

SACRIFICE AND DESTRUCTION IN SELECTED
FAMILY PLAYS BY EUGENE O'NEILL

by
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APPROVAL SHEET

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Plays by Eugene O'Neill

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ABSTRACT

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Thelma Jane Bryan, Doctor of Philosophy, 1982

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In most of his plays Eugene O'Neill continues in the family-oriented tradition of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American dramatists. Like theirs, his works treat the themes of sacrifice and destruction in the domestic setting. In his plays that treat these subjects, characters adopt one of four stances toward the family. They sacrifice themselves for their families' sakes. They sacrifice kindred to preserve dreams or personas. They slay relatives they hate. Or they try to destroy the love that binds them in marriage.

Both self-sacrifice and sacrifice of the family bring calamity to the individual and to the unit. Prompted by selfless love, selfless-selfish love, superstition, guilt, cowardice, or a need to atone, characters who immolate themselves follow an approach to domestic life that leads to happiness for no one. When O'Neill's characters selfishly subordinate family interests to the preservation of their dreams, the result is just as disastrous. Family dissolution follows the pursuit of such illusions.

An equally dark vision permeates O'Neill's plays in which malevolent dramatis personae succeed in destroying family members or

attempt to lay waste to the emotional ties that are the foundation of marriage. In the works that treat destruction there are no greater certainties than complete disjuncture in the bosom of the family and probable kindred-induced death. Havoc reigns, and the age-old contest between love and hatred in the domestic milieu is won decisively by the darker emotion. In the plays in which characters try to "slay" the love that welds them to others, hatred also thrives. It is not, however, the clear winner of its eternal contest with love; the competition ends in a draw.

Since O'Neill's domestic dramas function generally on at least two levels, their vision is particularly bleak; for in the bulk of them literal homelessness is a prelude or companion to cosmic homelessness. As a whole the plays imply that existence is chaotic, that man's lot is misery, that lack of true contact with his fellows or with the cosmic force is the norm, and that surcease from domestic and metaphysical loneliness is rarely possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I. SELF-SACRIFICE	7
CHAPTER II. SACRIFICE OF THE FAMILY	68
CHAPTER III. DESTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY	108
CHAPTER IV. ATTEMPTED DESTRUCTION	177
CONCLUSION	219
BIBLIOGRAPHY	226
SHORTENED PLAY TITLES	231

INTRODUCTION

In man's life the family experience antedates all others. Before he is conscious of himself as a unique being, he is entangled in the domestic mesh. There he encounters a spectrum of emotions--love, hate, altruism, selfishness, belonging, homelessness, hope, and despair.

Sven Armens says that the family "very definitely and concretely is: as a specific point of reference, as that part of our daily existence which embodies procreation, nutrition, affection, or the lack of these, it dominates our psychical energy, functioning like the earth under our feet as the very foundation of feeling."¹ Because the domestic experience is a universal one, the family nexus is a particularly fertile area for artistic exploration. Proliferating in literature through the ages, domestic themes and images affect the individual on two planes. He responds as a member of a specific family and as a sharer of a common emotional heritage with the larger human family.

Since its beginnings, American drama has had as a staple the play in which members of a family are among the dramatis personae or are felt presences by virtue of exposition. These characters inhabit worlds in which their approaches to the domestic milieu include sacrifice or destruction of themselves or their families. The first truly American play, Royall Tyler's The Contrast (1787) is both a comedy of manners

¹ Archetypes of the Family in Literature (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1966), p. 191.

and a domestic drama. Its socio-political message reflects its date of composition: love of America and her ways should supplant Anglophilia. As a play of family life, it presents dutiful relegation of personal preference to paternal authority and will. One of the earliest American plays that deal with colonial history, James Nelson Barker's Superstition (1824) is a tragedy that advocates filial sacrifice, affirms the desirability of benevolent paternal control, and condemns authoritarian patriarchy. An early American social comedy, Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie's Fashion (1845) resembles The Contrast in its patriotic support of American manners and morals; its rejection of fashionable European, in this instance French, customs; and its reliance on the family setting to develop these themes. In Fashion the selfless sacrifice of the protagonist Adam Trueman ensures his granddaughter's marital happiness.

In the worlds of these representative plays, rewards come to the self-sacrificing family member who acts out of love, while destruction follows individuals who cannot surrender their personal desires or who sacrifice because they are weaklings. Generally, in these works domestic life, regardless of characters' attitudes toward it, is characterized by little discord. Exemplars of their respective periods, the plays present few outright clashes between generations. For the most part, children bow willingly to authority; and patriarchy is sustained.

As Steele MacKaye's Hazel Kirke (1880) and James A. Herne's Shore Acres (1892) demonstrate, the vision of family life conveyed in American drama begins to change near the end of the nineteenth century. Like many of their antecedents, these plays end on a note of lasting concord.

But unlike The Contrast, Superstition, and Fashion, the later works do not necessarily punish the character who fails to subordinate his desires to those of kindred. Also, contrary to these earlier plays, Hazel Kirke and Shore Acres present love-hatred among family members; diminishment of patriarchal prerogatives; fraternal rivalry; and open, vigorous rebellion against parental authority. Their dramatis personae consist of alienating-sustaining families that crumble from within and later reunite.

In most of his plays, realistic and anti-realistic, Eugene O'Neill continues in the family-oriented tradition of his American predecessors. Like theirs, many of his domestic dramas treat the themes of sacrifice and destruction. But unlike theirs, his plays attempt to transcend the domestic and social spheres. Markedly more complex in their themes, they aspire frequently to the metaphysical plane. Also, in contrast to theirs, poetic justice does not reign in his denouements. The world of the family is usually a moral wasteland in his canon.

As domestic drama, O'Neill's plays contain for the most part egalitarian nuclear families. These units consist primarily of middle-aged parents with adult children or of childless married couples. If a young husband and wife have pre-adult children, their progeny generally die or are sickly, morose, or moronic. In those few plays in which young children thrive, they rarely or never appear on stage. When they are among the dramatis personae, they are normally flat characters.

Children, especially pre-adult ones, do not figure prominently in the plays because marital partners love possessively and cannot bear to share the beloved even with offspring. In marriages of this kind an actual child is unnecessary anyway. The husband and wife make up a

family complete with parents and progeny. He is the husband and son-figure; she, the wife and mother-figure. She does not lament her barrenness, for she is able to satisfy her maternal urges by caring for him. He remains an eternal child whose lifelong quest is for a state that approximates intrauterine harmony. His need manifests itself in a desire for a surrogate mother or for death (the womb-tomb).

When women in the plays have literal children of their own, these offspring are not enough to make their parents happy or to relieve their parents' cosmic aloneness. Regardless of whether progeny desert their mothers and fathers or remain at home, they cannot--as says Lucy Hillman, a minor character in Days Without End (1931-34)--make up for everything else that is missing in an individual's life.² Children cannot accomplish what only spiritual love between a man and a woman, who are preferably married, or faith can now and then.

Although the plays provide a sense of family history through photographs and portraits--in the manner of Nathaniel Hawthorne's and Henrik Ibsen's works--and through exposition that links the past and the present, they rarely contain grandparents among the cast of characters. Beyond the Horizon (1917-18); The Rope (1918); The Great God Brown (1925); and Strange Interlude (1926-27) are thus unusual plays in O'Neill's canon; for they have at least one grandparent, parent, and child among their dramatis personae. Technically, Desire Under the Elms (1924) also belongs in this group. The First Man (1921) and More Stately Mansions (1935-41) might warrant inclusion as well but for the

² After a play by O'Neill is cited in the text for the first time, its date of composition appears parenthetically. Publication dates are provided for works by other writers.

fact that the children in these plays are felt presences only. The Jaysons talk about Curtis and Martha's baby. Deborah Harford and her daughter-in-law discuss the latter's sons. But in neither play do the children appear on stage. The Dreamy Kid (1918) and Marco Millions (1923-25) contain modified extended families. Each has among its characters a grandparent and an otherwise parentless grandchild who dies or will surely die.

Most of the families O'Neill depicts are closed. They allow few outsiders within their ranks and rarely become active participants in larger society. Because of the isolated and insulated nature of these families, relations within them are generally intense, inward, and discordant.

Like earlier American domestic dramas which resolve affirmatively and optimistically, O'Neill's plays admit the family's potentiality as a source of support and belonging. But his plays do not suggest the permanence of such happiness and harmony as their forerunners do. Rather, they cherish the hopeless hope of the ideal family but suggest that the promise of the mutually sustaining, integrated family is rarely achieved in actuality. In O'Neill's vision harmony is transient at best, regardless of the milieu in which it is experienced. While the family can nurture its members and alleviate alienation, it can also shatter dreams and introduce them to an isolation that grows to cosmic dimensions. More often than not, the individual does not experience unity within and without himself in its bosom but finds harmony fleetingly in the womb or in infancy, during the early days of marriage, in the Pieta-like embrace of a symbolic Earth Mother, or in nature. As The Fountain (1921-22) exemplifies, death is the surest means of finding

lasting peace and unity in the playwright's oeuvre. Here death, the Nietzschean philosophy of eternal recurrence, and the family combine to produce the hope for such experiences. The play implies that as winter gives way to spring, effecting constant regeneration in nature, the individual may be reborn again and again and may belong to the cosmos through future generations of his family.

From the "lost" to the last plays, O'Neill is preoccupied with domestic relations.³ Nine of the ten "lost" plays focus on the family. And between the apprentice period and the final phase, the family is rarely absent from his works. As an element of action or exposition, the family nexus in O'Neill's plays is characterized, among other possible orientations, by members' selfless or selfless-selfish sacrifice of themselves; selfish sacrifice of kindred to preserve dreams or personas; final, malevolent destruction of relatives; and fear-induced attempts to destroy the family unit.

³ The "lost" plays are apprentice works O'Neill wrote in 1913-15. They were never truly lost; five of them appeared in Thirst and Other One-Act Plays (Boston: Gorham, 1914). They have more historical than artistic value. As a result of the playwright's failure to renew his copyright, the New York-based New Fathoms Press issued the plays, nine one-acters and one three-acter, under the title Lost Plays of Eugene O'Neill in 1950. Fourteen years later Random House published the authorized version Ten "Lost" Plays.

The early plays begin with Before Breakfast (1916) and end with Marco (1923-25). The middle plays commence with Brown (1925) and terminate with Days (1931-34). The late plays start with The Iceman Cometh (1939) and conclude with A Moon for the Misbegotten (1943).

CHAPTER I

SELF-SACRIFICE

Throughout the plays of Eugene O'Neill, characters sacrifice their youth, lives, loves, selfhood, and moral codes to ensure the well-being of other family members, to escape their consciences and their families' censure, to gain their own and their partner's happiness, or to atone for their wrongful acts against the family. Some families consciously encourage such actions and subsequently abandon the sacrificing characters or become irrelevant to them. In other instances, family members are initially or permanently unaware of the character's self-sacrifice because he elects to keep them in the dark or because they are blind. If they become enlightened, his life improves superficially but remains unaltered within. The philosophy of self-surrender, acceptance, and tolerance that has guided his past existence retains its currency.

In O'Neill's plays there are four kinds of self-sacrificers. One kind of martyr voluntarily suffers for others because he loves selflessly. In a Christian context, his self-sacrificing love is the most sublime form of this emotion and is the loftiest aspect of man's existence. The character's sacrifice for the sake of his specific family meets the same response that Christ's does from the family of man; neither group appreciates the savior's suffering. Relatives' reactions to the character's sacrifice imply that self-surrender and

suffering for the sake of family which are motivated by pure selflessness are futile. Indeed, they may be the worst possible approaches to family life for both the individual and the group.

Another kind of self-sacrificer acts voluntarily out of selfless-selfish love. This character, a female, has an unassailable ideal of love that is unaffected by the beloved's behavior. She surrenders self to maintain a dream that makes life tenable. Unfortunately, her selfless-selfish sacrifice has a negative impact on domestic life; for the beloved, given free rein, devalues both progeny and submissive spouse and selfishly relegates their interests to his.

The third type acts grudgingly out of superstition, guilt, or cowardice as well as love. Forced into the course he takes, he sacrifices his principles or his life. In the long run his surrender has a subtractive impact on the family.

The final kind of self-sacrificer voluntarily suffers because he is guilty of an offense against family. Prompted to some degree by love, he is chiefly stimulated by the desire to atone. His consequent self-sacrifice results in mixed blessings for the family.

The motif of family-related self-sacrifice appears first in O'Neill's apprentice plays. Four of the ten "lost" plays--Warnings (1913-14), Abortion (1913), A Wife for a Life (1913), and Servitude (1913-14)--treat this theme. As a major motif, it resurfaces four years later in two early plays Dreamy Kid and The Straw (1918-19). As a minor theme, it reappears during this period in Horizon. Sixteen years pass before it emerges again as a principal theme in the late play A Touch of the Poet (1935-42).

The first scene of Warnings is set in the family milieu; the second, in the larger world of ships, seamen, and passengers. James Knapp, his querulous wife Mary, and their brood of five children are the only characters in the initial scene.¹ Though the dialogue of the two older children Charlie and Dolly reveals that they have viable social lives outside the family, the Knapps seem to be isolated from the rest of humanity. Of the Knapp family, only James appears in the second scene. Because he must retain his position as a wireless operator aboard the S.S. Empress so that he may support his impoverished family, James reluctantly returns to his ship and conceals a hearing loss which warrants his discharge. He heeds the voice of family duty, his wife Mary; her remonstrance evokes his guilt for even considering to reveal his malady to his captain. James' subordination of his moral duty to those aboard the Empress to his economic duty to family results in the ship's sinking when he, who becomes totally deaf during the voyage, fails to hear warnings of a derelict the ship strikes. Overwhelmed by the ruin his sacrifice of integrity works, he seeks escape from guilt through suicide.

Barrett Clark contends that the first scene of Warnings is unnecessary. The critic's claim that a single shipboard scene that makes clear James' desperate need for his position would have been

¹ Only in a few other O'Neill plays are there among the dramatis personae so many pre-adult children residing in the home. In Servitude the Roylstons have two young children; both appear briefly on stage. In Straw Bill Carmody has five children, including the protagonist Eileen. In Brown Margaret and Dion Anthony have three sons, who are listed as her sons in the cast of characters. The Millers in Ah, Wilderness! (1932) have four children at home.

sufficient implies that the first scene serves little or no purpose.² Contrary to Clark's intimation, it does accomplish two functions: it balances the play and grants immediacy to both aspects of James Knapp's dilemma. Also, as Louis Sheaffer points out, the scene in question is the artistically superior one and the play's greatest asset.³

As the playwright's first depiction of the family, it has great historical as well as limited aesthetic value. In this scene, O'Neill uses devices that recur in his mature plays. In Now I Ask You (1917), an apprentice play, dingy portraits of sedate Ashleighs indicate family heritage. In Diff'rent (1920) photographs of generations of austere Crosbys perform the same function, while in All God's Chillun Got Wings (1923) a photograph of Jim Harris' flamboyantly attired father reveals racial and family history. In Mourning Becomes Electra (1929-31) the portraits of past Mannons attest to the persistence of life-denying tendencies through successive generations. The recording of family history in photographs indicates a family's modest means, while portraits signify position and wealth. O'Neill begins his visual chronicling of the family in Warnings. In the Knapps' dining room a "formidable display of family photographs" rests on the mantelpiece.⁴

² Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays, rev. ed. (New York: McBride, 1929), p. 71.

³ O'Neill: Son and Playwright (Boston: Little Brown, 1968), p. 271.

⁴ Ten "Lost" Plays (New York: Random House, 1964), Scene i, p. 57. Further references to Warnings and to all other "lost" plays appear in the text.

In this play O'Neill combines realistic and symbolic modes as he does in many of his subsequent works. Furnishings reveal the inner life of the family. The set includes a mournfully ticking black marble clock, which suggests gloom and death, and an ironic black-framed motto "Home Sweet Home." One of the most striking objects in the family's flat is a canary in a gilt cage. Its quality suggests the family's lower economic status; but primarily the cage is emblematic of James and Mary Knapp's union, which has degenerated into a biological snare as marital and family cares have diminished passion and as resentment and guilt have usurped love. Intermittently harmonious and discordant, marriage here means largely what it does in August Strindberg's A Dream Play (1901). Paradoxically, it is the "sweetest which is also the bitterest" and the "highest and the lowest." Both binding and fettering, children unite the Knapp family but also are the greatest drains upon its resources.

Mary becomes so anxious for her family that, in urging her husband to risk the lives of many to save his children from want, she is transformed into a harpy. Her fears for her family derive from her awareness of the constant threat of abject poverty and her great sense of responsibility for her children's welfare. Because the nature of her husband's occupation means his frequent absence from home, she has become in effect the power in the household. And Mary is a matriarch who is temperamentally unsuited for the inordinate demands such a position makes upon her. A largely ineffectual, biased disciplinarian, she does not command complete respect for her authority from her children. When she exercises her power to the fullest, by browbeating her husband into returning to his ship, she becomes the archetypal woman

as destroyer. She causes disaster for all--for her family, which is deprived of a wage earner; for the captain, who loses his ship; and for her husband, who takes his own life.

Mary is also largely responsible for the conflict between generations that occurs in Warnings. In most of O'Neill's plays that contain antagonism between parents and children, enmity exists between father and son; but in this play the major discord occurs between mother and son. No doubt the variance exists here because the family is a matriarchy, while in most of the playwright's works it is a patriarchy. Constantly irritable, Mary seizes every opportunity to disparage and discipline her fifteen-year-old son Charlie. She complains about the volume of his voice. She upbraids him for sprawling when he sits and thus endangering others by stretching out his long legs. When he idly threatens his sister Dolly, she gives him "a crack over the ear with her open hand" (Scene i, p. 63). Further, Mary accuses him of not knowing his place and of acting like he owns the family's home. This last charge implies the source of her resentment and animosity. Severity masks guilt, which stems from the family's dependence upon Charlie's earnings. Their need prevents his purchase of new clothing and forces him to wear a shabby suit he has long outgrown. Causing guilt that she cannot escape, the suit is a constant visual reminder of the family's reliance upon him. Mary rationalizes taking his salary by asserting that he cannot support himself on five dollars a week. But she protests too much. It is no secret that his fellow workers laugh at Charlie's attire. They earn comparable wages and yet, counter to her claim, manage to clothe themselves better than he.

Additional friction within the family occurs among siblings. Like Shakespeare and Ibsen, O'Neill uses repetition. A petty argument that pits the two younger children Lizzie and Sue against each other is paralleled by a similar quarrel between the older children Dolly and Charlie. Inadequate by nature for her role, their mother reacts to both disputes in the same short-tempered manner. The recurrence suggests that sibling rivalry and family squabbling are never-ending.

Although disharmony characterizes much of their domestic relations, the Knapps are not strangers to family togetherness. The kind of unity that characterizes the Bergers in Clifford Odets' Awake and Sing (1935) typifies this family. As Mary explains to her older children, the survival of the collective family depends upon the cooperation and contributions of all:

Your father ain't as young as he used to be and they all want young men now. He's got to keep on workin' or we'd never be able to pay the rent. Goodness knows his salary is small enough. If it wasn't for your brother Jim sendin' us a few dollars every month, and Charlie earnin' five a week, and me washin', we'd never be able to get along even with your father's salary. But heaven knows what we'd do without it. We'd be put out in the streets. (Scene i, p. 65)

In addition to defining the family's cohesiveness and unknowingly predicting the family's lot after the play's denouement, she, through her explanation, meliorates the otherwise immoral stance she assumes when she forces her husband to sacrifice his principles.

Harmony characterizes the relations between father and son. Although Dolly says their father "yells at Charlie and me for nothing" (Scene i, p. 65), she mitigates her criticism by indicating that James' harsh treatment of them is atypical. A man worn down by life--as his slow, heavy footsteps announce--he reveals himself in a brief conversation with Charlie as a loving father who keeps his promises to

his children. Although a sob escapes, James rises to manly stature only during this encounter. In his final confrontations with his wife and the ship's officers aboard the Empress, he is reduced to a pathetic, guilt-ridden creature.

The exchange between father and son in Warnings presages an equally strife-free moment in Long Day's Journey into Night (1939-41).⁵ In the earlier play a shift in Charlie's voice is an index to his relationship with his father. Before James' arrival Charlie speaks very loudly. But as soon as his father enters, he adopts his quietest, most pleasing vocal tone and attempts to cheer up his gloomy parent. After his mother leaves the room, Charlie summons the courage to ask his father for a new suit. James' response and his son's reaction indicate the deep bond of sympathy between them:

KNAPP . . . (A look of pain crossing his features) I'm afraid not just now, boy. (CHARLIE descends into the depths of gloom) You see, I've had to go to this doctor about (He hesitates) the--er--trouble I've had with my stomach, and he's very expensive. But when I come back from this trip I'll surely buy you a fine new suit with long pants the very first thing I do. I promise it to you and you know I don't break my promises. Try and get along with that one until I get back.
CHARLIE . . . (Ruefully) All right, Pop. I'll try, but I'm afraid it's going to bust if I get any bigger.

⁵ In Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 25n, Travis Bogard says he sees no resemblance between the Knapps and the Tyrones except their shared first names, James and Mary; but these moments between fathers and sons belie the critic's claim. Also, both James Tyrone and James Knapp express sorrow about their vocations. Tyrone regrets the course his career has taken, and Knapp mourns the nature of his occupation. Each despises the long, lonesome trips that are part of his profession; and each wishes he could start over and thus change some aspect of his career. Another parallel in the plays is the mother's antipathy toward the medical profession. Like Bill Carmody in Straw, Nora Melody in Touch, and other O'Neill characters, Mary Knapp and Mary Tyrone lash out at doctors.

KNAPP . . . That's a good boy. We haven't been having much luck lately and we've all got to stand for our share of doing without things. I may have to do without a lot--(He turns his face away to hide his emotion from CHARLIE. A sob shakes his shoulders. CHARLIE notices it and goes over clumsily and pats his father on the back).

CHARLIE . . . Gee Pop, what's the matter? I can get along without a suit all right. I wouldn't have asked you if I thought you was so blue.

KNAPP . . . Never mind me, boy. I'm just not feeling well, that's all--something I must have eaten--or a touch of fever . . .
(Scene i, pp. 68-69)

Although James does not tell Charlie the true reasons for his grief, the imminent loss of his hearing and the possible loss of his job, their moment alone is a rare instance in O'Neill's canon of true tenderness and communication between father and son. In Journey similar compassion briefly characterizes the relationship between James and Edmund Tyrone when, during a pause in charges and countercharges, the aging actor, alone with his son, laments his destruction of his career.

Mary Knapp's affectionate gestures and expressions of sympathy indicate that she and her husband normally enjoy a fairly peaceful relationship. This changes, however, when he evinces a desire to follow his conscience. Then this generally weak, supportive woman becomes like one of the relentless Furies. Angrily accusing him of selfishness, she lists the horrors his decision will bring. At this point Mary initiates a long tradition in O'Neill's plays; she is the first of a host of nagging wives.

Unable to endure this onslaught, James sacrifices his code of honor. He allows his family responsibilities to supersede his moral obligations. He nurtures the hopeless hope, a pervasive theme in O'Neill's plays, that he will not lose his hearing during the voyage;

but he hopes in vain.⁶ Ironically, his last planned trip proves to be more final than he anticipates. Inhabiting a universe governed by a malevolent or, at best, ironic force; physically removed from the domestic sphere, though never completely forgetting it; and alone with his moral guilt, James takes his life while at sea. Like Lavinia Mannon in Mourning, he punishes himself for his crimes by becoming his own judge and executioner. But while her actions suggest heroism, and also masochism, his suggest cowardly escape.

While James Knapp must assume some of the responsibility for the ship's sinking, he appears to be primarily a victim of socioeconomic and metaphysical systems. The socioeconomic system contributes to the family's imprisoning poverty, diminishes the individual's ability to make morally correct choices, and devalues James' sacrifice of his principles by making his abandonment of them and of life ironically signify greater deprivation for his family. The metaphysical system allows him to exercise his free will but stacks the cards against him. Its coup de grace is the derelict that appears along the Empress' course after James has lost his hearing.

⁶ The theme of the "hopeless hope" appears throughout the "lost" plays. In Thirst (1913-14), p. 18, the Dancer asks the Gentleman, a fellow shipwreck survivor, "Have you no hope that one of the ship's boats may have reached land and reported the disaster?" He replies, "I have not given up hope . . ." In Abortion, p. 162, Jack Townsend's eyes light up "with a gleam of hope" when he thinks for a moment that he may escape Joe Murray's retribution. In The Sniper (1914-15) the priest clings "to a last shred of hope" when, seeking information about Mother Rougon, he asks, "Alive and unharmed?" (p. 205). His hope becomes despair, for she has become a victim of World War I; she has been seen "lying on the ground," with "a big hole" in her chest and covered with "blood all over--bright and red--like flowers" (p. 205). In Servitude, Act I, p. 246, the disciple of selfhood, Mrs. Frazer tells her mentor David Royston, "Oh, how good of you! Your encouragement has made me feel so hopeful, so fully of energy, I am ready for anything. A new life of wonderful possibilities seems opening up before me."

In Warnings the detrimental effects of city life manifest themselves in Dolly Knapp's face: "Her ordinarily sallow city complexion is flushed from the run upstairs" (p. 61). Resembling William Wordsworth's pastoral poem Michael in its romantic notions about childhood and the city, Dreamy Kid attributes far more devastating effects to urban living than Warnings. In A Drama of Souls: Studies in O'Neill's Super-naturalistic Technique, Egil Törnqvist says in his analysis of Lazarus Laughed (1925-26) that the period in human history during which mankind's innocence and harmony made possible belief in Dionysus as a living reality has a parallel in each individual's life. Consequently, Törnqvist adds, Tiberius knows that during his childhood, when he was pure and integrated, he could have uttered Dionysian laughter as Lazarus does.⁷ Like Tiberius, Dreamy has also experienced a sense of belonging, a unity within himself and with something outside himself.

A backward-looking character who chronicles Dreamy's early childhood, his grandmother Mammy Saunders describes during her half-conscious ramblings his once-extant state of harmony:

Down by de crick--under de ole willow--whar I uster take
yo'--wid yo- big eyes a-chasing'--de sun flitterin' froo
de grass--an'out on de water-- . . . An' yo' was always--
a-lookin'--an' a-thinkin' ter yo'se'f--an' yo' big eyes
jist a-dreamin' an' a-dreamin'⁸--an' dat's w'en I give yo'
dat nickname--Dreamy--Dreamy--

⁷ (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 170-71.

⁸ The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1955), I, pp. 621-22. The collection is hereafter cited as Plays. Page references for all of the plays except the "lost" plays and those written after Iceman are to this edition. The first time a passage from a play is quoted, the volume number, act and scene number, and page number(s) are included in a footnote. Thereafter, all references to the play appear in the text.

During his infancy in the rural South, his poetic temperament was in accord with his surroundings. But after his mother and grandmother brought him to New York City, apparently during the great migration of blacks to the urban North during the early years of the twentieth century, the realities of life in this environment compelled him to sublimate his imaginative, creative qualities. Hard, pitiless, and contaminating as it is in Wife, The Web (1913), and The Hairy Ape (1917, 1921), the city in Dreamy Kid spells inner division and rupture with the outer world for the title character.

Because Dreamy visits her rarely and on these infrequent occasions never reveals the course his life has taken and because her friends conceal his fall, Mammy never learns of his association with gangsters and whores and of his murder of a white man. She cherishes a pipe dream of his Christlike innocence and purity. As his grandmother's friend Ceely tells Dreamy's unrepentant Mary Magdalene, the prostitute Irene, "his old Mammy don' know no dif'frunt but he's de mos' innercent young lamb in de worl'" (p. 609). Mammy's dream is never shattered, for it is implied that she will die before she is forced to confront the truth of his fall through pride.

Although Dreamy knows that policemen are searching for him, that they realize he will attempt to visit his dying grandmother, and that they will lay a trap for him near her apartment, he comes to see Mammy nonetheless. Tempted, but resisting Irene's pleas and his own self-preservative instincts, he elects to sacrifice himself by granting his grandmother's wish that he remain with her until she is released from "dis wicked yearth" and returns to the womb-tomb. His obedience to the family matriarch, the only parent he has and the only authority to

which he willingly submits, suggests that there is no escape from the family or from the past.

Ironically, his fulfillment of Mammy's desire has farther-reaching effects than Dreamy or his grandmother realizes. As in O'Neill's The Sniper (1914-15), Horizon, and Mourning, extinction of a family line is implied here. The protagonist's mother died when he was a baby, and apparently the two family members who survived her will end their lives together in the tiny Greenwich Village apartment.

W. David Sievers describes the protagonist's dying grandmother as "a sympathetic old Negro Mammy" and as the only warmly affectionate, lovable woman in O'Neill's early plays.⁹ But Mammy Saunders is not as endearing as Sievers claims. While she obviously cares deeply for Dreamy, her love is selfish. Although she has no reason to suspect that he is in trouble, she senses Dreamy's tension and his urgency to leave her apartment. Considering herself only, she resorts to preying upon his superstitions and his sense of guilt to force him to remain with her:

DREAMY. I'm gwine leave you--jist for a moment, Mammy. I'll send de word for Ceely Ann--

MAMMY. (wide awake in an instant--with intense alarm) Don' yo' move one step out er yere or yo'll be sorry, Dreamy.

DREAMY. (apprehensively) I gotter go, I tells you. I'll come back.

MAMMY. (with wild grief) O good Lawd! W'en I's drawin' de las' bre'fs in dis po' ole body--(Frenziedly) De Lawd have mercy! Good Lawd have mercy! . . . Lawd have mercy! (She groans) Gimme yo' han', chile. Yo' ain't gwine leave me now, Dreamy? Yo' ain't, is yo'? Yo' ole Mammy won't bodder yo' long. Yo' know w'at yo' promise me, Dreamy! Yo' promise yo' sacred word yo' stay wid me till de en'. (With an air of somber prophecy--slowly) If yo' leave me now, yo' ain't gwine git no bit er luck s'long's yo' lives, I tells yo' dat!

DREAMY. (frightened--pleadingly) Don' you say dat, Mammy!
(pp. 618-19)

⁹ Freud on Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama (New York: Hermitage House, 1955), p. 99.

Blood sister to Mary Knapp, Mammy uses every weapon at her disposal to achieve her desire. Trapped by his superstitions and his residual feelings for family, Dreamy resigns himself to his inevitable fate. But he proclaims with characteristic bravado that the policemen will not take him alive.

His bravado, his flashy clothing, his use of the gangster's argot, and his fixed forcing of his face into a cruel snarl constitute his mask. Beneath the mask of the tough guy hides the sensitive boy Mammy remembers, the boy who surfaces to save Irene's life and to stand like a child before his grandmother. During the final moments of the play, Dreamy's irreconcilable psychological split is conveyed through a visual image:

MAMMY. (speaking with difficulty) Yo'--kneel down--chile--say a pray'r--Oh, Lawd!

DREAMY. Jest a secon', Mammy. (He goes over and gets his revolver and comes back.)

MAMMY. Gimme--yo' hand--chile. (DREAMY gives her his left hand. The revolver is in his right. He stares nervously at the door) An' yo' kneel down--pray fo' me. (DREAMY gets on one knee beside the bed. There is a sound from the hallway as if someone had made a misstep on the stairs--then silence. DREAMY starts and half aims his gun in the direction of the door . . .) (p. 622)

Torn between hardness (the mask) and softness (the repressed inner self); between self-preservation and duty to family; and between the past (harmony in the rural South) and the present (disharmony in the urban North) as opposite sides of his body reveal, he never truly integrates his two halves during his adulthood. Ironically, heeding his better half in this instance spells his end. Family loyalty means personal disaster.

But his primarily self-created end is transcended to some extent, and his life gains a modicum of value through his sacrifice. Unlike

James Knapp's immoral sacrifice of his principles and cowardly suicide in Warnings, Dreamy's risking of his life, the morally right thing to do, has a beneficial effect. Through his basically unselfish act, he eases his grandmother's exit from life.

In Wife the protagonist sacrifices not his life but his wife. Allusions in the play to the Bible and to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's The Rime of the Ancient Mariner reveal that his relinquishment of her is an act of repentance and atonement. The penitent demonstrates that "Greater love hath no man than this, that he giveth his wife for his friend" (p. 223).¹⁰

Primarily a retroactive play, Wife presents through expositional pseudo-soliloquies the unnamed Older Man's history and his mining partner Jack's love for Yvette, a felt presence in the play. A year before he met the Older Man, Jack had fallen in love with Yvette, who in "the corrupt environment of a mining camp . . . seemed a lily growing in a field of rank weeds" (p. 217). The wife of a "broken-down" mining engineer twenty years her senior, she had wed, Jack says, before she was old enough to know her own mind. A submissive daughter, she had yielded to her poor parents, who thought the marriage would be an excellent match. Sensing that she could not love him but loving her nonetheless "in his fashion," her husband adopted dissolute ways. But in spite of his drunkenness and neglect, Yvette remained faithful. When Jack confessed his love for her, she sacrificed this opportunity for

¹⁰ See John xv.13. During his farewell discourse and prayer, Jesus outlines the pattern of the Christian believer's life. Delineating the relation of believers to one another, he says, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

happiness. He reports that she responded, "'I know you love me and I--I love you' but you must go away and we must never see each other again. I am his wife and I must keep my pledge'" (p. 217).

As Jack tells this story, the Older Man realizes that fate, ever the trickster, has delivered into his hands the man for whom he has searched for years, the man with whom he suspected his wife Yvette had an affair. Only when Jack, unaware of his partner's true identity, produces proof, a letter from Yvette, does the Older Man believe in her fidelity to their marriage vows. The letter reads, "I must keep my oath. He needs me and I must stay. To be true to myself I must be true to him' . . . 'Sometime I may send for you'" (p. 219). Dubbed "Mr. Doubting Thomas" by Jack, the Older Man behaves like his Biblical counterpart, who made belief contingent upon ocular and manual perception. One of little faith, the Older Man withholds belief in his wife's fidelity until he has tangible evidence that confirms her innocence.

He must atone for his distrust. His penance begins when he accepts responsibility for his past and present isolation. His neglect of her no doubt increased the likelihood of Yvette's falling in love with another man. And he abandoned her to seek revenge upon the man he thought had wronged him.

Unwilling to "be the ghost at their feast," the Older Man makes amends for his sins by concealing his true identity from the other parties in the triangle. He decides that such a disclosure would be pointless and immoral. When he hands his friend a telegram from Yvette that asks Jack to return to her, the Older Man in effect delivers her

personally. His gift of his wife atones for his doubting her faithfulness.

Like many of O'Neill's plays, Wife follows a circular pattern. As he is when the play begins, the Older Man is alone on stage as it ends. Doomed to wander like the Ancient Mariner, he contemplates his future isolation, an ultimate fate foreshadowed in the play's opening visual image: "The edge of the Arizona desert; a plain dotted in the foreground with clumps of sagebrush. On the horizon a lonely butte is outlined, black and sinister against the lighter darkness of a sky with stars. . . ." (p. 211). As Bogard indicates, this symbolic setting, a psychological index solely to the protagonist and not a sociological setting that all characters approach equally, has significance only for the Older Man, whose world and deepest feelings it reflects.¹¹

In the conclusion of Horizon Rob Mayo appears to atone for a past wrong in the same manner as the Older Man in Wife. Welcoming imminent death, he bequeathes his wife to his best friend, his brother Andy, in an attempt to salvage the remaining years of his survivors' lives.

A minor motif, sacrifice is introduced in the play eight years before Rob's death when, heartbroken, Andy yields the field to his rival. Wishing to spend as much time as possible with Rob on the night before he goes to sea, Mrs. Mayo reproaches Andy for allowing his brother to escort Ruth, the girl both men love, and her mother home. His response reveals that he has willingly subordinated his own interests to Rob's. Avoiding his mother's eyes, Andy explains that he "thought maybe Robert wanted to tonight. He offered to go right away when they were

¹¹ Bogard, p. 12.

leaving."¹² When his brother abandons his dream of journeying beyond the horizon so that he may remain at home and wed Ruth, Andy reveals little rancor.

Formerly silent about his feelings because he believes she prefers his older, practical brother, Rob is not altruistic enough to remain mute. Instead, he declares himself on the evening before he is to sail. Temporarily susceptible to his poetic musings, Ruth confesses that she reciprocates his feelings. Succumbing to her entreaties, Rob forsakes his lifelong dream of freedom and at first reluctantly but later enthusiastically replaces it with one of married love and happiness.

By nature a farmer, Andy, an Antaeus figure, denies his true self and flees the land. In Rob's stead he goes to sea because he believes he cannot endure living, unmarried, near the couple once they wed. Intended to preserve fraternal and family harmony as well as to remove himself from hurt, Andy's sacrifice of all he loves leads to his father's expulsion of him from the ranks of the family; is a factor in his father's untimely death a year after his departure; causes anguish for his mother, who initially attempts to be a peacemaker between father and son; and results in Rob's mismanagement and almost total ruin of the farm. As the fruits of Andy's altruism-cowardice imply, his abandonment of the land is a misguided act that contributes to the disaster that stalks and almost blots out the Mayo and Atkins lines.

Eight years after Andy's flight, Ruth is a slattern so hardened by life that she has become almost completely indifferent to pain. The child of Rob's and Ruth's union is dead. Always sickly, Rob is succumbing to tuberculosis' final onslaught. Now a grain speculator,

¹² Plays, III, Act I, Scene ii, p. 97.

Andy returns home with medical and limited financial aid. Joyfully anticipating death's repose and its inherent journey beyond the horizon, Rob imparts to Andy and Ruth what he believes is the key to attaining true harmony while one lives. After imploring his brother to wed his wife, Rob says, "Ruth has suffered--remember, Andy--only through sacrifice--the secret beyond there--" (Act III, Scene ii, p. 168). What the dying character thinks he has discerned is that through sacrifice they could have prevented the calamitous progress of their lives. If he had sacrificed what he felt was love for Ruth, Andy and she would have probably married and been happy. If Ruth had been able to distinguish between the reality of Rob and the romantic figure she created in her imaginings, had fully considered the ramifications of her acceptance of him, and had not encouraged him to relegate his yearning for the sea, the dreamer would have sailed and would have been spared a life so inimical to him. Or if Andy had been able to overcome his personal pain and had remained on the farm, such extensive blight and suffering might not have occurred. As he begins the process of destruction, Rob attempts to initiate what he thinks will result in Andy's and Ruth's salvation. His bequest of his wife is, thus, as Törnqvist states, an effort to reverse the march of ruin by recreating the state of affairs that existed before he revealed his love to Ruth.¹³ Rob hopes that his brother's contact with suffering, embodied in Ruth, will win back for Andy the "harmonious partnership he had before he started gambling with the thing" he "used to love to create" (Act III, Scene i, pp. 161-62).

¹³ A Drama of Souls, p. 139.

As the play concludes, the potential rewards of sacrifice are only suggested; they have not been and may never be reaped. Although the play ends on an indefinite note, Ruth's behavior implies that this approach has a bleak future if its success depends upon her active participation in life: "[I]f she is aware of his [Andy's] words, [she] gives no sign. She remains silent, gazing at him dully with the sad humility of exhaustion, her mind already sinking back into that spent calm beyond the future troubling of any hope" (Act III, Scene ii, p. 169). Prefiguring Nina Leeds' fatigue at the close of Interlude, Ruth's apathy indicates that Rob's dying remarks have little relevance for her. As Törnqvist indicates, Rob's symbolic position between his wife and his brother as he articulates his final wisdom suggests that the past will always come between them and prevent their marriage.¹⁴ Though the hopeless hope remains operative through Andy's optimism, the real worth of sacrifice and suffering as panaceas is undercut not only by her behavior and by their inability to forget the past but also by the suspicion that Rob's solution may be a mirage, the last dream of an incorrigible idealist.

Like James Knapp in Warnings, the chief character in Abortion pronounces final sentence upon himself. Ironically, at the height of his triumph, soon after his university team garners a baseball championship, Jack Townsend's fiancée Evelyn incorrectly assesses the protagonist's overall character:

You were so cool, so brave. It struck me as symbolic of the way you would always play, in the game of life--fairly, squarely, strengthening those around you, refusing to weaken at critical

¹⁴ A Drama of Souls, p. 139.

moments, advancing others by sacrifices [emphasis added], fighting the good fight for the cause, the team, and always, whether vanquished or victor, reserving a hearty, honest cheer for the other side . . . (pp. 149-50)

Evelyn's evaluation of Jack, which excludes man's grosser, sometimes uncontrollable, instincts, adumbrates Emma Crosby's romantic idealization of her fiance Caleb. In Diff'rent, however, Emma alone idealizes him; the other characters are realists. In Abortion, Evelyn, the Townsend women, and his fellow students idolize Jack. The students' final line equates to larger society's perception of him: "For he's a jolly good fellow, which nobody can deny" (p. 165).

But Jack's father, Joe Murray, and the protagonist himself do deny this image. John Townsend is the first to condemn Jack's behavior. His son's confidant, John is privy to the facts surrounding Jack's affair with and impregnation of Nellie Murray. Although he gives his son the money to finance the abortion of Nellie's baby, he does not condone Jack's avoidance of her after the operation; he believes such behavior is unnecessarily cruel.

A stenographer Jack does not love but for whom he lusted, Nellie is socially his inferior. From a poor family dependent upon her support, she is a "townie," one of a group the well-heeled college students regard with contempt. In spite of the disparity between them, Jack claims that he, the scion of a wealthy, prominent family, would have married her if he had "loved her the least particle" and if he had not loved Evelyn. Soiled, Nellie is implicitly contrasted with the beautiful, aristocratic, and pure Evelyn.

The second character who condemns Jack is Nellie's brother Joe Murray, both an avenger of wrongs against family and a spokesman for the "townies." In the latter role he reveals that mutual scorn exists

between his set and the collegians, whom the "townies" see as a "lot of no-good dudes spongin' on your old men" (p. 161). In the former capacity, he, seeking personal vengeance, informs Jack of Nellie's death as a consequence of the abortion, a death that occurred ironically as the protagonist was basking in public praise. Excoriating and threatening, Murray reminds Jack that "townies" have just as much concern and love for family as he and his kind. After this tirade Jack admits his culpability and denounces himself as a murderer.

An early O'Neill haunted hero, Jack attempts to dissuade Murray from disclosing the reasons for and his role in Nellie's death. First, he appeals to the avenger's sense of family honor: "Murray, for your own sake, for your dead sister's good name, for your family's sake, you must keep this thing quiet. I do not plead for myself. I am willing to have you punish me individually in any way you see fit; but there are others, innocent ones, who will suffer" (p. 163). When this approach fails, Jack explicitly beseeches Murray to remain silent for the Townsends' and Evelyn's sake: "My mother and father, my sister, Ev--(Bites back the name) this would kill my mother if she knew. They are innocent. Do not revenge yourself on them" (p. 163). Murray's continued inflexibility elicits an ignoble proposal from Jack. He offers to pay for silence. Outraged by the suggestion, Murray rejects the role of Judas and departs, he says, for the police station, where he claims he will reveal all.

After the two successive representatives of conscience exit, Jack is alone with his guilt. Unable to gamble that Murray may be bluffing and believing that he has no other alternative, he shoots himself. He both fulfills Murray's mission and atones for his offenses by using the

gun with which his accuser had intended to avenge Nellie's death. To avoid confronting his devaluation in the eyes of his women--his mother, sister, and fiancée--and to elude public opprobrium, he takes his life.

Although Jack commits suicide to escape domestic and social scorn, the central conflict occurs in neither of these spheres. Instead, it takes place in the psyche. The antagonists are man's higher, spiritual, self and his lower, bestial, self. The former aspect manifests itself in a pure love for Evelyn; the latter, in a gross passion for Nellie.

In Abortion man is unable to reconcile the opposing tendencies that coexist within him. O'Neill objectifies this inner division through the use of doubles, a practice the playwright follows in later plays such as Servitude, Horizon, Brown, and Days. Until Jack is exposed, he, a well-built, blue-eyed blond, appears to be the "angel" in man. Huge, swarthy Bull Herron, his roommate, seems to be the demon. Jack's sister Lucy clearly links Bull with man's lower self when she says, "You look more like a god of darkness than one of light" (p. 142). A little later, she adds that he "resembles Pluto more than any other divinity" (p. 143). The allusion to the ancient Greek and Roman god of the lower world, the diety responsible for the abduction of Persephone, vaguely suggests the seduction of the maiden Nellie. Ironically, the god of the higher world commits the dark act.

His name also associates Herron with man's bestial drives. His nickname Bull has obvious sexual connotations; it also implies a lack of cerebral orientation. His surname Herron suggests heron, a bird that wades along river banks and in marshes. His last name appears to link him with water, which in Jungian psychology is a symbol of the unconscious where instinct reigns. An additional appellative Lucy

bestows upon him, Jumbo, indicates Bull's elephantine dimensions and movements. Her linking of him with the animal kingdom becomes so inclusive that at one point he protests, "Jumbo! And Bull! Lucy thinks I'm a menagerie" (p. 148).

While Bull physically suggests man's instinctuality, but apparently has his dark urges under control, Jack, who is associated with the angelic and with "exaggerated ego," has ironically fallen victim to the "large portion of mud in our make-up." When Jack attempts to blame his lascivious behavior on his collective unconscious, his father rejects this excuse and espouses the primacy of free will in determining man's lot in life:

JACK. (Ironically) That's it! Do you suppose it was the same man who loves Evelyn who did this other thing? No, a thousand times no, such an idea is abhorrent. It was the male beast who ran gibbering through the forest after its female thousands of years ago.

TOWNSEND. Come, Jack, that is pure evasion. You are responsible for the Mr. Hyde in you as well as for the Dr. Jekyll. Restraint-- (pp. 154-55)

During his next try at avoiding responsibility for his actions, Jack attacks puritan values. He contends that some "impulses are stronger than we are"; that man's operative social and moral codes are unnatural and distorted because they direct themselves at his higher self and ignore the coexistent lower self; and that these laws force the individual into evasions.

In O'Neill's canon puritanism and paganism are antithetical orientations toward life. In Abortion paganism, which evolves in later plays into life affirmation, has not clearly become the enemy of puritanism. But adherence to puritanical values, even outward conformity, has approximately the same meaning here and in subsequent works. In Abortion it equates to literal death; in later plays, to

denial of life (metaphorical death). After he had his "glance into the abyss," Jack attempted to bring all into surface compliance with puritanical standards. To save himself, his fiancée, and his family from public ruin, he persuaded Nellie to have an abortion. This denial of life leads to her death and to his suicide.

In Warnings, Wife, and Abortion, the family is a point of departure. The protagonists' concern for family is diminished by their overwhelming sense of moral failure. In Warnings family life consists of endless skirmishes that are punctuated by moments of peace. Ultimately, family harmony rests not so much upon ties of affection as upon economic security. To retain its modest life style, the family forces its head to decide between duty to it and moral rectitude. In Wife the Older Man has had an opportunity for marital concord, but his distrust of his dutiful wife obliterated this possibility. Of the protagonists in these three plays, Jack Townsend has, on the surface, the most harmonious relationship with his family. But this harmony is not built on honesty and openness. The protective male, Jack feels he must shield the Townsend women from unpleasantness; and so he confides his transgressions only to his father. His guardianship extends even to his father when he prevents an encounter between his parent and Joe Murray.

Preoccupation with family continuance, unity, and good name decreases when the protagonists recognize the enormity of their moral lapses. In both Abortion and Warnings the major character's guilt consumes him to such an extent that it alone looms large in the foreground while the family recedes into the background. James Knapp's suicide, his elimination of himself as a much-needed source of family

support, indicates that for him the domestic sphere has lost its relevance. Jack Townsend's suicide is ultimately an escape from his private Furies, his awakened moral sense. As Chester Clayton Long indicates, Jack's act seems appropriate since he has revealed himself as an incomplete being who does not possess the resources to sustain life on his own. His suicide is also fitting, Long continues, because the social milieu in which Jack exists has no means of giving back to the character a purposeful, stable life once he is unmasked; hence, the protagonist must rectify wrongs and remove himself from this world.¹⁵ The play suggests that family turmoil, suffering, and possibly knowledge of his indiscretions will accompany this reestablishment of order. Undoubtedly, as Evelyn's swooning upon discovery of his body indicates, Jack's impulsive act will cause the grief from which he alleges he wishes to protect his family and his fiancée, but which he might want to protect himself from more than anyone else.

Like Abortion and the other plays about self-sacrifice, Straw begins as domestic drama and becomes moral drama. As a family play it presents three views, one direct and two indirect, of the family. Its direct portrait of domestic life has as its subjects the Carmodys.

Here O'Neill uses a formula similar to the one he employs in Warnings. The first scene is set in the family milieu, but neither the play nor its protagonist returns to this setting. In a clean, neatly kept, cheerfully painted kitchen that is emblematic of family life under the guidance of the chief character Eileen Carmody, her father and one of her younger sisters engage in expositional conversation. Their

¹⁵ The Role of Nemesis in the Structure of Selected Plays (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), p. 41.

exchange immediately indicates both the patriarchal orientation of the household and the child's grief because of her mother's death. Three other Carmody children enter from the outside, revealing through words and behavior that the family is an open one that mingles with larger society to a great extent. Its openness is further confirmed by the appearance of Fred Nicholls, Eileen's beau of long standing.

Life in the Carmody family circle has had a debilitating effect upon Eileen. After readily relinquishing a stenographic position, she has embraced her dead mother's domestic responsibilities. The oldest child, she has selflessly cared for her brothers and sisters and has performed arduous household chores when, exhausted and suffering from tuberculosis, she should have been in bed.

As well as epitomizing selflessness, she represents one side of a conflict that appears again and again in O'Neill's plays. Beginning with Thirst and Fog (1913-14) the playwright pits the poet against the practical man. In Straw dark-haired Eileen possesses a touch of the poet. And like many of O'Neill's artists/dreamers, she is her mother's child. Her mother was a Cullen; and her father Bill Carmody says, "They always was dreamin' their lives out."¹⁶ Nurturing, Eileen commands love not only from her dark-haired sister Mary, "the dead spit and image" of her mother (Act I, Scene i, p. 332), but also from her redheaded brothers and sister, true children of their coarse father and representatives of the opposite camp, "the fightin' Carmody blood" (Act I, Scene i, p. 332).

As a personification of the Cullen way, Eileen promotes education and reading. A Carmody, her father has gone against her wishes and

¹⁶ Plays, III, Act I, Scene i, p. 332.

allowed his son Billy to "leave off" his "schoolin'." The authoritarian father who brooks no revolt, he justifies his curtailment of Mary's reading by identifying books as the cause of laziness. His denouncement even makes reading a scapegoat in a graver matter; he claims that Eileen's illness is her own fault because she weakened her health by reading excessively.

To the children, Eileen is more than a bookish, sensitive sister. She is also in their minds a bulwark against household anarchy and a symbol of impartial, just law. Early in the play when Nora pinches her brother Tom and her misconduct goes unpunished, his threat implies Eileen's role as lawgiver and enforcer of order:

TOM. I'll tell Eileen, wait 'n' see!

NORA. Tattle-tale! Eileen's sick.

TOM. That's why you dast do it. You dasn't if she was up.

(Act I, Scene i, p. 334)

Present when Nora misbehaves but favorably disposed toward her, Bill Carmody does not discipline the child.

When he learns that Eileen must be hospitalized, Carmody's major concern is the expense he will incur: "Glory be to God, I'll not have a penny saved for me old age--and then it's the poor house!" (Act I, Scene i, p. 338). Reflecting his miserliness and selfishness, his complaints about having to spend money adumbrate similar protests by Journey's James Tyrone almost verbatim. Although Carmody mutters that "the likes" of Dr. Gaynor "be drainin' a man dry," he conveniently fails to notice that, to avoid hiring and paying a housekeeper, he has allowed his family to drain the life from his oldest daughter. The begrudging manner in which he, the exploitative father, provides for her care is contrasted with her loyalty to him. When Fred Nicholls indicts

Carmody, Eileen, the good daughter, admonishes her beau: "Sssh! You musn't, Fred. He just doesn't understand . . ." (Act I, Scene i, p. 345).

Devotion to family prompts her decision to enter the sanatorium. Primarily, she agrees to go to Hill Farm so that contagion may be removed from her home. In return for her dedication and sacrifices, her family ultimately abandons her. Although Bill Carmody loves her in his fashion, he discontinues support when her condition worsens, thus sentencing Eileen to a solitary, unmourned death in a state sanatorium.

In addition to indicating the lengths to which he goes to save money, Carmody's marriage to his housekeeper Mrs. Brennan signals the formalization of his desertion of his daughter. The terrible mother, Mrs. Brennan usurps Eileen's maternal role in the family.¹⁷ That the children forsake their ailing sister is the final, crushing blow. Most of them forget her; but one, Mary, visits the sanatorium and is repelled by Eileen's tuberculosis-ravaged appearance. Under the control of the bilious, brutal Mrs. Brennan, poetic, sensitive Mary becomes sullen and rebellious.¹⁸ Thus, when the child visits Hill Farm, she cannot offer love or pity but can only stare at her sister in fascinated horror. As John Henry Raleigh states, Mary is the last link the protagonist has

¹⁷ In Straw the stepmother is the evil, devouring mother; the dead mother, the good, nurturing mother. Desire contains a strikingly similar division of the mother-figure.

¹⁸ The child's transformation indicates that an artist needs a supportive environment if he is to thrive and fulfill his promise. As a representative of the artist, Mary is a successor of John Brown in Bread and Butter (1914) and a forerunner of Dion Anthony in Brown. They too are metamorphosed by their encounters with an unsympathetic world. Also, Mary's fate encourages speculation about the changes that might have been wrought in Eileen had she not received understanding and kindness from her mother.

with her beloved mother; hence, the child's defection is doubly painful.¹⁹ Eileen's reaction to her sister's aversion implies that the other children's neglect is the kinder cut.

In Straw the direct presentation of the family denies the possibility of true unity. The portrait of Carmody domestic life does not contain mutually supportive subjects but a single central figure whose selfless giving is not reciprocated by the taking family members who surround her. When the domestic situation becomes unbearable for Bill Carmody, he does not attempt to cope with or resolve it; but instead, like other O'Neill male characters, he escapes this milieu by entering a bar. After he first learns of the severity and expense of Eileen's illness, he scurries from his home:

CARMODY. (seeing his chance--hastily) You'll be stayin' a while now, Fred? I'll take a walk down the road. I'm needin' a drink to clear my wits. (He goes to the door in rear.)

EILEEN. (reproachfully) You won't be long, Father? And please don't--you know.

CARMODY. (exasperated) Sure who wouldn't get drunk with all the sorrow of the world piled on him? . . . (Act I, Scene i, p. 345)

He follows a similar pattern later when Eileen's need for her family is greatest--when he, her brothers, and her sisters could possibly instill in her the will to live. Sensing during his final visit to the sanatorium that there is something other than tuberculosis that is laying her low but unable to fathom exactly what it is, Bill Carmody responds to his daughter's plight in typical fashion. After he flees her bedside, he growls threateningly and warns Mrs. Brennan, "And I'll

¹⁹ The Plays of Eugene O'Neill (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1965), p. 145.

get drunk this night--dead, rotten drunk! . . . I'll get drunk if my soul roasts for it--and no one in the whole world is strong enough to stop me!" (Act II, p. 400). His Lethean waters, liquor provides Carmody with a temporary respite from family responsibility and turmoil.

Eileen needs her family's support most after Stephen Murray's tuberculosis is arrested; and he leaves the sanatorium and her, heartbroken, behind. It is he, the writer she meets at Hill Farm, selflessly aids, and comes to love, who sees beyond her role of surrogate mother to a specific family and ascribes to her maternity cosmic significance:

EILEEN. (with the same superior tone) . . . You don't know how children grow to depend on you for everything. You're not a woman.

MURRAY. (with a grin) Are you? (Then with a chuckle) You're as old as the pyramids, aren't you? I feel like a little boy. Won't you adopt me, too? (Act I, Scene ii, p. 360)

She is an Earth Mother who resembles Demeter, Persephone, and the Virgin Mary. As such a being, she is a forerunner of Josie Hogan in A Moon for the Misbegotten (1943), Cybel in Brown, Fat Violet in Journey, the lucid Mary Tyrone in Journey, and other O'Neill women who grant men surcease and maternal understanding and forgiveness.²⁰

²⁰ In O'Neill's canon female corpulence is associated with beneficent maternity. Eileen makes statements to Fred and Stephen that link her generally with characters in this tradition and specifically with Mary Tyrone. In Act I, Scene i, p. 346, she tells Fred that she will "do exactly what they [the doctors and nurses at the sanatorium] tell me, and in a few months I'll be back so fat and healthy you won't know me." In Act III, p. 411, she tells Stephen, "I'm happy for once in my life. I'll surprise you, Stephen, the way I'll pick up and grow fat and healthy. You won't know me in a month. How can you ever love such a skinny homeless [emphasis added] thing as I am now! . . ." In Journey James Tyrone remarks several times that Mary, recently released from a sanatorium, is fat and beautiful. While Eileen's and Mary's corpulence is literally related to sanatorium cures, their desire for or actual attainment of fatness connects them nonetheless with O'Neill's overweight earth mothers.

It is the masked Stephen who provides another perspective of the family. Like Yank in Ape, he makes an unconvincing disclaimer of family feeling.²¹ When Eileen expresses surprise that his family never prodded him into becoming a fiction writer and leaving his job as a reporter, Stephen assumes a cynical air of detachment and then suggests that the family as an institution is largely ineffectual and meaningless: "A family wouldn't have changed things. From what I've seen that blood-thicker-than-water dope is all wrong. It's thinner than table-d'hote soup. You may have seen a bit of that truth in your own case already" (Act I, Scene ii, p. 359). While his bitter remarks accurately describe Eileen's fate at the hands of her family and reflect his youthful faith that the future is the present, they do not correctly assess his own family experiences.²² Instead, they reveal that he feels betrayed by his parents, by his mother who died when he was a child and by his father who died when he was at the threshold of manhood. Forsaken by them through their deaths, he protects himself by concealing from himself and others the pain and extent of his loss. Out of fear, he flees from further family attachment. If he avoids such entanglement, loss of family can never to a source of suffering again.

²¹ In Plays, III, Scene i, p. 211, Yank identifies his ship as home and his comrades as family. His supersensitivity about his literal home and family and the bravado with which he recounts both his rebellion against parental authority and his escape from the domestic environment suggest that he is deceiving himself about a lack of family feeling. He clamors too much to be convincing. However, unlike the cerebral Stephen, he is unable to think; and he does not retract his negative statements about the family.

²² As Robert C. Lee states in "The Lonely Dream," Modern Drama, 9 (1966), 131, Stephen Murray has not yet learned what other O'Neill characters know, that the past is the present and the future as well.

The deeds of his two sisters give the lie to Stephen's negative generalizations. Ironically, he who expresses disdain for the family and hatred for children receives unsolicited, willing support from his sisters, both of whom have their own families, while selfless Eileen receives from her family reluctant aid that is eventually withdrawn. When his remarks elicit Eileen's shock and resentment, he hastily removes his metaphorical mask and disavows his dark sentiments. He admits, "I was only talking. I'm like that. You mustn't take it seriously" (Act I, Scene ii, p. 360). His reported visits to his sisters' homes after he leaves Hill Farm attest to the truth of his confession.

One of the nurses at the sanatorium, Miss Gilpin expresses the third view of the family. Conversing with Stephen, who returns to Hill Farm for a physical examination, the nurse delineates the potentiality of the family. Like Eileen, she has suffered because of unrequited love; but unlike the young patient, she had, she tells him, buffers between her and possibly engulfing despair:

I know how Eileen suffers, Mr. Murray. Once--a long time ago--I suffered as she is suffering--from the same mistake. But I had resources to fall back upon that Eileen hasn't got--a family who loved me and understood--friends--so I pulled through. But it spoiled my life for a long time. (Looking at him again and forcing a smile). So I feel that perhaps I have a right to speak for Eileen who has no one else. (Act II, pp. 408-09)

Mutually supportive, Miss Gilpin's family is the ideal that is ever yearned for but is rarely attained. In O'Neill's canon this kind of harmonious, sustaining family is depicted directly only once, in Ah, Wilderness! (1932).

The consequence of Miss Gilpin's conversation with Stephen is the establishment of a new family covenant. The nurse's request that he

pretend to love the failing Eileen is followed by his casting off his egotism, his discovering that he truly loves the dying young woman, his grasping at the hopeless love that she will recover, and his persuading her to marry him immediately by appealing to her maternal instincts.²³

After he convinces her that his tuberculosis has recurred--a lie Miss Gilpin substantiates--and that he needs her to care for him, Stephen, a man without parents, and Eileen, a woman without family, vow to wed.

Her acceptance of the role of wife-mother is in effect an affirmation of family values and evidence of man's ceaseless quest for the unity that may be his in the domestic environment. Their intention to marry, Miss Gilpin's description of the possibility of domestic life, and Stephen's recantation of his harsh criticism of the family as an institution succeed in overriding to some extent the negative view of the family conveyed through the Carmodys. By virtue of its direct presentation, the Carmody domestic experience remains, however, more vivid and more deeply felt by the play's audience.

When Stephen asks Miss Gilpin, "Oh, why did you give me a hopeless hope?" (Act III, p. 415), her sad, tenderly compassionate response indicates the extensive nature of this hope: "Isn't all life just that--when you think of it? (Her face lighting up with a consoling

²³ In his Eugene O'Neill, trans. Helen Sebba (New York: Ungar, 1971), p. 27, Horst Frenz asserts that Stephen's discovery of his love for Eileen is unconvincing. I disagree with Frenz. While it is sudden, his recognition of love is not unexpected. A narcissist, Stephen has not analyzed his feelings for anyone but himself until Miss Gilpin talks with him. Also, the possibility exists that he believes he loves Eileen because he wants to believe he does. His love may be just a pipe dream, a straw, a life-sustaining deception; but it is real to him nonetheless when he proclaims it.

revelation) But there must be something back of it--some promise of fulfillment--somehow--somewhere--in the spirit of hope itself? (Act III, p. 415). The hopeless hope, then, goes beyond the issue of Eileen's survival. It applies to man's need to believe that the ideal mutually supportive family is attainable. Indeed, it encompasses all. It attests, as Bogard suggests, to man's desire for faith in anything that will help him survive life's horrors.²⁴

The selfless giving that characterizes Eileen Carmody's relations with her family and with Stephen Murray also typifies both Alice Royston's relations with her writer/poseur husband in Servitude and Nora Melody's with her innkeeper/poseur husband in Touch. Alice and Nora are cut from the same cloth; each believes that the secret to marital happiness is glorious, willing servitude. When Alice expresses her life-garnered philosophy, she insists, "I do not boast of my strength, only of the strength of my love . . . Not even he [her husband David] ever saw it in all these eleven years . . . Love means servitude; and my love is my happiness" (Act III, p. 270). When Nora explains her concept of love to her daughter Sara, she articulates a similar stance:

I've pride in my love for him [her husband Con]!
I've loved him since the day I set eyes on him, and I'll
love him till the day I die!

With a strange superior scorn.

It's little you know of love, and you never will, for there's the same divil of pride in you that's in him, and it'll kape you from ivir givin' all of yourself, and that's what love is. . . . Faix, it proves how little of love you know when you prate about if's and want-to's in the world! It's when, if all the fires of hell was between you, you'd walk in them gladly to be with him, and sing with joy at your own burnin', if only his kiss was on your mouth! That's love, and I'm proud I've known the great sorrow and joy of

²⁴ Bogard, p. 114.

it! . . . There's no slavery in it when you love! . . . For the love of God, don't take the pride of my love from me, Sara, for without it, what am I at all but an ugly, fat woman gettin' old and sick [emphasis added]! (Act I, pp. 25-26)

Although the protagonist of Straw desires happiness as much as Alice and Nora, her purely selfless love generally brings her misery. Both selfless and selfish, their love, however, means their happiness. To numb themselves from the pain inherent in life, Alice and Nora have adopted an ideal of love that includes acceptance of all. Since they are so tolerant, their happiness cannot be threatened or disrupted by the mutability of individuals or entities outside themselves. The act of loving alone ensures their constant happiness and gives their lives purpose.

Like Patient Griselda, Alice and Nora have married men of higher social rank. Morally superior to their husbands but self-deprecating, nonetheless, they suffer all manner of indignity as consequences of their love for unappreciative men who neglect and feel contempt for them. The willingness of both women to endure such treatment also seems to stem from feelings of guilt for what they believe marriage to them cost their egotistical husbands and from pride-shame for having loved their men too well before marriage. Only after their husbands are transformed, David Roylston through enlightenment and Con Melody through the assumption of a new pose, do these men value their wives.

In Servitude Alice Roylston reveals her marital stance when, believing her husband loves another woman, she selflessly prepares to relinquish him and their children to ensure what she believes is his happiness. The chain of events that leads to this surrender of all she loves is initiated by the visit of Mrs. Frazer, a converted "new woman," to the Roylston home while Alice and the children are away and David

Roylston is there alone.²⁵ Mrs. Frazer seeks assurance and self-justification from David, whose Ibsenesque works have prompted her, in the tradition of Nora Helmer, to abandon her husband and home and to assert her selfhood.²⁶

Like Emma Crosby in Diff'rent, whose reading of cheap novels contributes to her imposition of an unrealistic standard of chastity upon her fiancé Caleb, Mrs. Frazer allows herself to be guided by novels and plays to which she has been exposed. And like the lives of characters such as Emma, Mrs. Keeney in Ile (1916-17), Christine Mannon in Mourning, Elsa Loving in Days, and Mary Tyrone in Journey, Mrs. Frazer's life reveals the destructive power of the romantic ideal. Not only do ideals discerned from literature influence her most recent decision to alter her life, but they also led her to marry seven years earlier. In language that anticipates both Touch and Mansions, she tells David Roylston why Mr. Frazer attracted her:

. . . He was then, and still is, a broker on the New York Stock Exchange. He fascinated me. I seemed to see personified in him

²⁵ In Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1958), p. 15, Doris Falk cites Ibsen's A Doll's House and Strindberg's Married as probable influences on O'Neill's first full-length play Servitude. In "Ibsen and O'Neill: A Study in Influence," Scandinavian Studies, 37 (1965), 218-19, Egil Törnqvist responds to Falk's assertion; he says that the parallels between A Doll's House and O'Neill's plays are only superficial and supports his contention by drawing attention to the plays' dissimilar resolutions. Similarities between A Doll's House and Servitude are also discussed in Drew B. Palette's "O'Neill and the Comic Spirit," Modern Drama, 3 (1960), 274, and in Bogard, p. 32.

²⁶ Mrs. Frazer resembles Lucy in Now I Ask You. Lucy falls victim to Ibsenism, Freudianism, and other isms in their shallower aspects. Although "new women" appear in nineteenth-century American literature, these characters are not generally related to larger themes as in O'Neill's plays. In James A. Herne's Shore Acres, for example, the actions of Helen Berry have at most limited significance. In Servitude and Now I Ask You O'Neill uses the "new woman" in an exposé of romantic ideals.

all I had read [emphasis added] about the (Sarcastically) financial giants, the daring gamblers who fought their battles to the bitter end of ruin. The house he was connected with is one of the largest on the Exchange and some of the so-called Napoleons of finance, whose names were forever in newspaper headlines, did their business through it. I thought of him doing his part in their gigantic enterprises, laboring to effect ever larger combinations in order that this glorious country might thrive and become ever greater and more productive (With a short laugh) You can see what a child I was; . . . (Act I, p. 235)

Mrs. Frazer's marriage lasts until she becomes disillusioned with her husband. Then, like Con Melody in Touch, who discards one illusion and quickly grasps another, she falls in love with another ideal, "the ideal of self-realization, of the duty of the individual to assert its supremacy and demand the freedom necessary for its development" (Act I, p. 238). Her need to escape "the stifling environment of married life" and to pursue individualism reveals that illusion has completely taken over her life. David Roylston's observation that she is the incarnation of Mrs. Harding, a character in his play Sacrifice, and her admission that she has seen the play ten times and has made it her gospel attest to her subordination of reality. The ruin such idealism brings in its wake is subsequently implied through Mr. Frazer's disclosure of a nervous breakdown following his wife's desertion and through Alice Roylston's threat to dissolve her marriage when appearances suggest an adulterous relationship between Mrs. Frazer and David.²⁷

²⁷ As Sophus Keith Winther indicates in his Eugene O'Neill: A Critical Study, 2nd enl. ed. (1934; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), p. 17, the basis of what may be termed an "affirmative philosophy" in O'Neill's early and middle plays is their leaning toward acceptance of reality and rejection of romantic illusion. Although the late plays neither denounce nor advocate either stance toward life, treating both the propensities for reality and for illusion objectively, they do indicate that man desperately needs illusions to exist even in a "Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller" (Plays, III, Iceman, Act I, p. 587).

Peering through the haze of illusion, Mrs. Frazer finds David Royston all she imagined him to be, although he clearly reveals his selfishness, indifference to his family, and lack of esteem for his wife. She does not perceive that he hides what Törnqvist calls "an ugly egotism behind his 'mask' of superman, creator and maker of new values" until she witnesses his denial of his wife's selfhood.²⁸

Implicated by her hat, which functions as does the fan of Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windemere*, and judged guilty by virtue of her presence overnight in the Royston house, Mrs. Frazer is assumed by David's valet Benton--a malicious, imprudent gossip who suggests similarly disposed townspeople in Mourning and neighboring farmers in Desire--to be his employer's mistress. The valet's conclusion immediately precedes a similar inference by Alice, who resigns herself to her lot as a discarded wife. She tells her "rival":

If he no longer loves me it's because I allowed him to make too great a sacrifice. His father cut him off and never spoke to him again. The old gentleman was kind enough generally but he had great plans for his only son, David, and I spoiled them all. He died soon afterward--of grief over our marriage, they say. I've always thought that perhaps in his heart David has never forgiven me for--killing his father. (Act II, p. 266)

Feeling as she does about her husband's rebellion against parental authority and its consequences, Alice interprets David's "infidelity" as Nemesis' punishment for her sin of marrying him. The willingly submissive wife in a patriarchal household, she fails to give proper weight to the sacrifices she herself has made: during the years before he became a successful writer, she supported her husband, typed his

²⁸ See A Drama of Souls, p. 120.

manuscripts at night after working all day, and maintained their apartment.

Although David--representative of the patriarchal value of thought, love's enemy--has become disinterested in her and their children, she--love's standard-bearer--feels no need to assert her rights as an individual as Mrs. Frazer--married to a loving, attentive husband--does. Even though it is not reciprocated, Alice's love for her husband satisfies her need for happiness. And her willingness to sacrifice, to relinquish him to another because her love is so great, demonstrates that she is the stronger of the two women.

Through the nonthinker Alice Roylston, Mrs. Frazer is exposed to an ideal of selflessness that prompts her to forsake her quest for selfhood. She then attacks David, who reacts to Alice's suspicions not by reassuring his wife but by castigating himself for believing she had faith in him and by lamenting in Melvillean phrases the disparity between illusion and reality. Naming him "Mr. Narcissus," the new proselyte to self-surrender topples him from the pedestal upon which she and other admirers had placed him and reduces him to "merely an egotist whose hands are bloody with the human sacrifices he has made--to himself!" (Act III, p. 281). Under siege, he, whose egocentricity, like Stephen Murray's in Straw, has prevented him from loving anyone except himself, experiences a moment of recognition:

I see, I see ! Poor Alice! What a woman she is! And I--good heavens! You threatened to open my eyes--I've lived with her all these years and forgotten how much I owed to her. She has protected and shielded me from everything--made my opportunity for me, you might say--and I took it all for granted--the finest thing in my life! Took it all for granted without a thought of gratitude, as my due. Lord, what a cad I've been! What a rotten cad! (Act III, p. 293)

He also realizes that he and his children are strangers. And with the exception of Edward Bigelow's efforts to be an attentive, loving father in First Man, David's resolution to know his children is unparalleled in O'Neill's canon. Dion Anthony in Brown is a more typical father. A stranger to his parents, he never attempts to know his own sons; this recurrent pattern implies the subtle working of family fate.

As a result of Mrs. Frazer's instruction, David learns the key to marital happiness: "Servitude in love, love in servitude! Logos in Pan, Pan in Logos!" (Act III, p. 294). He discerns that true unity in marriage is achieved by the spontaneous merging of opposites. This union of thought, linked here with Nietzschean individualism, and feeling, associated with self-surrender, is accomplished, Bogard states, through "an ultimate act of will which is itself a denial of will." In Servitude happiness is found, the critic continues, in each marital partner's unthinking acceptance of the other, an act that shatters separateness and results in "a 'Dionysian' ecstasy of belonging."²⁹

An egoist-reforming confidante like Miss Gilpin in Straw, Mrs. Frazer completes her task immediately before her husband arrives and they reaffirm their marital bond. She discontinues her flight from the love and faith that have haunted her as they hound the speaker in Francis Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven."³⁰ In view of Mrs. Frazer's

²⁹ See pp. 33-34. Bogard traces the phrases "Pan in Logos" and "Logos in Pan" to Part Two, Act III, of Ibsen's Emperor and Galilean, wherein logos refers to the Christian view of life and Pan to the "Dionysian commitments of Emperor Julian." Adding that O'Neill's interpretation of the terms is different from Ibsen's, O'Neill's concept of Pan stemming from Nietzsche, Bogard says that the writer of Servitude rejects Nietzsche's Apollonian tenets while at the same time he accepts the Dionysian ones.

³⁰ See Doris Alexander, "Eugene O'Neill, 'The Hound of Heaven,' and the 'Hell Hole,'" Modern Language Quarterly, 20 (1959), 307.

independent, energetic nature, Falk doubts the permanence of her conversion to Alice Royston's teachings.³¹ Also, the speed with which Mrs. Frazer changes roles makes any new orientation toward life on her part suspect. However, as David Royston notices, she has always given priority to family relationships. And so her return to this stance is hardly a new perspective of life. As a matter of fact, the inner conflict that prompts her to visit David results from the opposite pulls of family commitment and self-commitment. Alice's philosophy simply supports, clarifies, and enhances the course Mrs. Frazer originally felt was proper but, influenced by David's writings, thought was improper.

A suggestive visual image near the end of Servitude reinforces what the words and deeds of the Roystons and the Frazers reveal about marriage. Like the cross in Welded (1922-23) and Days, this image intimates that marriage is a sacrament, a matter of unthinking faith, and that love is holy. Mrs. Frazer eagerly kneels beside her husband and reavows her love for him. Soon thereafter David behaves in similar fashion. "Kneeling down beside her [Alice] and putting his arms around her" (Act III, p. 302), he repents while genuflecting beside the chair upon which his wife-mother sits. Using words that might be appropriate for an enlightened Con Melody, he repudiates his dark self, the aspect of his being objectified in his double Benton, and pleads "for pardon,

³¹ Falk, pp. 17-18.

pardon for a lifetime of selfish neglect, of vain posing, of stupid conceit" (Act III, p. 302).³²

Servitude is an unusual play in the dramatist's corpus because in it polarities are reconciled and the promise of marriage is fulfilled. Here characters may find belonging in wedlock if they love enough to relinquish their selves in a union untainted by thought. In Welded marriage is neither the heaven that Servitude implies it can be nor the hell that Before Breakfast (1916), Horizon, Chillun, and other plays indicate. Instead, marriage alternates forever between love and hate, between periods of belonging and those of disjuncture. But in the late play Touch O'Neill's treatment of married love comes full circle. Through the figure of Nora Melody, the nature of satisfying love between the sexes is once more defined as love in servitude and servitude in love. Extended happiness in the family milieu is once more made possible through self-surrender. Not only does Nora's love secure her own happiness; it is also the only source of belonging for her husband Con, whose aristocratic pretensions and pride isolate him from family and acquaintances. Unlike David Roylston, he fails to become enlightened. Self-surrender in Touch remains unilateral. Nora's philosophy of love does, however, find a convert, her daughter Sara.

Touch is the only play in O'Neill's projected multi-play cycle A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed that the dramatist completed to his

³² That Benton is his master's alter ego is suggested by David's comment: "When I outgrew a governess they gave me Benton. I thought it was a change for the better but it wasn't. I have never been able to outgrow him. He won't let me. . . ." (Act III, p. 278). David's dichotomization into two selves, one of them the masked writer and the other objectified in the evil valet Benton, is less obvious than the doubling in Abortion.

satisfaction and authorized for publication.³³ Although part of a larger whole, Touch has a beginning, middle, and end and is complete in itself. As the other plays were to do, it concentrates on the ultimate lot of one member of the Harford family and also carries on the story of the collective family.³⁴ As O'Neill conceived the cycle, its expanse was so broad that Lawrence Langner, a founder of the Theatre Guild, contends that "Galsworthy's The Forsythe Saga seemed like child's play in comparison as 'Gene traced the effect of the grandparents on the children and their grandchildren, reminding me of the Biblical prophecies as to the sins of the parents being visited upon their children."³⁵ O'Neill himself was equally awed by the scope of his endeavor. In a letter to Langner dated August 12, 1936, he claims that he would recommend writing a cycle--at this time he envisioned a five-play series--only to someone he hated and adds that, compared to a

³³ Confusion surrounds the cycle. As Lawrence Langner indicates in The Magic Curtain (New York: Dutton, 1951), p. 286, O'Neill was very secretive about the plays: "We were not to expect the first of them until the last was completed because he would be making changes in them until the very last one was done." Because the playwright frequently altered the names of individual plays and of the overall cycle, added more plays, and moved already planned or written ones around, critics have been unable to agree on the definitive arrangement and number of plays comprising the series. Some contend that the cycle was to consist of nine plays; others, eleven.

Critics who believe O'Neill envisioned a nine-play cycle include John J. Fitzgerald, "The Bitter Harvest of O'Neill's Projected Cycle," New England Quarterly, 40 (1967), 364-74; Raleigh, p. 35; and Karl-Ragnar Gierow, "Eugene O'Neill's Posthumous Plays," World Theatre, 7 (1958), 46-52. Those who say the playwright planned an eleven-play cycle include Arthur and Barbara Gelb, O'Neill, enl. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 839; Jordan Y. Miller, "Myth and the American Dream: O'Neill to Albee," Modern Drama, 7 (1964), 190; and Frederick I. Carpenter, Eugene O'Neill (New York: Twayne, 1964), pp. 137-38.

³⁴ Eugene O'Neill's declaration of purpose is stated in Bogard, p. 375.

³⁵ Langner, p. 286.

writer attempting such a task, a woman giving birth to quintuplets "is having a debonair, carefree time of it."³⁶ While love, linked with Nora and Sara Melody, is a major theme in Touch, the overall cycle is, O'Neill writes in this letter, chiefly the chronicle of an American family:

I hope you yourself don't believe the Cycle is 'an American life' in any usual sense of the word, or you're going to be disappointed. I mean, I'm not giving a damn whether the dramatic event of each play has any significance in the growth of the country or not, as long as it is significant in the spiritual and psychological history of the American family in the plays. The Cycle is primarily just that, the history of a family. What larger significance I can give my people as extraordinary examples and symbols in the drama of American possessiveness and materialism is something else again. But I don't want anyone to get the idea that this Cycle is much concerned with what is usually understood by American history, for it isn't. As for economic history--which so many seem to mistake for the only history just now--I am not much interested in economic determinism, but only in the self-determinism of which the economic is one phase, and by no means the most revealing--at least, not to me.³⁷

Twelve years later O'Neill revised this statement. In 1948 he admitted that the cycle's characters were supposed to be more emblematic than he had earlier suggested: the evolution of the Harford family was meant to coincide with historical process.³⁸ And he further divulged that, as an exposé of the American dream--perverted by pride, materialism, and

³⁶ Quoted in Langner, p. 287.

³⁷ Quoted in Langner, p. 286.

³⁸ On pp. 139-40 Carpenter says the cycle failed because O'Neill depicted American idealism as thoroughly romantic and thus false but based the cycle upon nineteenth-century history, a period during which historic American idealists fervently supported the American Dream. In "The Tragic Sense--III," The New Yorker, 13 March 1948, p. 40, Hamilton Basso says O'Neill discontinued work on the cycle in mid-1939 but never completely forsook the project and planned to resume work on it at some later time. According to Basso, in 1939 O'Neill destroyed three complete plays, three that were almost finished, and two on which he had done a great deal of work.

unprincipled ambition--the cycle was conceived as a response to a specific question: "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"³⁹

Touch begins and ends on July 27, 1828, the anniversary of the battle of Talavera. Sara Melody, an Irish immigrant of lowly origins, is nursing Simon Harford, a Yankee aristocrat, in her father's inn, which is located on the outskirts of Boston. She and her mother Nora are principally responsible for the maintenance of the nearly bankrupt establishment. The genteel pretensions of Con Melody, the titular head of the household, preclude his active participation in any facet of the inn's upkeep. He spends much of his time in the bar, where he imbibes with hangers-on who sponge drinks. On this particular day he dons the scarlet uniform he wore during his tenure in the British army and prepares to celebrate the anniversary of the battle that culminated in his most glorious moment, the Duke of Wellington's commendation of him for bravery. Retaining his illusions about his past and present status as a gentleman, he, the son of a peasant, yields them only after he is humiliated as Simon's mother Deborah gazes on. The process of Con's abasement begins when Simon's father Henry Harford offers through an emissary money to Sara in exchange for her release of any claims upon his son. Outraged, Con goes to the Harford mansion, where a brawl ensues between him and the Harford servants. After his involvement in this fracas and his brief confinement in the local jail, he finds his former self-image untenable. Patiently sustaining his new illusion as

³⁹ In Matthew xvi.26, Jesus asks his disciples, "For what will it profit a man, if he gains the world and forfeits his life? Life here is not just physical existence but higher spiritual life as well. Peter's unwillingness for Jesus to suffer and die evokes the question.

she had his past one, the ironically named Nora accepts the peasant persona that supplants the genteel Major. The consummation of her love for Simon and her mother's transfiguration through total, abiding love produce in Sara an orientation toward love and life that resembles Nora's.

As a history play Touch presents the acculturation and assimilation of Irish-Catholic immigrants into the ranks of the host Yankee-Puritan culture. Suspended between the Old World (represented by her father Con) and the New World (associated with the Harfords), Sara is the means for merging the two cultures and the two worlds. Her union with Simon signifies the creation of a new group, the Anglo-Irish, through the infusion of fresh, vital Irish blood into the sterile, depleted veins of the Puritan New Englanders.⁴⁰ Also, it signals the intensification of the poetic and materialistic strains, already extant in the Harford line, through marriage with the Melodys. The figure of Con reveals that this Irish family is given to dreaming. Deborah's alignment of Sara with the Medusa-like Harford spinsters, Con's boasts about his swindler father, and the young Irishwoman's unabashed desire for wealth indicate that greed too characterizes this immigrant family.

That Sara will not find happiness in marriage to a Harford and that like their forebears the progeny of Simon and Sara will be fated to become greedy men with perverted dreams is predicted in Touch by Deborah. Revealing the malice she usually manages to hide behind a mask of detached amusement, she relates the Harford family history to Sara. Deborah's motive for the disclosures is a selfish one. Wishing to retain her influence over her son, she hopes that Sara will be

⁴⁰ See Raleigh, p. 59.

frightened and will relinquish him. But as Deborah quickly perceives, Sara's pride and ruthlessness rival the Harfords'. The possession of these qualities by the future mother of Simon's children suggests that these traits as well will be amplified through a Melody-Harford alliance.

As domestic drama Touch presents the typical O'Neill family, an isolated, insulated nuclear one. The rural setting of their inn-residence plus the absence of stagecoach traffic and the general infrequency of travelers along the nearby road contribute to the Melodys' separation from larger society and to the intensity and inwardness of their family relations. The lack of travelers and the consequently meager patronage of the inn also increase the precariousness of the family's financial situation. Other factors effecting the Melodys' isolation include Sara's and Nora's long hours of drudgery, which limit any socializing in which they might engage; Nora's refusal of the solace of church-related society; and Con's aristocratic pretensions, which offend not only the Yankee gentry but the Irish "scum" as well. His estrangement from the local aristocracy stems from their refusal to acknowledge his gentility and from his scorn for their puritanical obsession with sin; their perspective of life is anathema to him. Animosity between him and his fellow Irishmen is the result of his belief in his superiority to them. His lack of insight into his actual situation in America manifests itself in his support of John Quincy Adams, the candidate of the upper classes in the upcoming presidential election, and his denigration of Andrew Jackson, candidate of the common man. Con's political statements and leanings evince, Ima H. Herron

says, O'Neill's tendency to link family relationships with social history.⁴¹

In this play the family is each member's staunchest ally and his harshest foe. While Nora accepts and sustains Con's illusions, Sara attempts to explode them. As Arthur and Barbara Gelb assert, Nora as protector of a marital partner's dreams resembles James Tyrone in Journey, who guards his wife's dope dreams; Sara is like Jamie Tyrone, who baits and sneers at his father; and Nora is also similar to Mary Tyrone, who attempts to be the peacemaker between father and child.⁴²

Although Sara always tries to win a better lot in life for her mother, as a rule Nora allies herself with her husband when she is unable to effect a truce between Con and their daughter and she is forced to relinquish her neutrality. Thus, she acknowledges the supremacy, in her view, of the marriage bond over the blood bond between mother and child. Although Con makes few positive contributions to the family's welfare, Nora considers his word ultimate law simply by virtue of his role as the family's nominal head. Even Sara, independent and strong-willed, grudgingly concedes his final authority.

The patriarchal orientation of the Melody family does not prevent the strife that drives Con, as it does Bill Carmody in Straw, from the domestic milieu into the bar--the world in which men can forget their families, articulate unchallenged illusions, and imbibe liquor. Manifested in Sara's constant rebellion against her father and her taunting of him, conflict between the generations erupts, although Con terrifies his daughter when he is enraged. As in Journey animosity

⁴¹ The Small Town in American Drama (Dallas: Southern Methodist Univ. Press, 1969), p. 325.

⁴² Gelb and Gelb, p. 800.

toward a family member surfaces here in unilateral accusations and in mutual recriminations, both followed usually by quick retractions and, in Con's case, by transference of blame for the verbal onslaught from himself to "the liquor talking."

The Melody family adheres for the most part to O'Neill's usual formula. The terrible, sexual father, Con possesses traits associated with lower patriarchy--avarice, pride, lust, and authoritarianism. The mother is linked with self-sacrificing, pliant love. Here, however, there is a slight divergence from the normal pattern; for Nora's love is as selfish as it is selfless. The product of vastly dissimilar parents, the child is tortured by conflicting impulses.

Unlike Deborah and Sara, who are associated, Bogard claims, in the overall cycle with Strindbergian female domination and destruction of the male, Nora is always connected with constancy and sustenance.⁴³ As a matter of fact, the configuration of females suggests the division of woman into the asexual good mother Nora; the sexual terrible mother Deborah, who momentarily succumbs to Con's physicality and exerts inordinate influence over her son; and the Kore Sara.

Loved and respected by all who know her, Nora elicits such response because she is humble, wise, and caring. Although she endures years of drudgery that ruin her body and suffers her husband's disaffection, she never becomes a pathetic creature, is never beaten, and always retains a quiet dignity. While she is aware of Con's and Sara's faults, she allows no assault upon their characters. Defiant and rebellious when either is harshly criticized, she epitomizes family loyalty. Indeed, as Mickey Maloy's assessment of her character suggests, Nora is the ideal

⁴³ Bogard, p. 382.

wife-mother.⁴⁴ Finding her alone, awaiting Con's return from the Harford estate, the bartender expresses resentful surprise because Sara does not join the vigil. To shield her daughter, Nora lies, thus reflecting the lengths to which she will go for her family's sake. Maloy's consequent yearning for such fierce protectiveness and warmth suggests her larger symbolic role:

NORA

Stiffens defensively.

I made her go to bed. She was droppin' with tiredness and destroyed with worry. She must have fallen asleep, like the young can. None of your talk against Sara, now!

MALOY

Starts an exasperated retort.

The divil take--

He stops and grins at her with affection.

There's no batin' you, Nora. Sure, it'd be the joy av me life to have a mother like you to fight for me--or, better still, a wife like you.

NORA

A sweet smile of pleased coquetry lights up her drawn face.

Arrah, save your blarney for the young girls!

MALOY

The divil take young girls. You're worth a hundred av thim.
(Act IV, pp. 135-36)

To Nora, her love for Con is essentially spiritual and timeless; but to him, and to Simon in Mansions, love is primarily sexual and transitory. As the symbolic bird cage in Warnings suggests, sexual love and consequent marriage are generally traps in O'Neill's canon. When on one occasion Sara's visible contempt for her father prompts his usual vindictive response, Con reveals not only that he commiserates with Simon but also that he has negative feelings about his marriage to Nora.

⁴⁴ On p. 169 Falk says that Nora's mooning over Con is pitiable and nauseating. The critic fails to acknowledge that Nora's capacity for spirited behavior and her nobility preclude such a negative reaction.

He tells Sara, "Don't let me detain you, my dear. Take his milk to our Yankee guest, as your mother suggests. Don't miss any chance to play the ministering angel. . . Faith, the poor young devil hasn't a chance to escape with you two scheming peasants laying snares to trap him!" (Act II, p. 60). Sexual love initially bound Con to Nora. But after his ardor waned, hatred and guilt took its place. Although her humble social status did not prevent their marriage in the past, Con, no longer enthralled, finds her present sloven appearance and her brogue threats because they reflect reality and deny his supposedly genteel origins. To retain his illusions, he must insist at all costs on the truth in the present of what he perceives as his aristocratic past. Until he adopts a pose that allows him to reassess Nora, momentary contrition alone stimulates his fleeting admissions of affection for her.

Nora, however, consistently loves Con. Since she must have something in which to believe, she grounds her hope in a dream of transcendent, all-accepting love. It becomes her life-sustaining illusion, the equivalent of liquor and dope in O'Neill's corpus. But as she divulges when her love passes its greatest test, the lure of Catholicism, her dream is not purely selfless. Primarily, she gives Con love for her own sake:

He'd feel I'd betrayed him by attending mass or confession and my word and my love for him--and for all his scorn, he knows my love is all he has in the world to comfort him. Then spiritedly, with a proud toss of her head. And it's my honor, too! It's not for his sake at all! Divil mend him, he always prates as if he had all the honor there is, but I've mine, too, as proud as his. (Act IV, p. 139)

Not only does her love for him constitute her pride; it is her reason for being and her sole source of happiness. As Rolf Scheibler says, her joy depends on her ability to subordinate or deny her own desires and to

exist only for her husband.⁴⁵ Con's worthiness of such sacrifice is an unimportant issue. He is a vehicle through which she attains her goal. When through her physical union with Simon, Sara briefly and mystically loses her self in love, she grasps at last the selfish-selfless nature of the love Nora espouses. As her mother has intuitively known for years, Sara learns that it is "love's slaves we are, Mother, not men's" (Act IV, p. 150).

While Nora's love ennobles her and allows her to achieve harmony both in the domestic sphere and with a world she cannot change, her constant turning of the other cheek, her tolerance, and her loyalty irritate Con, whose only experiences of integration have occurred when he was away from his wife and child. He recoils from her magnanimity. Unable to cope with her moral superiority, he retaliates by accusing her of encouraging his excesses purposely. Like Hickey in Iceman, he sees the diabolical in the saintly acts of his wife. Ironically, Con's reproaches turn on him because Nora's apologies and explanations inevitably elicit his guilt and recantation.

Hounded by his wife Evelyn's goodness, forgiveness, and abiding love, Hickey assuages his guilt only by killing her, his mute conscience. Sporadically, Con feels remorse because his demand for the life style and trappings of aristocracy, his poor business sense, and his indolence have prematurely aged Nora and embittered Sara. But the sorrow he feels for any hardship he causes them is transient. When Con "kills" the Major and replaces him with the peasant, a substitution that

⁴⁵ The Late Plays of Eugene O'Neill (Bern: Francke, 1970), pp. 48-49.

attests to his inability to integrate these opposing aspects of his being, the change is stimulated in no way by his concern for family.

A brawl before the Harford home, witnessed by Deborah, initiates the Major's destruction. And as in The Emperor Jones (1920) the demise of an aristocratic persona is objectified through the torn and soiled raiment of the formerly resplendent poseur. When, corpselike, Con returns from the Harford estate, his sardonic, mocking praise of his valor calls attention to the disparity between the fracas and the battle of Talavera but implies a similarity of response to both:

Bravely done, Major Melody! The Commander of the Forces honors your exceptional gallantry! Like the glorious field of Talavera! Like the charge on the French square! Cursing like a drunken, foul-mouthed son of a thieving shebeen keeper who sprang from the filth of a peasant hovel, with pigs on the floor--with that pale Yankee bitch watching from a window, sneering with disgust! (Act IV, p. 157)

Scheibler claims that Con finds temporary happiness and harmony during the mayhem and, attributing these to the peasant in him, he renounces his former persona.⁴⁶ But the major reason for his abandonment of the genteel pose is his image-shattering perception of himself through a reflecting surface other than his illusion-sustaining mirror. He sees himself through the eyes of Deborah Harford, a true aristocrat. The powerful effect of this small, fragile recluse upon Major Cornelius Melody exemplifies a frequent theme in O'Neill's plays: the erstwhile strong are destroyed by the weak.

The self-appointed savior, Sara repeatedly pleads with her father to awaken from his lies and dreams and face the truth. But her proselyting backfires on her. Instead of emerging from his humiliating experience an individual receptive to reality and bent on self-integration,

⁴⁶ Scheibler, p. 42.

Con exorcises one demon and immediately replaces him with another. He remains essentially the same within; still an egotist and a dreamer, he changes only his mask. And as Sara learns when he points his pistols at her, his perennial foe in a constant verbal duel, and later cuffs her on the head, he defends his new illusion as rigorously and as ruthlessly as he did the former one. The rapidity with which the peasant persona succeeds "the Major" reveals that Con still believes that a suitable pose is the preferable orientation toward life, the best path to some semblance of happiness.⁴⁷ Without one, he has "no character left in which to hide and defend himself. He cries wildly and despairingly, as if he saw his last hope of escape suddenly cut off" (Act IV, p. 178).

As Sophus Winther says, Con quickly and easily shifts from genteel, cultivated speech to brogue.⁴⁸ However, the character's transition from the Major to shanty Irishman is not made without its difficulties. Though Con derides his former pose, he reveals briefly that he has not completely become the peasant. Sara's offer to sacrifice her relationship with Simon in exchange for her father's repudiation of his newly adopted persona causes the peasant Con to crumble visibly, to drop his lowbred pose for an instant, and to beg his daughter for mercy.

⁴⁷ In "O'Neill's A Touch of the Poet and His Other Last Plays," Arizona Quarterly, 23 (1957), 319, Drew B. Palette says Touch espouses acceptance of one's real self as the solution to man's problems. In "Eugene O'Neill's Quest," Tulane Drama Review, 4 (March 1960), 106, Edd Winfield Parks states that, when the destruction of the dream compels Con to face reality, he dies though he still lives. In The Iceman, the Arsonist, and the Troubled Agent: Tragedy and Melodrama on the Modern Stage (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1973), pp. 104-05, Robert Heilman claims that, like John Loving in Days, Con is able to defeat dreams and save himself by accepting facts. These critics do not give sufficient weight to the fact that Con has undoubtedly assumed another pose and has not resolved his problems or faced reality.

⁴⁸ See "Eugene O'Neill--The Dreamer Confronts His Dream," Arizona Quarterly, 21 (1965), 227.

Soon thereafter he escapes into the bar, but Sara continues to lament her father's denial of an important aspect of his being, an aspect that she believes possesses some redeeming qualities. She sees no such traits in the Major's successor.

Sara is initially surprised by her desire for the resurgence of her father's aristocratic persona. She wishes to revive the Major because, although she sneers at and upbraids him, she does not object to his genteel aspirations. Indeed, she too wishes to rise. As she indicates to Nora early in the play, she disparages the Major because he lacks the ability to attain and the means to sustain his dreams. A realist, Sara lives in the present, keeps her eyes on the main chance, and yearns for the future while her parents remain tied to the past. A pragmatist, she is able to summon either her peasant or aristocratic qualities at will in appropriate situations and promises to gain wealth and position through her love. Her "grandfather's true descendent [sic]" (Act IV, P. 170), she exploits Simon's puritanical beliefs, which force him to propose marriage once he beds her, and his idealism, which leads him to replace his dream of freedom with a new ideal, his love for her. The Major first advises her to secure her future by seducing Simon but, blaming his suggestion on liquor, quickly disavows this ignoble recommendation. But like Phil Hogan, the shanty Irishman who gives his daughter Josie similar advice in Misbegotten, the peasant Con approves of this method of snaring a husband.

Until the demise of the Major, Sara does not acknowledge any love or admiration for her father except when she seems unable to prevent herself from an impulsive admission of these feelings. Her reluctant expressions of praise and love, though mingled with her more commonly

articulated hatred, foreshadow her reaction to the Major's departure. Another clue to her ambivalence toward her father is, Törnqvist states, her manner of addressing him. Sometimes she calls him sarcastically "yer Honor," "Major," and "Your Lordship," but more often she addresses him sympathetically as "Father."⁴⁹ An added indication of her feelings for him is her seemingly unconscious imitation of him. Like the genteel poseur, she displays pride, a strong will, antipathy for the church, and a sense of superiority to the "scum." Her disdain for Father Flynn, the parish priest; her many arrogant tosses of the head, which unavoidably suggest Con's proud mare's movements and thus Sara's native aristocracy; her rebellion against and spirited, unflinching verbal attacks upon her father; and her haughty manner with Mickey Maloy and her father's shanty Irish drinking companions attest to her conception of herself and of her family.⁵⁰ Thus, her attempts to resurrect what she deems as assets in her father are not surprising.

After she and Simon consummate their love, Sara's readiness to sacrifice her prospective marriage shows her great love for her father and her overwhelming desire for the reemergence of those qualities that separate the Melody family from the common herd. To her, the peasant Con, an egalitarian and a supporter of Andrew Jackson, signifies

⁴⁹ "Personal Addresses in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 55 (1969), 127.

⁵⁰ Like her daughter, Nora is also given to proud tosses of the head. Linking them with his thoroughbred mare, to Con the truest symbol of aristocracy, this horselike movement by the Melody women implies that they have inner aristocratic qualities that the Major does not perceive because he never looks beyond their surfaces. As his grand manner, his fine clothing, his dueling pistols, and his mare indicate, he attempts to become an aristocrat by possessing the externals associated with gentility. Granting significance only to the superficial, he never sees beyond their broad ankles and "peasant paws."

acceptance of the end of both pride and upward striving. The Major, whom she finds contemptible in many respects, has instilled in her both of these values. She has allowed them to guide her life, and she resists yielding them.

As she reveals, her offer of sacrifice is made as much for her own sake as for her father's. She wishes Con to retain his pride because "It's my pride, too!" (Act IV, p. 178). But as Scheibler says she proposes to relinquish her happiness neither for the Major, as her pleas first suggest, nor for the peasant but for the father who synthesizes these polar drives as they were during the period when Con was an army officer.⁵¹

The Major's death elicits the anticipated response from Nora, who characteristically acclimates herself easily and quickly to any shifts in her husband's behavior. She accepts the peasant and the aristocrat in the same spirit. Since her love is not dependent on Con's personas, or his treatment of her, it proceeds uninterrupted. As Nora proudly tells Sara, she will "play any game he likes and give him love in it" (Act IV, p. 181). Her acceptance is rewarded when Con's new pose eliminates any social distance between them. As the peasant he is reduced to her station and is thus able to express his love for her. No longer does he speak condescendingly and contemptuously to her; he can now use tones and terms of endearment.

Since Con's new illusion is less harmful to his inner qualities and to his family and allows him to express love and humor, Scheibler says that one point the play makes is that a humble, openly egotistical ideal

⁵¹ Scheibler, p. 44.

is preferable to a pretentious one.⁵² Ultimately, however, it matters not if the dream is a harmless or harmful one. As Nora's philosophy of love and Simon's ideals indicate, man must have an illusion, any illusion, to ease his way through life. When one dream is exploded, another quickly follows in its stead. Simon's quick adoption of a new ideal parallels Con's and reiterates this point.

O'Neill's plays--Touch, Servitude, Straw, Abortion, Wife, Horizon, Dreamy Kid, and Warnings--suggest that self-sacrifice may become a character's approach to family for a variety of reasons and may, when embraced, have thoroughly negative or mixed consequences. It may be motivated by pure selflessness, may be prompted by a blend of selfishness and selflessness, may be forced upon a superstitious, guilty, or cowardly character by a family member, or may be caused by desperation or a need to atone. In Warnings and Abortion the protagonists' suicides will surely produce hardship for their families, while the restraint of the Older Man in Wife means loneliness for him but happiness for the only two people he loves. In Horizon Andy's altruism-cowardice contributes to the disaster that befalls his family, and Rob's theory of the value of sacrifice is never tested. In Dreamy Kid the title character's imminent surrender of his life enables his grandmother to die happily, but it will blot out his family line. In Straw caring for her family and helping Stephen Murray bring Eileen both joy and sorrow.

Straw implies that unadulterated selflessness is not the surest path to happiness in the family or in any other milieu. Instead, as

⁵² Scheibler, p. 46.

Servitude and Touch indicate, happiness comes more easily to those women who love both selfishly and selflessly. Loving for their own sakes while giving their partners safe havens, they are the slaves only of this happiness. Able to treat the objects of their love as means to ends and accepting their mates and the world as they are, these women construct ideals that are invulnerable to attack. These non-thinking, feeling characters are also able to convert others to their view. One of these proselytes, Sara Melody, discovers first-hand the rewards of this selfless-selfish philosophy of love. By surrendering herself to love, she experiences a mystical loss of self, time, and place and achieves true union with Simon:

But I was so drunk with love, I'd lost all thought or care about marriage. I'd got to the place where all you know or care is that you belong to love, and you can't call your soul your own any more, let alone your body, and you're proud you've given them to love . . . I knew tonight the truth of what you said this morning, that a woman can forgive whatever the man she loves could do and still love him, because it was through him she found the love in herself; that, in one way, he doesn't count at all, because it's love, your own love, your love in him, and to keep that your pride will do anything. (Act I, pp. 149-50)

Unfortunately, while the dream of love embraced by Alice Roylston and Nora Melody brings them happiness, it does not make for a harmonious domestic environment. In such households husbands run roughshod not only over their wives but also over their progeny. As Sara Melody's reaction to her father shows, the child living under these conditions may be unwilling to submit to a sire who consistently makes his own desires preeminent. And strife may ensue. Though warring often with her father, Sara is, however, more fortunate than the Roylston children; for at least Con acknowledges her existence. David Roylston exhibits little awareness of his progeny until he is metamorphosed.

Most of the male characters in the plays that treat sacrifice fail to grasp the need to accept conflicting drives. Instead, they normally try to live in accordance with one aspect of their being at a time. Consequently, they remain ever split. Jack Townsend and Dreamy never synthesize their disparate selves, and this failure effects their destruction. In the past Con achieved self-integration briefly, but he never comprehends the means through which he found it. The only males who become more integrated and find at least hope for harmony do so within the context of the family. David Roylston is transformed and made more whole through enlightenment; Stephen Murray, through love and a hopeless hope.

If a character is unable to reconcile antagonistic impulses and does not opt to escape life through suicide, the only course available to him other than the realist's stance is the dream or persona. Rob's, Andy's, and Ruth's dreams; Alice's, Nora's, and Sara's all-accepting, all-abiding love; Con's aristocratic and peasant poses; Mrs. Frazer's romantic and Ibsenesque ideals; Simon's dreams; and Eileen's and Stephen's hopeless hope are all evasions of reality and ways of coping with life's disappointment, horror, and agony. As an attitude toward domestic relations and to life in general, self-sacrifice does not bring the characters who elect to live the boons that ideals or the mask does.

CHAPTER II

SACRIFICE OF THE FAMILY

As figures who selfishly subordinate their family relations to the preservation of personas, David Roylston and Con Melody are joined by Captain David Keeney in Ile. When Servitude and Touch conclude, the male protagonists have altered their stances enough that their wives have increased hope for mutually loving, satisfying marriages. However, Ile ends on a note of unrelieved pessimism that admits little possibility for a propitious resolution of the Keeneys' problems. For another, equally selfish, reason Captain Isaiah Bartlett in Where the Cross Is Made (1918) and Gold (1920) sacrifices his wife and children. He brings ruin to his family through his elevation of a dream of material wealth above all else. In Horizon Rob Mayo, Andy Mayo, and Ruth Atkins Mayo attempt to win happiness through selfish dreams that inherently preclude attainment of their goal. Their pursuit of illusions brings about family dissolution.

Before his awakening David Roylston places thought before emotion; and, as he boasts to Mrs. Frazer, he accepts his "domestic bliss at its surface value" and saves his "analytical eye" for the creations of his brain (Act I, p. 249). At this point in his education the family means interference and complications to him, and he blindly abets and accepts his wife's countless self-sacrifices. Similarly, Con Melody exploits his family. But, unlike David's heightened vision, the innkeeper's

assumption of a peasant persona does not spell a substantial decrease in his demands upon his wife and child.

As in Wife, in Touch O'Neill uses a set to objectify a character's psychological state. Here it is an index to Con's unresolved inner conflict:

The dining room and barroom were once a single spacious room, low-ceilinged, with heavy oak beams and paneled walls--the taproom of the tavern in its prosperous days, now divided into two rooms by a flimsy partition, the barroom being off left. The partition is painted to imitate the old paneled walls but this only makes it more of an eyesore" (Act I, p. 7)

As the room was united in the past, so was he. Split in the present, Con is a sham of his formerly reconciled self.

Before his immigration to America, he achieved inner and outer integration during two short-lived periods. While in Spain during the Napoleonic Wars he, the son of a former shebeen keeper, had access to and was welcomed into aristocratic circles. So during this period the polar elements of his being, his lowly beginnings and his genteel aspirations, were in concord. But with his dismissal from the army Con was no longer admitted among the upper classes, and internal fragmentation began. He attained comparable wholeness when, during a quasi-mystical moment while riding on his estate in Ireland, he felt at one with his thoroughbred mount--symbolic of the synthesis of robustness, earthiness, and aristocracy--and the universe around him. Years later he recalls that he and his horse seemed to have transcended their world briefly and to have been suspended in a realm where neither time nor space exists.

In America Con never regains this harmony. He is a failure who requires an illusory world that provides him with a modicum of self-esteem. To recapture some semblance of internal and external

concord, he erects a mental structure that permits him to believe he is the unified Major once more. This world of his creation becomes so all-important that he guards it with all requisite cruelty. Denying the peasant qualities that he never realizes contributed as much as his aspiring half to his once-extant happiness, he attempts to regain a feeling of wholeness by acquiring the outward symbols of aristocracy and by crushing all threats to his genteel pose. The former approach manifests itself in his possession of a thoroughbred mare, retention of dueling pistols, affectations of urbanity, use of cultivated speech, recourse to Byronic quotes, and appearance in the uniform of an officer. What Con perceives as assaults upon his persona and thus must put down are actually reminders of his humble origins: Nora's love, bedraggled countenance, and brogue; Sara's oft-undisguised hate, messianism, peasant features, and intentional lapses into brogue; and Jamie Cregan's familiarity and frequent failure to address him as Major.

To keep his pose intact, Con not only makes drudges of his wife and his child. He also imperils Sara's marital prospects. When he confronts Simon and demands to know the young man's intentions towards his daughter, he does not approach the Yankee because he wishes to ensure Sara's happiness. Rather, he selfishly plans to use Sara's possible marriage to serve his own ends. After forcing Simon to declare himself, Con seizes the opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge of gentlemanly conduct in such matters. In addition to showing, as his support for John Quincy Adams does, how absurdly he misjudges his real position in America, his conversation with the young man casts him in a ridiculous light and spells possible danger for Sara. As consequences it produces between Con and Deborah, the young woman's major adversary,

an alliance of sorts, which could delay or cancel any nuptials. And it warns Sara that her father will go to any lengths to use the prospective match to foster his aspirations and that, if support for his ambitions does not coincide with the marriage, he will ignore her wishes and refuse to give his blessing to the union.

Selfishness of this kind and unwillingness to concern himself with his wife's and his daughter's comfort, health, and happiness are Con's normal approaches to marriage and family life. But on one occasion prior to the brawl at the Harford estate he forsakes his genteel pose and acknowledges a need of and desire to receive Nora's and Sara's love. After insulting them by insinuating that they are scheming to trap Simon into marriage, Con momentarily relents and seeks their forgiveness. But ironically he sheds his persona and utters his retractions when they are both out of earshot. Historically, he alternates constantly between the wish to belong to family and the need to escape its responsibilities. His expressions of remorse are followed with contemptuous hardness and distance. His past pattern and his demonstrated inability to live without a pose after his illusion-exploding experience at the Harford mansion suggest that this unusual removal of the mask reflects an attitude toward life Con could not have sustained permanently. The major significance of the scene lies in its reiteration of a prominent view in O'Neill's plays: communication is well-nigh impossible within the domestic, or any other, milieu. When Con eliminates all barriers briefly, he does not have true contact even with Nora, who loves him in her fashion but does not know him and does not seek to know him.

While Con's pursuit of a persona jeopardizes Nora's physical health, Captain David Keeney's efforts to retain his reputation as

Homeport's leading whaling Captain cost his wife Annie her sanity. Although in Ile the icebound sea is never seen, the characters' frequent references to and glances through portholes at the Arctic setting imbue it with dual-valued significance. On a cosmic plane it suggests all-powerful, inscrutable, and forthrightly hostile fate. And as the ice's dissolution just as Captain Keeney decides to terminate the whaling expedition implies, it also connotes ironic fate. On another level the icebound waters symbolize the protagonist's implacability, coldness, and stubbornness--qualities that are paradoxically his strengths and his weaknesses. Causes of his success as a ship's captain, they produce disaster in the domestic sphere.

An authoritarian leader to his men but a generally solicitous husband, Captain Keeney is married to a woman whose sensitivity and background have ill-prepared her for the rigors of life aboard a whaling ship. Nonetheless, she has persuaded her husband to allow her to accompany him on a two-year voyage. The incongruity of her presence on board the ship is so striking that it elicits the Steward's speculation: "Who but a man that's mad would take his woman--and as sweet as ever was--on a stinkin' whalin' ship to the Arctic seas to be locked in by the rotten ice for nigh on a year, and maybe lose her senses forever--for it's sure she'll never be the same again."¹

In fairness, Captain Keeney vehemently objected to her coming with him. It was Annie Keeney herself who, as inflexible as he, forced him into granting permission. And by so doing, she contributes to her own bleak fate. Like Mrs. Frazer in Servitude, Mrs. Keeney is the victim of romantic idealism. A small, pleasant-looking woman whose prim black

¹ Plays, I, pp. 537-38.

attire suggests her repressive, hymn-singing puritan past, Annie Keeney is a former teacher whose reading about Vikings in storybooks has induced her to idealize her husband and his vocation. The lure of what she imagined as the adventurous life at sea determined her to join his whaling expedition. The other major factor that led to her resolution to accompany him was her loneliness during his absences, which was heightened by their childlessness and could not be alleviated by her return to teaching because his position in the community made such a step improper.

Seeing only his mask, which she supplemented in her dreams, she worshipped her husband in the past as the townspeople, without for the most part her hard-won knowledge of reality, will continue to do in the future. The loss of larger society's favor and the ridicule and sneers of his colleagues are what Captain Keeney fears will follow any diminishment of his stature. Thus, "in spite of all hell," he is compelled to keep his image intact by returning with a ship full of whale oil. Even the selfish sacrifice of his wife's sanity is not too great a price to pay.

Prefiguring Ella Downey's reaction to the Harris apartment in Chillun and echoing the bird-in-a-gilded-cage symbol in Warnings, Annie's response to life aboard the ice-trapped vessel is a feeling of being "pent up by these walls like a prisoner" (p. 546). Experiencing a growing sense of "the cold and the silence . . . crushing" on her "brain" (p. 546), she begins to fear for her sanity and begs her husband to take her home.

In Warnings, Wife, and Abortion, memory equates to guilt. But in Ile it means nostalgia. What Annie Keeney sees most rosily when she

recollects and rearranges the past is her home. Prior to the ill-fated voyage, she denied its value: "I used to think Homeport was a stupid, monotonous place. Then I used to go down on the beach, especially when it was windy and the breakers were rolling in, and I'd dream of the fine free life you [her husband] must be leading . . . I used to love the sea then . . . But now--I don't ever want to see the sea again" (p. 548). Her perspective altered by exposure to the severity of life at sea, she whimsically yearns in the present for land's beauties. But as her admission of failing memory implies, Annie Keeney is waxing nostalgic and has replaced her dream of the sea with a dream of land's promise.

She has become hardened toward the sea because living thereon means isolation, discomfort, and deprivation. It also means witnessing what she interprets as her husband's extreme physical and verbal cruelty to his crew. When she can no longer bear this mode of existence, she attempts to exploit love as she had when she convinced Captain Keeney to allow her to accompany him on the voyage. By his admission, she is the best of wives; and so for her sake he promises to return immediately to Homeport. But as soon as he allows love to supersede his persona, fate intervenes. Just after he engages in a fierce inner struggle and vows to relegate his desires to hers, the ice breaks, whales appear, and, hardening his heart, he determines to "git the ile."²

Usually, Captain Keeney displays tenderness and compassion toward his wife; and it is his habit to address her as Annie. But when she

² When Captain Keeney acquiesces to his wife's entreaties and thus rejects his self-image, he "holds her out at arm's length, his expression softening. For a moment his shoulders sag, he becomes old, his iron spirit weakens as he looks at her tear-stained face" (p. 549). When at one point in Touch Con removes his mask, the stage directions are remarkably similar to those in Ile: "He crumbles, his soldierly erectness sags and his face falls" (Act III, p. 116).

attempts to hinder his progress, he adopts the address O'Neill's male characters typically use in such confrontations. As "Woman" she loses her individuality at this moment and becomes a representative of collective womanhood, which archetypally attempts to thwart man's ambitions and aspirations.³ As his reduction of her to a type and her failure to grasp his overwhelming need to retain his rank among his fellow Captains hint, both marital partners are unbending and blind. The typical O'Neill husband and wife, neither truly comprehends the other's needs. And equally rigid, neither is able to compromise and take less than all that he wants. The result of their mutual obstinacy is her loss of sanity and his loss of a good wife.

When Captain Keeney irrevocably decides to ignore his wife's cries and to subordinate her mental well-being to the retention of his reputation, she has recourse only to her organ, a gift from him that was intended as a source of pleasure and diversion during the long journey. However, as he prepares to embark in pursuit of whales, her wild, discordant playing of the instrument means the onset of insanity. The mock-hymn quality of her music signifies, Törnqvist states, both a regression to and a rejection of the past, denouncement of the God that has failed her, and protest against the cruel universe.⁴ The volume and violence of her playing constitute her last-ditch efforts to conquer and destroy the threatening silence she links with the hostile and ironic cosmic force.

³ See Törnqvist, "Personal Address in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill," p. 130.

⁴ A Drama of Souls, p. 182.

Annie's constant charges of callousness and brutality and the crew's attribution of madness to Captain Keeney must be evaluated in light of her precarious mental health and both their natural resentment of authority and their bitterness about the harshness of life aboard his ship. Though ultimately responsible for his wife's fears of insanity being realized, Captain Keeney is neither a beast nor a storybook Viking. As Bogard points out, O'Neill takes pains to portray Captain Keeney sympathetically as a man torn between an image that spells his manhood and compassion for a wife who does not understand him.⁵

When he faces the final test, Keeney stubbornly refuses to relinquish his place as "first whalin' skipper out o' Homeport" (p. 547) not because he does not value Annie sufficiently or because he needs or wants additional material wealth but because like Con Melody his self-image is all he has. Without it, he is one of the walking dead and has neither self-respect nor reason for being.

C. G. Jung says that the individual's persona, his manner of dealing with the world, is forced upon him by those around him and that frequently he succumbs to the great temptation to become identical to the being he and others believe he is.⁶ A creation of Annie and the citizens of Homeport, Captain Keeney cannot resist this urge. At the outset of the voyage, she is the standard-bearer for larger society's views. Two years later she must pay the price for her role in producing a man who has little choice but to give primacy to an image that he

⁵ Bogard, p. 92.

⁶ "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," in The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung, ed. Violet Staub DeLaszlo (New York: Modern Library-Random House, 1959), pp. 122-123.

cannot yield because it has become synonymous with his pride, indeed with all he deems desirable in life.

Denying his humanity, Captain Keeney is so obsessed, according to critical consensus, with retaining his image that he becomes manic.⁷ But his compulsion is not a mental aberration, as Edwin Engel claims.⁸ Instead, it is a manifestation of man's overwhelming need to find both a means through which he belongs in the world and an orientation toward life that minimizes suffering.

Captain Keeney's failure to soften his stance is, Homer E. Woodbridge asserts, an artistic flaw in the play. The critic contends that the character's inflexibility and insensitivity are unbelievable under the circumstances and that they exemplify O'Neill's propensity to forgo consistency of characterization for the sake of the "splendid theatrical 'punch' of the conclusion."⁹ While the play does end in a melodramatic phantom-of-the-opera fashion that strives for stage effort, Captain Keeney's desertion and sacrifice of his wife are in accord with his character. Annie Keeney's remembrances of things past and his words and deeds suggest that his final act follows the general pattern of his life. As his inability to fathom at first the reasons for his crew's desire to return to Homeport implies, home and family have always been secondary to him:

⁷ See, among others, Clark, p. 86; Edwin Engel, The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 20-21; Sheaffer, O'Neill: Son and Playwright, p. 385; and Homer E. Woodbridge, "Beyond Melodrama," South Atlantic Quarterly, 37 (1938), 22-35; rpt. in O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism, ed. Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion Fagin, and William J. Fisher (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 312-13.

⁸ Engel, p. 19.

⁹ Woodbridge, pp. 312-13.

KEENEY. What do the fools want to go home fur now? Their share o' the four hundred barrel wouldn't keep 'em in chewin' terbacco.

MATE. (slowly) They wants to git back to their folks an' things, I s'pose.

KEENEY. (looking at him searchingly) 'N you want to turn back, too. (The MATE looks down confusedly before his sharp gaze) Don't lie, Mr. Slocum. It's writ down plain in your eyes. (With grim sarcasm) I hope, Mr. Slocum, you ain't agoin' to jine the men again me. (p. 542)

Like a lesser Oedipus, Captain Keeney is a hard man, but not an evil man, who brings ruin to his family through his excessive pride. A man who stands above the masses, the whaling skipper keeps to an unveering course that most men would be incapable of maintaining. One of O'Neill's earliest decisive, rock-hewn protagonists, he is prepared to accept, his grim determination suggests, the consequences of his acts. Unlike the unprotesting, beaten victims of fate in Warnings and Abortion, he creates his own lot and is partially responsible for his wife's tragic end. And although he may be wrongheaded, he always retains his almost heroic stature.

In Cross a father is willing to sacrifice his son's sanity to keep an obsessive dream of material wealth; and, aware of encroaching madness, the son arranges for his father's admission to an asylum in an effort to shield himself from his sire's infectious illusions.

Set in a world of dreams, the play unfolds in the moonlit "cabin" of Captain Isaiah Bartlett, a room fitted out like a captain's quarters on a sailing ship. An ivory tower that has been erected at the top of his home, it signifies the former whaling skipper's spatial and mental remove from his daughter Sue and the distance that his son Nat desperately wants to maintain between himself and his parent. During the three years since he lost his ship and his wife, Captain Bartlett has restricted his activities to the boundaries of this room and the

poop above it. He has refused to descend from his tower even for meals. His daughter must bring them up from the reality-based world of family.

In spite of indisputable proof that his ship has sunk and that the gold he awaits is dross, Captain Bartlett expects his vessel to return laden with treasure he and three crewmen believe they found while marooned on a Pacific island. His actions recalling in some respects those of Laura in August Strindberg's The Father (1887), Nat brings Doctor Higgins, a physician affiliated with a nearby asylum, to the cabin in an effort to have his father committed. His sanity threatened by the contagion of his father's dreams, Nat wants to conceal his plan from his sister until it is a fait accompli. Deceiving the doctor by indicating that Sue agrees with his actions, he gains the physician's cooperation and promise to return shortly to collect Captain Bartlett. Before the scheme is effected, the father appears and exerts an almost hypnotic influence upon the son. And much to Sue's horror, Nat is possessed, Ligeia-like, by their father's madness and dreams. Imagining that the three men he sent to retrieve the fortune, buried in the location where the cross is made on a treasure map, have returned, Captain Bartlett suffers a heart attack and falls dead soon after he believes his dream has come true.¹⁰ Thus, he cheats the asylum through the same means that Adolf does in Strindberg's play.

The sets of antitheses in Cross are concern for family welfare and selfish greed; knowledge and belief; and lantern light/daylight facts

¹⁰ In "The Iceman and the Bridegroom," Modern Drama, 1 (1958), 8, Cyrus Day says O'Neill's selection of the word cross suggests that an additional message the play imparts is that Christianity is, like the treasure, an illusion. Similarly, Bogard, p. 106, acknowledges that the cross may be intended as a Christian symbol and adds that Captain Bartlett's given name may be an attempt to link the character's "prophetic hope" with the Biblical prophet Isaiah.

and moonlight dreams. Here O'Neill goes against the archetypal pattern and casts men as the sources of evil. Captain Bartlett destroys his son by forcing Nat to become his true heir; the father bequeaths insanity and illusions to his son. And it is hinted that Bartlett's mania was responsible for his wife's death and a great deal of pain that preceded her end. When Sue implores her brother to desist in his efforts to commit their father to an asylum, she pleads not only for her sake but also for "our dead mother's sake." But this approach makes Nat more determined as he reminds her of their mother's lot at the hands of Captain Bartlett: "She's dead--and at peace. Would you bring her tired soul back to him again to be bruised and wounded?"¹¹

Like Con Melody's need of a persona, Captain Bartlett's obeisance to a selfish, obsessive dream of wealth has not only brought suffering and death to his family, as his son indicates. It has estranged them from larger society. Though not completely closed or isolated, as Nat's and Sue's discussion of her prospective marriage reveals, the family does not participate actively in community life. Circulating rumors about the father have frightened the neighboring inhabitants to such an extent that they avoid the house because they believe it is haunted.

Patriarchally oriented until the father left it rudderless through his abandonment of reality, the Bartlett family consists of an ambivalent, weak adult son; a loyal, good adult daughter; and a formerly strong father. Relations between father and son are generally hostile until Nat succumbs to Captain Bartlett's vision of the world. Enmity between the two was initiated many years earlier when the father's imposition of his dictatorial will had a catastrophic effect upon the

¹¹ Plays, I, p. 565.

course of his son's life. Taken from school and forced to go to sea, Nat lost his arm and became, he says, a "broken thing" and another one of his father's "wrecks." Seething, lasting bitterness and resentment typify their relationship after this unfortunate episode. The source of danger once more, his father must be removed, Nat believes, so that he may survive without losing his mind in the present as he lost his arm in the past. Father-daughter interaction is harmonious, no doubt, because Captain Bartlett has chosen Nat as his successor, directs his energies toward converting his unwilling son to his perspective, and thus creates neither contention nor possibility thereof with Sue. Also, given her strength, it is unlikely that her father would have been a comparable menace to her.

Although he knows the Mary Allen sank with all hands aboard, Captain Bartlett refuses to believe it. For like Con Melody and Captain David Keeney, he cannot sustain life if his illusions are shattered. Therefore, he clings desperately to them. The effects of his tenacity are disastrous. A relatively minor offense against the family, his mortgaging of their home to finance the ill-fated expedition to the island, results in imminent foreclosure and displacement for him, his son, and his daughter. Payment has been precluded by the loss of income that accompanied the shipwreck and Captain Bartlett's madness. The major offenses against the family include his alleged role in his wife's death and his destruction of his son. The former is meliorated somewhat by his remaining behind when his ship embarked because his wife was dying. Also, since the inception of madness coincided with his wife's death and the ship's sinking, his guilt for his part in her demise and his desire for the return of the vessel named in her honor seem to be bound in his

mind. His linking of the ship and his wife suggests that part of him wants symbolic release from his sins against Mary Allen Bartlett through the Mary Allen's reappearance and his comrades' reincarnation.

Other parts of him selfishly attempt to imbue his illusions with truth by convincing his son to subordinate facts and knowledge to dreams and belief. Nat's lack of resistance to Captain Bartlett must be assessed in terms of the general appeal of dreams and in terms of the son's specific biological and psychological inheritance. As Doctor Higgins' temporary susceptibility to the "root of belief" shows, not even the man of science, who represents ultimate commitment to facts, is immune to the seductiveness of dreams. Their power to assert themselves rapidly, though fleetingly, over an apparently strong man like the physician prepares the audience for the speed and facility with which Captain Bartlett accomplishes the theft of his son's soul and mind.

While the father is associated with the need for illusions, the destructiveness of dreams, and crimes against the family, the daughter is linked with the reality principle and loyalty to family. Like Eileen Carmody, Sue is created in her mother's image. Loving her brother and father deeply, she is willing to sacrifice some of her privacy and bliss as a bride by, in Nat's words, saddling her "young husband with a madman and a cripple." To promote true family accord and stability, she attempts to act as peacemaker between her father and her brother by assuaging old wounds. To preserve the family unit, she entreats Nat to forgo his plan for removing Captain Bartlett. As her brother's and her father's last tie with reality, she tries to serve her family also. But as Nat's final act reveals, she fails. In lantern light, a form of illumination associated throughout with facts and knowledge, he examines

what he believes is a copy of the treasure map which one of the ghosts has handed, he claims, his father just before Captain Bartlett's death. His scrutiny of the map in this light--as opposed to moonlight, the light he links with dreams up to this point--shows that he is no longer capable of distinguishing between reality and illusion.

A shell of a man as his voice, "low and deep with a penetrating, hollow, metallic quality," indicates, Nat physically resembles but is an inferior version of his father. The detrimental effects of the son's contact with the father manifest themselves in Nat's beaten-down countenance and in his desire for freedom. His shoulders stoop wearily, and he appears much older than his thirty years. He wants to escape not from family in general but specifically from his father, who, uncompromisingly, ignored Nat's inclinations in the past. In this respect the son in Cross has an affinity with O'Neill characters such as the Cabot sons in Desire and the Hogan sons in Misbegotten, who also wish to flee the male parent's authority. But while they achieve spatial remove, Nat is unable to gain any semblance of personal liberty.

As a means of creating his own lot rather than blindly accepting the sea-bound fate of his ancestors, Nat is writing a book that he hopes will free him through its functioning as a purgative and as a source of income. Three-fourths of it completed, he must, he feels, finish in the house where he began writing. But, as he incoherently and wildly attempts to explain to Sue, his father's tales of treasure and the desire to dream that they awaken in him impede his progress:

The map of the island . . . stands between me and my book. It's stood between me and life--driving me mad! He taught me to wait and hope with him--wait and hope--day after day. He made me doubt my brain and give the lie to my eyes--when hope was dead--when I knew it was all a dream--I couldn't kill it! (His eyes starting from his head) God forgive me, I still believe! And that's mad--mad, do you hear? (pp. 566-67)

Among other things, this outburst is a description of the tomorrow syndrome, an approach to life that consists of eternal postponement both of facing reality and making pipe dreams come true. O'Neill treats this stance at length in the short story "Tomorrow" and in a host of plays that include most notably Iceman.¹²

Struggling to prevent possession by and obsession with dreams, Nat has made an agreement with the mortgagee that will allow him to remain in the house rent-free for an indefinite period if only one condition is met: he must become a Judas and remove his father from the premises. In compliance, the son makes a desperate attempt to eliminate this obstacle to sanity, reality, and freedom. Nat's failure implies what Dreamy's return to his grandmother's bedside does: the individual cannot escape his past, his family, or an aspect of his self.

As Nat's too-conscious support of daylight and lantern-light facts in Doctor Higgins' presence, his preference for moonlight or dim lantern light when alone, and his extreme fear of his father suggest, dreams have already made deep inroads; and his total capitulation is always imminent. These intimations are confirmed when even Nat's attempt to destroy illusion through ultimate exposure to light results in victory for the world of dreams. He "opens the lantern and sets fire" to the map, emblematic of illusions and belief. But when "he shuts the lantern again," its flame "flickers and goes out" (p. 567). The absence of light symbolizes his inability to annihilate either dreams or that part of his being associated with them. As the cabin is flooded with clear moonlight, Nat surrenders completely. At this moment Doctor Higgins, a

¹² See "Tomorrow," in The Seven Arts Magazine, June 1917, pp. 147-70.

representative of reality, comes to take dreams, in the figure of Captain Bartlett, away. Unable to see until he locates his "flash," the physician is unable to reverse the events that have occurred since his departure or to assist the family in any way. His impotence signifies the relative powerlessness of reality and knowledge when they are subjected to the dream's constant onslaught.

In a 20 June 1920 letter to George Jean Nathan, O'Neill assesses the artistic merits of Cross and refers specifically to the play's objectification of the contents of Captain Bartlett's mind:

But where did you get the idea that I really valued 'Where the Cross Is Made'? It was great fun to write, theatrically very thrilling, an amusing experiment in treating the audience as insane-- that is all it means or ever meant to me. You will see by my last letter how I came to write it, that it was a distorted version of a long¹³ play and never intended for a one-act play in my mind.

O'Neill's use of actors to represent apparitions and of lighting effects to suggest briefly that the cabin is the sea's bottom is an attempt to make the audience a participant in the action, a group character of sorts, and thus to imbue the play's theme, humanity's need of dreams, with universality. But, as Törnqvist points out, this quality is not imparted because one of the major characters in Cross does not exhibit this proclivity.¹⁴ Sue never succumbs to illusion; she does not even experience momentary temptation as Doctor Higgins does. Her exclusion negates O'Neill's implied attribution of this tendency to all humanity. In Gold, the full-length play that succeeds Cross, the dramatist evinces

¹³ "Eugene O'Neill to George Jean Nathan: Selections from Correspondence," in The Theatre of George Jean Nathan: Chapters and Documents Toward a History of the New American Drama, ed., comp. Isaac Goldberg (1926; rpt. New York: AMS, 1968), p. 150.

¹⁴ A Drama of Souls, p. 88.

an awareness of this flaw by limiting the theme's inclusiveness and by altering drastically the final confrontation between Captain Isaiah Bartlett and his children.

In the four-act treatment, O'Neill makes other changes as well. Unlike its predecessor, Gold begins in a barbarous, evil world of men and then moves in the second act to the sustaining-shattering, loving-hating family milieu where it remains. Set on "a small, barren coral island on the southern fringe of the Malay Archipelago," the first act presents directly the conditions and events leading to the Captain's madness and obsession.¹⁵ In this desolate spot Captain Bartlett, a perennial dreamer by his own admission, and five of his crewmen are marooned without water or food. Maddened by sun, heat, thirst, and hunger, the whaling skipper and three of his men--Horne, Cates, and Jimmy Kanaka--find a canoe that contains what they believe is a treasure in gold and jewels. When, his zeal for truth prompted by resentment at being shanghaied, the ship's cook Butler attempts to explode their dream, Jimmy Kanaka slays him with Bartlett's silent consent and the outspoken approval of the other obsessed seamen. Along with reality in the figure of Butler, whose messianism leads to death, the cabin boy Abel perishes. Because he escapes madness through sharing water Butler has secreted and because their consequent closeness suggests that he subscribes to the cook's view that the treasure is worthless brass and colored glass, the youth joins his comrade in initiating the chain of sacrifices the captain and his confederates make to preserve their dream. Largely unprovoked, the murders, not occurring in Cross, lead Woodbridge to classify the first act of Gold as melodrama of improbable

¹⁵ Plays, II, Act I, p. 623.

events.¹⁶ Their inclusion in the full-length play seems to be an effort to increase the work's complexity. When Captain Bartlett returns home, he is not only obsessed with a dream; though he rationalizes the killings, he wears the mark of Cain and suffers like many of Nathaniel Hawthorne's characters the devastating effects of secret sin.

In the longer play Captain Bartlett links his long-extant dream of gold and ambergris specifically with the family, while in the one-act version he makes no such connection. Adumbrating James Tyrone in Journey, he justifies his offenses and his obsessive greed in Gold by insisting that he seeks riches for his family's sake when in truth he desires wealth for his own and its own sake. Ironically, his dream of treasure, which he claims will save his family, destroys what was before a harmonious unit.

To retain his illusions once he is in the domestic sphere, Captain Bartlett isolates himself from his wife and children by moving from the house to an old boat shed, where he interacts freely and frequently with his accomplices. Later he dwells solely in the cabin. The antithesis of the warm, bright family region and the only set in Cross, it is one of four locations in the full-length play. He contributes to his wife's demise, almost brings about his impressionable son's loss of sanity, causes his daughter great anguish and sorrow, and threatens his family's continuation through his indirect responsibility for the perilous voyage his daughter's fiancé Danny Drew undertakes.

In Gold the family constellation consists of the protagonist Captain Bartlett, his wife Sarah, their twenty-year-old daughter Sue, and

¹⁶ Woodbridge, pp. 313-14.

their eighteen-year-old son Nat.¹⁷ In this play the father is dichotomized into the ambivalent, often tyrannical, literal father and his double Doctor Berry, a cherubic, kindly family physician. It is the good father-figure at whom the ambivalent son directs his hatred and distrust, while allying himself totally with his overpowering literal father.¹⁸ Because Nat is infected with dreams, he becomes paranoid for a while and suspects that Doctor Berry's assistance to and friendship with the family are motivated by a desire for information about the treasure.

As one of Nat's outbursts reveals, the family is open. When he suspects that his father is lying about the reasons for a planned return to the Pacific, he accuses, "[I]t's not a trading venture you're going on. Oh, I'm not a fool! That story is all right to fool the neighbors and girls like Sue. But I know better" (Act II, p. 650). Although his father is secretive with both family and nearby residents, even Captain Bartlett communicates, albeit dishonestly, with individuals outside the immediate domestic sphere. Danny Drew, the mentally stable good-son figure, indicates that the relative openness of the Bartlett family does not diminish its inviolability. When Sue grieves about her parents' estrangement, he wants to help. But he cannot, even though he is

¹⁷ Here Mrs. Bartlett is the former Sarah Allen and is among the dramatis personae in Acts II and III, while in Cross she was Mary Allen Bartlett and was dead when the play opens. In the one-acter Sue is twenty-five years old. Her fiancé is named Tom and is not one of the play's characters. And Nat is five years older than his sister.

¹⁸ The stage directions specifically describe the sixty-year-old physician, whose counterpart in Cross is thirty-five years old and professionally detached, in a highly suggestive fashion: "His whole manner toward Sue is that of the old family doctor and friend, not the least of whose duties is to play father-confessor to his patients" (Act IV, p. 675). In Gold Berry suggests to Sue that Captain Bartlett be placed in an asylum.

engaged to her, and thus almost one of them, because he recognizes that "this isn't anything anyone outside your family could mix in" (Act II, p. 646). That this family is extremely close is attested to by its symbiotic nature. Because her parents have been sleeping apart and her father has been consciously and obviously avoiding being alone with Mrs. Bartlett, "these last months have been terrible" for Sue (Act II, p. 645).

In the early plays Captain Bartlett is one of O'Neill's more complex fathers. Like many of his antecedents and successors, he enjoys a fairly harmonious relationship with his strong-willed daughter. However, he is not as implacable in his dealing with his weak, ambivalent son as the granite-like, hated father in Cross is. As a result, Nat is, though endangered by his father's dreams in Gold, in less peril in the four-act play and experiences a diminished compulsion for freedom. Here Captain Bartlett does not insist as persistently that his son become his true heir because he, the father, never completely resolves the inner conflict that tears him between obsession-possession and guilt-conscience, dream and reality, insanity and sanity, and belief and knowledge. As he moves back and forth, he alternates in doppelgänger fashion between madman and loving family man. The change from a character completely committed to obsession and dreams in Cross to one engaged in a psychological struggle makes possible the dissimilar resolutions in the plays.

Captain Bartlett's chief adversaries are his wife and his daughter. During his interaction with his wife, he reveals himself as a man who possesses overweening pride. When she implores him to confess and repent for the murders, of which she has inadvertently learned through

his sleeping disclosures, he rebelliously counters, "What I've done I've done, and I've never asked pardon o' God or men for ought I've done, and never will" (Act II, p. 655). Hounding and pursuing him relentlessly like one of the Furies until he can find neither peace nor escape, Mrs. Bartlett functions as his moral sense. Her role is explicitly delineated when she tells her husband, who tries to evade her by sleeping in the shed, "It wasn't me you ran away from, Isaiah. You ran away from your own self--the conscience God put in you that you think you can fool with lies" (Act II, p. 652). An inflexible, fanatical believer in Christianity, she is then, as Engel says, an objectification specifically of his religious conscience.¹⁹ As resolute and as obsessed as he, she does not allow her frail and failing health to deter her from attempting to save her husband.

Formerly a vital, naturally cheerful woman, Mrs. Bartlett is transformed after she discovers her husband's crimes. His impenitence gnaws away at her health. Beginning on the night of her discovery, her sickness is in accord with her symbolic value: as Captain Bartlett ignores his conscience in order to retain his dream, his wife and his moral sense become more and more enfeebled. On a literal plane, his ruinous effects upon his wife make him one with O'Neill's vampire men who suck the lifeblood from family members around them. Created in the mold of the fathers in Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata (1907) and The Dance of Death (1901), their number includes Bill Carmody in Straw as well as Captain Keeney, Captain Bartlett in Cross, David Roylston, and Con Melody.

¹⁹ Engel, p. 25.

Before his wife's death, Captain Bartlett tries to deny his dreams out of love for her and their children. But after tremendous, though brief, inner conflict, his obsession regains its mastery of him. This moment is as close as Mrs. Bartlett comes to convincing him to yield his illusions. She loses the battle although she has always been, like Annie Keeney, an obedient, good wife. As her forerunner harshly learns, she discerns that these qualities count for naught when placed alongside illusion's attractions. When she refuses to christen the schooner that is to bear Captain Bartlett and his confederates back to the island, her husband forces her compliance by threatening to take Nat with him. To save her son from madness and dreams, she unwillingly performs the act that drains her remaining strength. Her demise soon thereafter prefigures the loss of the schooner bearing her name, Sarah Allen.

Gold suggests that Mrs. Bartlett is an agent of Nemesis. When she can stop her husband from retrieving the treasure in no other way, she works toward preventing the craft's successful return to the island in the only manner her fanatical belief leaves her. Significantly, only Jimmy Kanaka, the stereotypic savage who possesses greater superstition and insight than the whites, suspects what she is up to. He warns, "That old falla wife belong you, Captain, she make strong falla spell for wind blow plenty? She catch strong devil charm for schooner, Captain?" (Act III, p. 660). But no one heeds him. Before she dies Mrs. Bartlett verifies the Hawaiian's suspicions when she proclaims with "fanatical triumph" that through prayer she has invoked God "to visit His punishment and His curse on them three men on that craft you forced me to give my name--" (Act III, p. 673). An earlier statement by Sue foreshadows her mother's curse and increases its potency and thus the

likelihood of retribution. She gives way to hysteria and wishes for the deaths of "those three awful men" whom she blames for Captain Bartlett's transformation from "the father I love" (Act III, p. 663) into a cold-blooded, hateful, and cruel monster. Punishment is meted out; for the schooner, the treasure, and the men do not return. And Captain Bartlett is hunted and haunted by his conscience until he destroys the symbol of his obsession and possession, the map where the cross is made; elevates love for family above his selfish dreams; and finds the peace of death.

More than any other character in Gold, Sue is the spokesman for family solidarity and harmony. To achieve these ends, she is even willing to delay her marriage. As she explains to her fiancé in Act II, her parents' unhappiness precludes her personal happiness: [I]t can't be this time. With Ma so weak, and no one to take care of her but me--(Shaking her head--in a tone of decision) I couldn't leave home now, Danny. It wouldn't be right. I couldn't feel really happy--until this thing--whatever it is--is settled between Pa and Ma and they're just as they used to be again . . ." (Act II, p. 646). For family's sake Sue prevents Captain Bartlett's departure on the schooner through a clever, timely maneuver. While her father is at Mrs. Bartlett's deathbed, she arranges for her fiancé to captain the craft. By the time Captain Bartlett leaves his dying wife, the vessel has sailed without him.

Intentionally and unintentionally the metamorphosed Captain Bartlett exerts considerable power over Nat. Victim of heredity, the son is highly susceptible to the dream's attractions. As his forgetting to go for the doctor when his mother is dying shows, Nat is even capable of relegating family to illusion as his father does. After his mother's

death and the schooner's loss, he is even more tempted to believe than to know, to prefer illusions to facts. During this period Sue functions as his surrogate mother. Heir to her father's strength instead of his tendency to dream, she provides the only solace her brother, a bewildered man-child, finds when he is caught between reality and illusion.

As the standard-bearer for family accord, Sue is most successful when she appeals to her father's love of family and wins Nat's freedom from madness. A similar approach almost results in victory earlier for Mrs. Bartlett. When she implores her husband to abandon his quest for riches for the family's sake and to confess his sins and thus gain absolution, he wavers momentarily. But her major appeal is to his conscience, and her elevation of the religious argument over the family one spells her defeat. Mrs. Bartlett's threats of God's wrath stimulate her husband's expressions of hubris and make him even more determined to follow his dream. Significantly, Sue never perceives the struggle as essentially a moral one.

Even when he makes the dream ascendant, Captain Bartlett continues to love his family, even the wife he appears to hate when he is enraged. Sue's appeal solely to this emotion, without an offer of personal redemption, produces the selfless sacrifice that means Nat's salvation. Always pulled between shielding his son from his dream and infecting him, Captain Bartlett sheds the mark of Cain by confessing to Nat that he consented in his mind to the murders of Abel and Butler and by displaying a worthless sample of the treasure that denies the existence of real riches. While his abandonment of his lifelong dream of gold or ambergris means his death, it signifies life and sanity for his son.

In Horizon the protagonist's lone decisive act seals his doom. A weak dreamer, Rob Mayo is slowly drained by his womenfolk and by a career for which he is unequipped. He is not an innocent victim, however. He creates the situation that ultimately brings ruin to him, his brother, his parents, the Atkins family, and the Mayo and Atkins farms. The other villains in the play are misguided altruism and cowardice, both linked with Andy Mayo, and romantic imagination, associated in varying degrees with Rob, Ruth, and Andy. Love born from idealism prompts Ruth to select the wrong mate and causes the Mayo brothers to follow inappropriate roads in life.

What Rudolf Stamm calls "the error of a minute" results in a misalliance. Ruth and Rob are similar types, the critic asserts; and their marriage fails because she is unable to compensate for his shortcomings.²⁰ While neither Ruth nor even Andy is immune to the power of dreams, the play attempts to show that the marriage between her and Rob fares poorly not because they are too alike as Stamm claims but because they are too dissimilar. Like Strindberg's Laura, she despises her husband once she sees him as he really is. Although the temporary victim of romantic imagination like Mrs. Keeney in Ile, Ruth is basically a practical character. Because he is innately cognizant of her basic nature, Rob addresses her as "little Miss Common Sense" (Act I, Scene i, p. 92). Another clue to their inherently different outlooks is provided immediately after their avowal of mutual love. As he gazes rapturously at a star, she urges, "We'll be late for supper, Rob" (Act I, Scene i, p. 92).

²⁰ "The Dramatic Experiments of Eugene O'Neill," English Studies, 28 (1947), 10.

That common sense, connected generally with Ruth as well as with Andy, is the antithesis of dreams and impracticality is made clear by Captain Scott, the brothers' literal uncle and good father-figure. When Rob renounces his dream of going to sea and announces his allegiance to another dream, Scott predicts the transitoriness of his nephew's new-found love: "Love! They ain't old enough to know love when they sight it! Love! I'm ashamed of you, Robert, to go lettin' a little huggin' and kissin' in the dark spile your chances to make a man out o' yourself. It ain't common sense [emphasis added]--no siree, it ain't--not by a hell of a sight! . . ." (Act I, Scene ii, p. 102).

That like Ruth, Andy is also linked with common sense prior to his decision to flee is a point made by James Mayo, the representative of reality and practicality who never strays from the path that suits his talents and disposition. After his son expresses a desire to leave home and family, James is amazed at Andy's behavior: "It sounds strange to hear you, Andy, that I always thought had good sense [emphasis added] talkin' crazy like that. . . ." (Act I, Scene ii, p. 105). What these references to sense imply is, as Mrs. Mayo and Mrs. Atkins later come to believe, that Andy and Ruth are compatible and should have married.

That Captain Scott augurs well when he admonishes his younger nephew is demonstrated three years later when an emotion akin to hatred typifies Rob's and Ruth's marital relations. At this time she acknowledges that she was entranced briefly by his "cheap, silly, poetry talk" and that she truly loves Andy. While her declaration of love for her husband's brother is another dream, a means of dealing with unbearable reality, her devaluation of her feelings for Rob rings with truth.

As Törnqvist says, in Horizon the shifting appearance of the farm, the seasons during which scenes occur, the alternation of indoor and outdoor settings, and the physical changes in the characters' faces and bodies are more than realistic details.²¹ They are keys to the collective family's health and stability and its members' inner states. Before dreams begin their destruction, the Mayos are a mutually sustaining, harmonious family group. As Andy tells Rob, their fraternal relations do not conform to the archetypal pattern: "[Y]ou and I ain't like most brothers--always fighting and separated a lot of the time, while we've always been together--just the two of us. It's different with us. . . ." (Act I, Scene i, p. 83). Interaction between them and their authoritarian father is equally free of discord. And while their mother seems to prefer Rob, she actually loves them both and treats them equally. Though unlike the aspirations and interests of his practical father and brother, Rob's dreams and love of books are accepted. Although his family members anticipate missing him greatly, they do not attempt to dissuade him from venturing beyond the horizon.

During this period of unity the play is set first outdoors and then inside the Mayo house. The opposition of these two environments continues through the various stages of the farm's and the characters' deterioration. According to O'Neill the shifts between outdoor scenes showing the horizon and indoor ones during which it is not visible reveal "man's desire and dreams" and "what has come between him and his dream." These alternations are the playwright's way of achieving the rhythm of Rob's "longing and loss."²²

²¹ A Drama of Souls, pp. 50-53.

²² Quoted in Gelb and Gelb, p. 41.

Spring is the season of family integration and mutuality. The farm is an Eden unpolluted by sin and decay.²³ The fields are freshly plowed, and fall-sown rye is beginning to sprout. "A straggling line of piled rocks, too low to be called a wall, separates this field from the road" (Act I, Scene i, p. 81). This structure is not intended to isolate the family from larger society as Deborah's garden wall is designed to do in Mansions. Here the wall-like line suggests that the family is self-sufficient but is willing to mingle with outsiders. Budding nearby is an old, gnarled apple tree, both a version of the tree of knowledge and an index to the vitality of the Mayo family line. Passing beneath the tree is a snake fence that "sidles from left to right" (Act I, Scene i, p. 81). As a symbol the fence signifies attempts to preserve a prelapsarian paradise by denying entry to evil. Through the "garden's" defenses enters woman, the archetypal cause of man's fall and loss of Eden. Because he is weak, she is able to persuade him to forsake his dream of freedom. Ruth's infatuation and Rob's frailty begin a process that ends in pain and poverty for their families. Because their failings and not their strengths produce ruin, the play never rises to tragedy but is instead, as Robert Heilman states, a disaster of "inadequate personality."²⁴

Before the inhabitants become aware of the presence of danger, the interior of the Mayo farmhouse is extremely clean and well-kept. The "atmosphere is one of the orderly comfort of a simple, hard-earned

²³ In A Drama of Souls, pp. 51-53, Törnqvist says the Mayo farm is an earthly paradise in Act I.

²⁴ Heilman, p. 78.

prosperity, enjoyed and maintained by the family as a unit" (Act I, Scene ii, p. 94). When Andy announces his plans to sail with Captain Scott, family concord is shattered. James Mayo becomes a terrible primal sire. Charging his son with unfairness to him and avoidance of his responsibilities on the farm, the patriarch rages at Andy. But, resolute, his son defies authority and embarks on the voyage in spite of these protests and an accompanying curse. Also, friction and coldness characterize the relationship between Rob and Andy briefly. The rift is not permanent, however. They quickly reconcile.

Three years later the blessed farm has become a cursed inferno. And the star of hope (dream of love) in Act I has been succeeded in Act II by a blazing sun. On a sweltering, windless summer day, the family's decline may be first gauged by the altered appearance and atmosphere of the Mayo sitting room. Curtains are soiled, a screen door is patched, and other little signs of carelessness and inefficiency are everywhere. As a disorderly pile of books on the sideboard shows, not even the treasures of the inveterate dreamer Rob are exempt from the aura that pervades the room. That his and Ruth's daughter Mary is affected as well by the despondency and exhaustion that characterize her older relatives is suggested by her armless doll, which has been tossed under a table. Besides these sights and the sounds of a woman's irritated voice and a child's peevish whining, two of the clearest early signs of worsening relations in the household are the face and voice of Rob's mother: Her face "has lost all character, disintegrated, become a weak mask wearing a helpless, doleful expression of being constantly on the verge of comfortless tears. She speaks in an uncertain voice, without

assertiveness, as if all power of willing had deserted her" (Act II, Scene i, p. 112).

Like her mother-in-law Ruth has also been worn down by life with a man who possesses a touch of the poet. The years have changed Rob as well. The demands of farm and family cause his shoulders to droop, his eyes to lose their brilliance and life, and his lips to turn down into a resigned, hopeless expression that accentuates the weakness of his face.

As progeny chain parents to one another in Strindberg's plays, their child Mary binds Rob and Ruth in a loveless marriage that imprisons them both. Because of his love for his daughter, Rob cannot leave the farm and follow his dream of freedom. Although at first glance Ruth does not seem to care deeply for the child--her jealousy because their daughter prefers Rob and Mary's concern and sympathy for her mother belie Ruth's apparent lack of affection--she is unable to ignore her parental responsibility and to leave her husband after she discovers she does not love him. As Louis Sheaffer states, the child's presence in the play seems to be a contrived means through which O'Neill denies his character exit from an unwise marriage in order to accommodate a specific type of tragedy he wanted to write, one that focuses on wasted lives and the entrapment of marriage.²⁵ On a symbolic plane, however, the child is not a facile device but is a necessary component in the play; for she objectifies the quality of her parents' relationship. Mary's weak constitution--she is anemic and dies at a young age--suggests her parents' love, which thrives only for a short time, and their consequently tenuous union.

²⁵ O'Neill: Son and Playwright, p. 40.

As in Strindberg's The Father, enmity between spouses is exacerbated in Horizon by the wife's suspicions that her husband believes she is intellectually his inferior. When so threatened, Ruth projects her feelings of inadequacy onto Rob. He responds by pleading for a return to the unity and understanding that formally typified domestic relations in the Mayo home: "Why can't we pull together? We used to. I know it's hard on you also. Then why can't we help each other instead of hindering? . . . We can both improve. Say a word of encouragement once in a while when things go wrong, even if it is my fault. . . . I've got to pull things through somehow. With your help, I can do it. With you against me-- . . ." (Act II, Scene i, p. 123). His entreaties meet deaf ears. Like other O'Neill characters, they fail to find again the harmony that characterizes marriage, if ever, generally only during the early days of the union. Ruth succumbs to her hatred and pent-up resentment. Anticipating salvation when Andy returns, she becomes a younger version of her mean, nagging, small-minded, cold mother and delivers the killing blow to her husband's pride:

You were saying you'd go out on the road if it wasn't for me. Well, you can go, and the sooner the better! I don't care! I'll be glad to get rid of you! The farm'll be better off too. There's been a curse on it ever since you took hold. So go! Go and be a tramp like you've always wanted. It's all you're good for. I can get along without you, don't you worry. (Exulting fiercely) Andy's coming back, don't forget that! He'll attend to things like they should be. . . . I'd say it if you was to kill me! I do love Andy. I do! I do! I always loved him. . . . And he loves me! He loves me! I know he does. He always did! And you know he did, too! So go! Go if you want to! (Act II, Scene i, pp. 127-28)

As Frederic Fleisher states, the shock Rob receives here is similar to the jolt Adolf experiences in The Father when Laura hints that he may not be Bertha's father. But Rob does not resist his wife as the Captain

does, the critic adds; instead he adopts a stance that is closer to the Count's attitude in Strindberg's Miss Julie (1888).²⁶ When Ruth wants to be alone with Andy, Rob does not intervene. By his daughter's report, the Count permitted his wife a similar degree of liberty in the conduct of her life.

Like Laura's in The Father, Ruth's assault upon her husband has a dark underlying motive. Both wives wish to eliminate their husbands. Laura wants hers removed to an asylum and is not grieved when he dies before he is committed. Death is a more final, and thus a far more satisfactory, means of achieving her purpose. Although Ruth is not conscious of the thinly veiled wish that inheres in her suggestion that Rob go, her statements intimate that what she desires is not mere spatial separation. Like Lavinia Mannon in Mourning, who dispatches her brother, and Orin Mannon, who sends his mother to her self-inflicted death, Ruth represses her yearning for her husband's demise. However, her hope for a future with Andy becomes despair when after his return he rejects an opportunity to save farm and family and crushes unknowingly Ruth's dream of love for him.

Five years later the Mayo-Atkins lot continues its plummet. On an October morning Ruth awaits Andy's return from South America, where he has gone to amass a fortune. Horribly aged, she personifies ennui and slovenliness. Now the sitting room has an appearance of decay and dissolution and an atmosphere of resigned poverty. The curtains are torn and dirty, the furnishings are covered with dust, the carpet is faded, and damp blotches disfigure the wallpaper. When Rob enters, his

²⁶ "Strindberg and O'Neill," Symposium, 10 (1956), 90.

weak, emaciated body indicates that he is about to join his parents and his beloved daughter Mary in death.

After Andy arrives with a specialist who predicts Rob's imminent death, the ailing character crawls from the Mayo farmhouse, where he has been trapped by family responsibilities, and goes to the field where the play begins. There Rob articulates his hope for achieving at last his dream of traveling beyond the black hills, funereal symbols of his entrapment, that surround the farm. The freedom he has been seeking is not to be his in life; and he anticipates finding it in death, the final release from the corporeal body that houses his spirit. By pinning his hopes thereon, he finds an ideal that is as unassailable as Nora's dream in Touch. To him death means the possibility of wandering eternally.

That death has always been what Rob wishes is suggested eight years earlier when he explains the origin of his initial dream to Ruth:

I can remember being conscious of it [the desire for freedom] first when I was only a kid--you haven't forgotten what a sickly specimen I was then, in those days, have you? . . . Well, in those days, when Ma was fixing meals, she used to get me out of the way by pushing my chair to the west window [emphasis added] and telling me to look out and be quiet. . . . So I used to stare out over the fields to the hills, out there--(He points to the horizon) and somehow after a time I'd forget any pain I was in and start dreaming. I knew the sea was over beyond those hills, . . . and I used to wonder what the sea was like and try to form a picture of it in my mind. . . . There was all the mystery in the world to me then about that--far-off sea--and there still is! It called to me then just as it does now. . . . (Act I, Scene i, p. 89)

His sickness is with life. The sea is not the literal body of water that Bogard believes the character must merge with to gain strength and

maturity.²⁷ Instead it is the womb-tomb. In Rob's lexicon the west, the sea, and death are all synonyms.

Death's boons constitute his final pipe dream. That he grasps another illusion as he dies is ironic in view of the devastation dreams cause in his and his loved ones' lives. The irony is increased by the suggestive closing set. Flourishing during the opening spring scene, the field in the final autumnal scene--especially the apple tree, the major visual symbol of family vitality--implies that the characters' susceptibility to dreams has been so dangerous that it means the possible extinction of the Mayo and Atkins families: the field has "a wild uncultivated appearance as if it had been allowed to remain fallow the preceding summer. Parts of the snake-fence in the rear have been broken down. The apple tree is leafless and seems dead" (Act III, Scene ii, p. 166). While Ruth's silence, exhaustion, hopelessness, and apathy during the denouement deny the probability of resurgence, Andy's determination to rebuild and the playwright's use of the verb seems as opposed to is in the description of the tree give the play an indeterminate ending that does not exclude the possibility of the families' regeneration.

To Ruth, Andy assigns blame for his brother's death and for a large share of the general disaster. Addressing her as "you damn woman, you coward, you murderess" (Act III, Scene ii, p. 168), he sees her briefly as representative of her sex and, as such, as the mythic cause of man's doom. Andy's quick retraction shows that determination of culpability is not as simple a task as Clifford Leech intimates. The critic

²⁷ Bogard, pp. 128-29.

contends that the play makes a reasonable case for believing that Ruth's selection of Robert ruined the lives of both brothers.²⁸

While her actions have direct bearing on the lot of the collective family, they alone do not bring ruin. Rob knows that his brother loves Ruth, but he lacks the restraint and the selflessness that would have decreed his continued silence. Further, his lack of resolve facilitates her manipulation of him. Recognizing that no single individual is to blame, he does not make her the primary culprit when all goes wrong after their marriage. Adumbrating Jim Harris in Chillun, he assigns the greatest portion of the blame to God. At this midpoint in their lives, he does not see that the universal force promises man neither happiness nor concern for his aspirations. Like Ruth and Andy, Rob substitutes constantly one dream for another in a quest that he fails to realize is in vain. None of them perceives that his manner of pursuing happiness--through illusions--and the perverse nature of life itself prevent the attainment of his goals. When one of them attempts to find some semblance of happiness, the ineffectuality of his method is revealed. Ruth builds a dream of marriage with Rob, but reality destroys her hopes of happiness. Andy dreams of accruing wealth in South America, but his speculation in wheat corrupts him. Rob's dream of love brings him pain; but his dream of finding freedom and happiness in death, his final self-deception, suggests that the destruction that accompanies illusions does not reduce their appeal to nor diminish their tenacious hold on the unenlightened dreamer.

The disharmony that typifies the lives of these characters may be viewed on two levels. On one plane, the three figures seem to objectify

²⁸ See O'Neill (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), pp. 23-24.

an inner struggle within a single composite character. As in Fog and in Brown, the one consciousness in Horizon is torn between the practical and the idealistic and is unable to resolve its internal strife. The characters' inability to cooperate with and to support one another implies what the telling visual image in the conclusion of Dreamy does: conflicting aspects within the individual can rarely be brought into harmonious relationship with one another. On the other hand, the three characters' susceptibility to dreams and their self-betrayal suggest that, in spite of surface dissimilarities, they are one under the skin. The net result of these two possible interpretations is confusion. The characters' function remains ambiguous.

On a more literal level, the discord signifies the irreconcilability of freedom and the family. At the beginning of the play, when family life is integrated and individuality is tolerated, Rob does not truly belong. That he is isolated at this stage is indicated by the opening tableau: he stands alone, reading a book. When Andy opts for escape from the family, he is driven out by his furious father, who equates his son's desire for personal liberty not only with treason against self but against family as well. Once Andy experiences freedom in the larger world, he is unwilling to submit to the confinement of the family farm for an extended period. His second flight from the Mayo land stresses the basic incongruity of self-interest and family stability.

While Andy's attempts to win liberty and happiness are essentially fruitless, Rob's years of imprisonment within the family milieu are equally barren. The unrewarding nature of both family-oriented and self-centered lives intimates that happiness is infrequently garnered

inside or outside the domestic milieu. Horizon suggests that only when the individual renounces his quest for temporal happiness or adopts an impregnable ideal will he find surcease. Hoping that death will bring him tranquility, Rob exits the life he has always abhorred. Ruth becomes one of the walking dead. Without hope, she can no longer feel pain because suffering has brought emotional numbness. After Rob's death, Andy expects at most to stumble through the remainder of his life and to find perhaps an existence that does not contain inordinate pain.

In O'Neill's plays a character's commitment to dreams or personas can mean an end to stable, relatively peaceful domestic relations; for he is often willing to sacrifice everything, even his family, to achieve a dream or to retain a self-image. When the dreamer is a patriarch whose obsession with illusions proceeds unchecked, he imperils at least one family member's life, marital prospects, physical health, or sanity. Only in those plays in which wife-characters formulate self-protecting counterillusions in reaction to their husbands' selfish dreams is there escape for these women. When good wives who have not provided themselves with such armor attempt to loosen the dream's or persona's stranglehold on their husbands by reminding their mates of their years of obedience and loyalty, they discover that these are puny weapons against illusion's might. Though these obsessed, possessed male characters love their wives and their children, they need their dreams more than their families. In *Con Melody's* and *Captain Keeney's* cases, their self-respect and indeed their total identities are tied to their self-images; hence, no price is too great if it allows them to retain their personas. David Royston does not need his detached, cerebral pose to live; and therefore his sacrifice of his wife and family is more

despicable than the destructive acts of those characters whose dreams and personas mean survival. Because his retention of a self-image and its accompanying ideals is not crucial, he is able to shed his persona with relative ease once Mrs. Frazer educates him. Captain Bartlett in Gold, the only other sacrificer of the family who reforms, requires dreams to live. Thus, his feminine saviors meet greater opposition when they attempt to effect his conversion; and for this reason his ultimate surrender of illusions becomes more heroic than David Royston's in Servitude. In Horizon when two brothers and the woman they both believe they love succumb to dreams that they believe they must follow, two entire families are almost totally destroyed. The ruin they cause appears to leave Ruth oblivious to both dreams and reality. Andy seems to renounce illusion finally. But Rob remains an inveterate dreamer until his death; he never appears to realize the harm that illusions have brought.

Not a universal necessity but a requirement for those in O'Neill's plays who are unable to accept harsh reality and have no other defense against the world's infringements, the dream or the unremovable mask is often forced upon a character by his family, by his community, or by society at large. Though his illusions often destroy his family, they warrant in his perspective the great lengths to which he goes to retain them; for in most instances their absence equates to nothingness for him. Without this bulwark, he is alone, nakedly facing a universe that inflicts horrors the family cannot meliorate but which the dream can.

CHAPTER III

DESTRUCTION OF THE FAMILY

Through words and deeds some of O'Neill's characters contribute to the destruction of family members. The injury that is done to a relative is not mitigated by the ascendancy of a persona or the claims of a dream upon the disaster-causing individual. Instead, malevolence determines his course. Hate emerges victorious in its constant battle with love. A family member becomes judge, jury, and executioner of a marital partner, sibling, or parent. In such homes there are no greater certainties than complete and utter disjunction in the midst of relatives and probable kindred-induced death. Domestic interaction of this kind more appropriately constitutes an "obscene little world" than the squabbings, figurative back stabbings, and viperousness Curtis Jayson describes in such a fashion in First Man.

One of the "lost" plays, Recklessness (1913-14) initiates the group of works in which domestic strife, psychological turmoil, or the pursuit of vengeance leads characters to murder, to suicide, or to gradual deterioration. Its major characters are Arthur Baldwin and his wife Mildred. A beautiful, voluptuous woman many years younger than her moderately wealthy husband, she falls in love with and has an illicit affair with their chauffeur Fred during one of Arthur's prolonged absences. When her husband returns, the maid Gene informs him of Mildred's conduct. In love with Fred but scorned by him, the servant

tells all because she hates her mistress and because she desires personal vengeance against the chauffeur. Prior to Arthur's appearance Fred intimates that his employer is an unscrupulous, ruthless businessman. But Mildred protests, "I simply can't think him the devil in human form you would make him out to be" (p. 116).¹ As Arthur's satanic countenance and his handling of his wife's infidelity show, Fred is the more astute of the lovers. Unfortunately, his knowledge of his employer's business tactics neither makes the chauffeur an equal opponent nor saves him from the wronged husband's revenge. Assuming the guise of a civilized partner, Arthur deceives Mildred, who acknowledges the truth of Gene's accusations. His assurances persuade her that he will not obstruct the lovers' future happiness. What he does not tell her is that he has deviously exploited the chauffeur's love for her and has thus ensured Fred's death. After Arthur tells him that Mildred is seriously ill and that he should proceed at top speed in search of a doctor, Fred drives down a dangerous mountain road in a car that has, unknown to him but known to his employer, a faulty steering mechanism. When the chauffeur's bloodstained corpse is brought to the Baldwin house, Mildred swoons at the sight. Arthur takes his prostrate wife to her room, where, upon regaining consciousness after he leaves her, she commits suicide.

Patriarchy, needless cruelty, and betrayal are the subjects this play explores. Like Nora's father and her husband in A Doll's House (1879), the representatives of patriarchy in Recklessness deny the female character personal liberty and effect her isolation in the

¹ Arthur and Fred appear to be latent doubles. Arthur is the evil, destroying aspect; Fred, the good, loving.

domestic milieu. A lovely ornament joined in a childless marriage to Arthur, Mildred ranks below her husband's automobile in terms of the amount of pride their possessor takes in each. He has never, she claims, cared for her deeply nor acknowledged that she even had a distinct identity of her own: "[Y]ou have never loved me. I have been just a plaything with which you amused yourself--or so it has always seemed to me . . ." (p. 134). But as he reminds her, the blame is not solely his. He has simply taken a cue from her mother and father: "If I have regarded you as a plaything I was only accepting the valuation your parents set upon you when they sold you" (pp. 134-35). His attitude prevents her from loving him. Other obstacles include, she says, the disparity in their ages, a dissimilarity in interests, and her inability to understand him. Even his willing, ready satisfaction of all of her material desires fails to inspire her affection. His gifts cannot obliterate her awareness that he ignores her humanity.

For his part Arthur does not require her love. Always suspecting that she married him for his money, he demands only her faithfulness and her beautiful presence. As his veiled comments about Fred and the car--actually he is talking about his wife as well--suggest, he has rigid ideas about objects he has purchased:

Fred is very careless--very, very careless in some things. I shall have to teach him a lesson. He is absolutely reckless. . . , especially with other people's property. You are worrying about Fred, but I am bewailing my car, which he is liable to smash from pure overzealousness. Chauffeurs--even overzealous ones--are to be had for the asking, but cars like mine are out of the ordinary.
(p. 129)

Because of his strong sense of possessiveness, he is compelled to avenge himself when he learns of his wife's adultery. Although he does not love her, she belongs to him. His property, Mildred has been partaken

of by another and hence defiled. For this breach Arthur exacts payment from her and her lover.

The calamitous chain of events in Recklessness begins in the same manner as the unfortunate occurrences in Wife, another backward-looking play that treats an unhappy union between a young woman and an older man and relates a husband's quest for revenge. In each play the wife knew prior to marriage that she did not love her prospective husband but wed him nonetheless at her parents' urgings. In Recklessness as in Wife, filial submission to authority means future unhappiness for the obedient daughter. While Yvette's parents were motivated by love and concern for her future, Mildred's family was, she suggests to Arthur, prompted by less altruistic motives: "My family forced me into it [marriage]. You must have realized that. I hardly knew you, but they were nagging me night and day until I gave in. It was anything to get away from home" (p. 134). Prefiguring the swarming Jaysons in First Man, her family, a felt presence in the play, is an alienating, destructive force. And the home is a place from which the individual must escape at all costs. Her family's efforts initially mean Mildred's delivery into the hands of "a hardened old sinner" and ultimately lead to her suicide.

Although this sinner does not pull the trigger, he is principally responsible for her death and is thus guilty not only of Fred's murder but of hers as well. Through his needless cruelty, Arthur forces her act. Icily playing cat and mouse with the lovers, he embodies pure evil. The only chinks in his armor are revealed when he winces when Mildred brings up the differences in their ages and when he is stunned briefly by her suicide. At other times his emotions are limited to the glory and joy of ownership and to cold anger. The clandestine battle he

engages in with Mildred and Fred is overwhelmingly weighted in his favor. Before their dooms are sealed, their relative innocence and naivete make them defenseless beings totally unable to grasp fully the extent of his malice.

To Arthur, Mildred is a Judas. And Fred commits the cardinal sin, infringement upon his employer's rights and property. Hence, Arthur feels they deserve the punishment he, their judge, metes out. The horror of pulling back the covering from Fred's livid face fits his wife's crime. Considering the chauffeur's offense, his death is proper. Although Arthur's first reaction indicates he is unprepared for Mildred's suicide, her final flight from family, his rapid adjustment to and acceptance of this eventuality imply that in his perspective her act too is appropriate.

As Mildred Baldwin responds to her husband's cruelty and to the emptiness of marriage, the protagonist in Bread and Butter (1914) reacts to a union that is utterly desolate and without hope of salvation. Bread is the first of a group of plays in which a weak, aspiring male character is irrevocably tied to an inferior wife who contributes actively and maliciously to his ruin. Her hatred, lack of sympathy with his goals, and inability or unwillingness to release him from matrimony mean his total destruction. In Bread the wife's tirades are not mitigated by an overriding concern for others as Mrs. Knapp's are in Warnings. Rather, Strindbergian viciousness prompts her attacks upon her husband.

Bread is an exposé of the Brown family, narrow-minded, "decent" residents of Bridgetown, Connecticut, the hometown of the similarly practical-minded, hypocritical Jayson family in First Man. As the

contents of their sitting room indicate, most of the Browns are slaves to conformity and have little taste:

The walls are papered a dull blurred crimson. This monotony of color is at well-regulated intervals monotonously relieved by pretentiously stupid paintings of the 'Cattle-at-the-Stream', 'Sunrise-on-the-Lake' variety. These daubs are imprisoned in ornate gilt frames. The room is sufficiently commonplace and ordinary to suit the most fastidious Philistine. Just at present its ugliness is shamelessly revealed by the full downward glare of the reading lamp and the searching stare of all four bulbs on the chandelier.²

This dull, materialistic family is not supportive of the artistic aspirations of one of its own. An early clue to John Brown's distance from his parents and siblings is conveyed through his physical appearance: "He is an altogether different type from the other members of the family; finer, more sensitive organization" (Act I, p. 15). Only his sister Bessie understands and sympathizes with his aims.

In the domestic sphere, where in this play factionalism, enmity, and jealousy are the norm, John is the cause of contention. His pompous, materialistic brother Edward, one of the major spokesmen for the bread-and-butter view of life, claims that John, the character with a touch of the poet, receives preferential treatment. The charge of favoritism is lodged because Edward; prim, spinsterish Mary; and Mephistophelean Harry are incensed because John is the only child in the

² Bread and Butter, in "Children of the Sea" and Three Other Unpublished Plays, ed. Jennifer McCabe Atkinson (Washington, D.C.: NCR/Microcard, 1972), Act I, p. 7. All future references to this play appear in the text. (This edition retains spellings and punctuation as they appear in O'Neill's typescript. Words or letters enclosed in brackets within quoted passages are legible strikeovers that Atkinson has included to shed light on the dramatist's creative process. Typing errors that do not obscure meaning have not been corrected, while holograph changes have been inserted by the editor. In an attempt to reproduce the typescript as closely as possible, Atkinson has kept editorial emendation to a minimum.)

family whom their father has allowed to attend college, does not force to work at some job, and has slated for a profession.

Fraternal discord erupts for two other reasons as well. Three distinct types, the son-figure is divided into the irresolute artist/dreamer; the staid businessman; and the sneering, cynical man about town, a forerunner of Jamie Tyrone in Journey. As representatives of opposing life styles and values--idealism, practicality, and profligacy--they collide unavoidably. As in Brown--in which Margaret is desired by both Dion Anthony and William Brown, metaphorical brothers--and in Horizon--in which Ruth is loved by both Andy and Rob Mayo, literal brothers--a woman is the chief cause of schism between brothers in Bread. Establishing a pattern to which her successors in O'Neill's plays will adhere, Maud Steele selects the artist instead of the practical man when each sues for her hand.

An open unit, the Brown family is ruled by an authoritarian father. The "terrible parent," Mr. Brown is guided, like his son and namesake Edward, by practical considerations. His belief that John wants to become a lawyer attests to the dearth of true communication within the family and to the father's tendency to determine the course of his children's lives without giving proper attention to their needs or talents. At the suggestion of Maud's father, Mr. Brown supports John's art studies in New York City because he believes his son will become a highly paid commercial artist. When John remains true to his ambition to pursue art for art's sake instead of for money's sake, Mr. Brown withdraws his financial assistance. During the conversation between father and son that culminates in this withdrawal of aid, John

delineates the ideal function of the father in a family and indicates the extent to which his parent falls short of perfection:

BROWN- . . . What is a father for I'd like to know?

JOHN- (shrugging his shoulders) I suppose, when a man is a willing party to bringing children into the world, he takes upon himself the responsibility of doing all [his] in his power to further their happiness.

BROWN- But isn't that what I'm doing?

JOHN- Absolutely not! You consider your children to be your possessions, your property, to belong to you. You don't think of them as individuals with ideas and desires of their own. It's for you to find out the highest hope of each of them and give it your help and sympathy. (Act II, p. 37)

Mr. Brown's materialism and imposition of his will upon his children are compared with the attitude of Eugene Grammont, the aging, kindly, ascetic art instructor who has great faith in John's potential as a painter. As Steve Harrington, one of John's roommates in New York, indicates, Grammont is a good father-figure: "The poor Old Master! He's as much worried as if John were his own son" (Act II, p. 35). The disastrous course of his protégé's life reveals that the instructor's fears for his weak pupil are well-founded.

Similar to the artist's reception in a practical, and hence hostile, middle-class world, the antipathy John's family displays toward his creative pursuits is contrasted with the support his fellow artist Babe Carter receives from his parents and siblings. In Bread the family that sustains its striving members is crucial to the individual's success. Because his family is confident that he is a great artist and is willing to give him all it possesses to further his career, Babe is able to withstand the daily uncertainty, privation, and disappointment that an unestablished artist faces. With his family's continued encouragement and a loyal wife, Babe is never forced to deny his dreams.

He becomes a respected artist, while John fails miserably in all aspects of his life without the understanding and support of his family and with an unsuitable wife.

John's initial refusal to surrender his aspirations means that he must work at a grueling, monotonous job in order to remain in New York. Soon he finds that full-time employment and spare-time painting are incompatible. During this period he is so despondent that his need for harmony and peace manifests itself in a latent death wish. His desire for ultimate repose and unity places him at the head of a list of similar characters in O'Neill's plays who envision death as a solution to life's problems. Like fog people such as Mary, Jamie, and Edmund Tyrone in Journey, who culminate this trend, John hungers to find himself through a mystical loss of self. He must flee present reality because "something is like [a] a dead weight inside me--no more incentive, no more imagination, no more joy in creating,--only a great sickness and lassitude of soul, a desire to drink, to do anything to get out of myself and forget" (Act III, p. 48).

Lacking the fortitude and independence of his sister Bessie, who revolts against their dictatorial father so that she can be true to herself, John ignores her Cassandra-like predictions of a doomed union between him and Maud, yields to love, and leaves the city, which the advocates of provincial life and the playwright (in his stage directions) see as unclean and prospectively evil. As Dolly Knapp's face reveals the negative effects of urban dwelling in Warnings, John's also "has an unhealthy city pallor" (Act II, p. 29). Small-town life has, however, a much more deadly impact upon him in the final analysis.

John's capitulation to the Philistines brings unhappiness to him and to Maud, a "dollface" who is the first of O'Neill's obtuse female

characters who wed artists they can never hope to fathom. That his return to Bridgetown, his marriage, and his acceptance of a position in his father-in-law's store are not the proper choices for John is suggested by the disparity between his avant-garde creations and the conventionality of the furnishings his wife selects for their home: "In startling incongruity with the general commonplace aspect of the room are two paintings in the Impressionist style, a landscape and a seascape, one of which hangs over the mantel and the other over the piano" (Act IV, p. 61). Within two years after the sacrament of marriage is performed, John's and Maud's love has been transformed into hatred; and their union has become impossible. When reality displaces expectations of bliss, she begins to feel cheated by life. Not even her gay clothing can adequately mask her bitterness and disappointment when her husband proves unable to adapt to the unwanted role of provincial businessman. A harridan, Maud nags and berates her husband to such an extent that he flees her in the characteristic fashion of O'Neill's family men. He seeks self-dissolving, reality-obliterating liquor and the comradeship of men in a bar.

In language that echoes Strindberg's The Ghost Sonata, John confesses that his marriage cannot be saved to his sister Bessie, whose compatible, concordant union with Babe serves as a foil to his own disharmonious alliance:

Maud and I have become disillusioned. I know there's nothing so out of the ordinary in that. Most married couples I have no doubt, go through the same thing. The trouble with us is we've gone to the bitter end. There are no veils left to tear off. We're two corpses chained together. (Act IV, p. 78)

Even though Maud agrees with his analysis of their marriage and although they have no children to bind them, she rules out the possibility of

divorce. Claiming belief in the sacredness of their vows, in actuality she refuses to give him his freedom because she fears public opinion and selfishly and spitefully wants to deny him any opportunity for future happiness with someone else. Unable to endure the isolation of his marriage to a "devil of a woman"--an epithet one of his successors, Jim Harris in Chillun, uses to describe a similarly venomous wife--John resorts to the only escape from imprisoning marriage that remains. Unable to kill Maud, he adopts the same course many of O'Neill's early protagonists follow. He commits suicide.

That his life resolves in this manner appears inevitable. In Bread, chance, his and Maud's human faults, her inability to transcend the determinism of environment, and the nature of life all combine to produce unavoidable disaster. Since all and none of the characters are responsible for their sad lots, culpability cannot be assigned to specific individuals. That it is difficult to place blame is corroborated by the raisonneur Bessie. When she commiserates with her brother about his failed marriage, she laments, "The pity of it is, you're neither of you really to blame. It's simply the conflict of character. You'll grind together until both are worn out" (Act IV, p. 78).

Characters grind together in Breakfast until, like John Brown, the husband cannot endure his wife's cruelties any longer and escapes her wrath by taking his own life. Demonstrating O'Neill's penchant for name symbolism to convey the essence of an individual or of a relationship between individuals, the couple's surname Rowland suggests the quality of their marital relations: their union is characterized by interminable rows and incessant bickering. The condition of the only

living objects in their kitchen other than the characters is another key to the state of their marriage: it is withering just as "several potted plants are dying of neglect" (p. 635).

The dramatis personae are restricted to two characters, Alfred Rowland and his wife. He is unseen and unheard for the most part; during the play he is in the bathroom. The only clue to his physical appearance is provided when he extends a trembling "sensitive hand with slender fingers" (p. 629) into the kitchen, where his wife is milling around, to receive a bowl of hot water for shaving. The only sounds that emanate from him are associated with his death--the dripping blood from his self-inflicted wound, the muffled groans of agony, and the thud of his body as he collapses on the bathroom floor. In the manner of Mrs. X, whose remarks to Miss Y do not elicit an audible response in Strindberg's The Stronger (1889), Mrs. Rowland engages in a monologue to which her husband offers no spoken reply.

Through her continuous diatribe, this backward-looking play presents the conditions leading to the marriage of its mismatched characters. The reasons she cites connect Breakfast, an early play, with two of O'Neill's "lost" plays. As Ghosts (1880) may be interpreted as Ibsen's depiction of the other side of A Doll's House (1879), Breakfast can be seen as O'Neill's treatment of what might have occurred if Jack Townsend had married Nellie in Abortion. And it also shows what could have happened to the Roylston's marriage in Servitude if Alice had been a vicious, disparaging wife. Each of the three O'Neill plays contains a male character who is the product of an upper-class upbringing; he has a premarital love affair with a woman of lower station. In Servitude he married the woman and, aided by her, attained

success as a writer. In Abortion he has no literary ambitions and does not marry the woman he ruined. In Breakfast the male character, an aspiring writer, elected to do the honorable thing when he impregnated the woman of humble origins. The unhappiness of their marriage drives Alfred Rowland to suicide, the same fate Jack embraces when he does not marry Nellie in Abortion. Considered together, the plays suggest that in most cases relationships between upper-class men and women of lesser social rank resolve themselves inevitably in disaster unless the male marries the female and unless she is a saintly, mothering woman who relegates her identity and desires.

In Breakfast Alfred is trapped in a loveless alliance that offers no possibility of unity. Unable to sell his writings and to find a job, he has pawned all of his valuables to support himself and his wife and to purchase liquor. His slovenly, bitter wife's nagging worsens his plight. Attempting to reduce him to her level, she never allows him to forget his failures or his family's disgrace when his millionaire father died bankrupt. Vindictive, she resorts to pettiness and verbal abuse because she wishes to punish him for past slights. She has been excruciatingly aware that Alfred is ashamed of her, has never forgiven his father's attempt to prevent their marriage by buying her silence, and has hated her husband because he withdrew his love after he was forced to marry her. One of her more savage thrusts is a conjecture that, had their child lived, Alfred would have been an unsatisfactory father. Her attack becomes even more venomous when her topics are his love for and his adulterous relationship with an artist who has become pregnant. Unlike Alice Royston in Servitude, who loves her husband so selflessly that she will readily relinquish him to another, Mrs. Rowland

is prompted, like Maud in Bread, by malice to boast that she will never yield her husband to a rival.

Small-minded and uneducated like Strindberg's Laura in The Father, Mrs. Roylston does not comprehend the worth of her husband's strivings. To her, all he does is "moon around all day writing silly poetry and stories that no one will buy" (p. 628). A materialist as most of the Browns and Maud are in Bread, she relates success and the merits of a particular vocation with the amount of money the activity yields. Hence, she has no respect for a husband who is unable to provide for their needs and whose artistic ambitions--interpreted by her as indolence--force her to become the major breadwinner. As a mouthpiece for the materialistic view, she is one of many O'Neill characters who suggest the hostility and the lack of understanding artists encounter in the larger world.

Her non-stop assault evokes a response for which she is unprepared. She is horror-stricken when Alfred is no longer able to withstand the dearth of communication and the enmity that typify their marriage and opts for death, a permanent escape. Indicating the absence of conscious intent to destroy him, Mrs. Rowland's reaction fails to garner sympathy for her. Even when her honest shock is coupled with her rationalizations for her hardness, she remains a negative character. Regardless of the legitimacy of her accusations, her ceaseless hounding seems excessive. Her arguments are too one-sided. She perceives Alfred as the lone culprit and herself as a suffering martyr. She never sees that she undoubtedly contributes to their marital discord as much as he.

In at least two respects, Breakfast is an antecedent of Chillun. In both plays a devouring female figures largely in the fate of a weak

idealist. In Chillun the male protagonist wishes to rise in the world, but his plans are obstructed by a malevolent wife who symbolically murders him and attempts to annihilate his racial heritage as well. In addition, both plays possess a quality Laurence Kitchin calls "compressionism." According to the critic, compressionist plays present the "groping of lost souls in a single room."³ First written by Strindberg and Chekhov, they contain, Kitchin says, a "cage" (confinement and insulation) and a "scream" (intellectual or emotional conflict and reaction to such strife).⁴

In Chillun Jim Harris has a dream he cannot realize because he lacks the necessary inner resources. Contributing to his failure are not only his unconquerable formless fears but also his wife's concerted efforts to impede his progress. A black man who wishes to pass the bar examination and thus prove his equality to whites, Jim marries Ella Downey, a white character Bonamy Dobree deems "subnormal in intelligence and will."⁵ Their ill-advised union results in their alienation from larger society and produces eventually a breach between Jim and his family. As in Breakfast, the destructive nature of the marriage in Chillun means that both husband and wife are adrift and cannot find solace even in each other.

Although Chillun presents a misalliance between a white character who insists on her racial superiority and a black character whose self-doubt stems from his membership in an oppressed race, it is not in

³ "The Cage and the Scream," The Listener, 24 January 1963, p. 159.

⁴ Kitchin, pp. 157-59.

⁵ "The Plays of Eugene O'Neill," Southern Review, 2 (1937), 440.

the final analysis a race play. As several critics agree, its protagonists are emblematic of the universal, unavoidable conflict of character and not of the effects of a particular era or social system.⁶ O'Neill himself holds a similar view of the clash between the characters:

The real tragedy is that the woman could not see their 'togetherness'--the Oneness of Mankind. She was hemmed in by inhibitions. Ella of the play loved her husband but could not love him as a woman would a man, though she wanted to, because of her background and her inherited racial prejudice. . . . But the Negro question, which, it must be remembered, is not an issue in the play, isn't the only one which can arouse prejudice. We are divided by prejudices. Prejudices racial, social, religious.⁷ Tracing it, it all goes back, of course, to economic causes.

Chillun moves from an outdoor public setting in Act I, replete with topical songs and street noises as background sounds and many speaking characters, to an indoor domestic setting in Act II that is almost as insulated, confining, and strife-filled as hell is in Jean Paul Sartre's No Exit (1946). The world of Act II is populated by a few inhabitants who are family members by marriage or by blood and who tear at each other incessantly in this timeless, placeless realm.

Both acts of Chillun have similar form. Each begins with the protagonists in the midst of a larger group and ends with their separation from others.

In Act I, Scene i, nine-year-old Jim and eight-year-old Ella are two of eight lower-class children on a New York City street corner who watch or participate in a game of marbles. On this spring afternoon

⁶ See David Daiches, "Mourning Becomes O'Neill," Encounter, June 1961, pp. 75-76; T. S. Eliot, Review of All God's Chillun Got Wings, Criterion, 4 (1926), 395-96; rpt. in O'Neill and His Plays, pp. 168-69; Heilman, p. 79; and Leech, p. 44.

⁷ Quoted in Gelb and Gelb, pp. 535-36.

during their innocent childhood, color is no barrier to love and friendship; and Jim and Ella interact willingly with each other and with their fellows. Like a host of O'Neill's characters, they want to lose themselves in each other at this time. She wants to be black like him, and he confesses to drinking chalk water so that he may become white. Now Jim is sure of himself. He is the winner of the game of marbles; and he is ready to meet all challengers, black or white. Not yet has he learned to doubt himself because of prejudices that divide mankind.

Throughout most of Act I, family life is presented indirectly. Through dialogue in Scene i, the children of both races convey the impression that the domestic milieu does not signify harmony and support. Parents are not understanding; they do not strive for communication with progeny. They are to be feared, for they dispense "lickin's" and are prone to be "madder'n hell." Sibling relations are no less fractious. Two girls, one black and one white, urge their brothers to abandon the game of marbles and to return home; but their siblings want to remain. The girls are motivated by a desire to protect their brothers from parental wrath, but each girl is rebuffed roughly. The similarity of response of both the black and white brothers implies that the tenor of sibling relations is universally discordant.

Scene ii occurs nine years later on the same street corner and during the same season. In this and the next scene the changes in the setting and in the passers-by have twofold implications: they mirror the increasingly negative effects of modern life and the growing corruption of the children introduced in the initial scene. In Scene ii, which contains prophecies of Ella's fall and Jim's later failures, the speaking characters are decreased from eight to six. Like most of

the other characters who appear in Scene i and reappear in Scene ii, seventeen-year-old Ella is presented here as a victim of her environment and her collective unconscious. Now she has succumbed to prejudices that divide mankind. She despises blacks and barely acknowledges Jim's existence. When he offers his friendship, she rejects the notion that she will ever need a person of his race as a friend. Self-confident, she has completed high school almost effortlessly, while Jim, graduating a year behind his class because he has failed once, is now baffled and sensitive. Bold in a repellent way, Ella is at this time being pursued by Mickey, a white boxer.

In Scene ii Jim's family becomes a topic of discussion for the first time. Joe, a black contemporary of Jim, and Mickey, a white one, reveal that Mr. Harris died a wealthy man and that, if Jim wishes, he need not work or attempt to advance in life but may allow his mother to support him. Their remarks also indicate that Jim's parents' industry and material success have evoked envy, resentment, and hostility among their neighbors, both black and white, who desire riches but who lack the qualities needed to attain wealth. Not only do the Harrises differ from the other inhabitants of the community in this respect. As Scene i suggests, they do not inspire fear in their children. Unlike most of the other participants in the game of marbles, Jim does not anticipate meeting parental rage when he returns home. Scene ii implies that his mother and father support his aspirations more than is common in the neighborhood. He is graduating from high school while Joe and Mickey have forsaken education, and his mother will apparently finance his attempts to become a lawyer.

Through three speaking characters, Scene iii unfolds during a spring night on the same corner. This scene presents the consequences of Ella's lapse. Five years after her graduation, she has had an affair with Mickey; has had his child, now dead; and has been discarded by her lover. At this point she resembles Ruth in the final scene of Horizon and Nina during the last moments of Interlude; one of the walking dead, she is through with life. Shunned by her family and her former acquaintances, she gains another chance to live when she accepts the marriage proposal of Jim, whose self-esteem has also been dealt crippling blows since his graduation from high school. He has diligently studied law; but, intimidated by the white faces of his competitors, has been unable to pass the bar examination. Ella's sole friend, Jim has remained loyal throughout her ordeal. Realizing that loneliness, desperation, and gratitude prompt her consent to wed him and that their union may never be consummated, he desires to marry her just to be near her. In his readiness to be a slave of love, he resembles Nora Melody. But he lacks her dignity and pride, and he has not arrived at a comparable philosophy that elevates and justifies such complete servitude and self-abnegation. Instead, his attitude toward his prospective roles as husband and caretaker is so abnormal that Ella is alarmed. When Jim interprets his responsibility for her as a sacred trust and expresses his Christlike desire "to give my life and my blood and all the strength that's in me to give you peace and joy," Ella, a mentally stable, reliable judge of behavior at this points, exclaims, "Jim! Jim! You're crazy! I want to help you, Jim--I want to help--"⁸

⁸ Plays, II, Act I, Scene ii, p. 318.

In Scene iii the Downey family is presented through dialogue. The typical O'Neill family, the Downeys form a unit that does not aid members that violate its code. Consistent with the portrait of family life in Scene i, domestic relations in the Downey household are not characterized by forgiveness and compassion. Consequently an outcast, Ella tells Shorty, a childhood acquaintance who has become a pimp, that there is "no chance" that she and her family will reconcile. Living alone, she observes her relatives' wishes and has no contact with them. Receiving neither sustenance nor support from her family, she finds both forthcoming only from Jim.

Freedom is a minor theme in Scene iii. As in Strindberg's plays and in O'Neill's plays such as Warnings and Horizon, freedom in Chillun is the antithesis of family; and entrapment often takes the form of progeny. Though Ella and Mickey have never legally wed, she, he, and their child have been a family of sorts. The child has made the parents prisoners. When he dies, they are both liberated. When she announces to Jim that she is through with Mickey and is now free, her black friend, contrasting freedom and fate, indicates that freedom is an impossible state and that anyone who believes he is free has fallen victim to an illusion: "We're never free--except to do what we have to do" (Act I, Scene iii, p. 315). Jim's pronouncement seems to be more the philosophy of the playwright than of the character. Shortly after he states his view on freedom and fate, Jim paradoxically tries to escape his lot by spatial remove.

Cut off from everyone else by virtue of their marriage, Jim and Ella have only each other in Scene iv. They are completely adrift from their families; not a single relative of the bride or groom is present

to alleviate their aloneness. In contrast to earlier, noisier scenes, quiet greets the pair as the wooden church doors close behind them. That they alone break the silence signifies their isolation from the ominously massed, hushed enemy. Without hope of understanding or compassion in their immediate environment, Jim projects his desire for these qualities onto the universal force. In the manner of the shipwrecked characters in Thirst and of Captain and Mrs. Bartlett in Gold, he links the cosmic ruler with the sun. He comforts his shrinking, confused wife by connecting certain benevolent traits he imposes on this orb with God's attitude toward them:

Look up, Honey! See the sun! Feel his warm eye lookin' down!
 Feel how kind he looks! Feel his blessing deep in your heart,
 your bones. . . And look at the sky! Ain't it kind and blue!
 Blue for hope. . . We're all the same--equally just--under
 the sky--under the sun--under God--sailing over the sea--to the
 other side of the world--the side where Christ was born--the kind
 side that takes count of the soul--over the sea--the sea's blue,
 too-- . . . (Act I, Scene iv, p. 320)

As in Horizon, here the sea is in the final analysis the womb-tomb. And like Rob Mayo, Jim not only reveals a death wish but also continues to possess baseless hopes because he imbues God with caring qualities that the progress of man's life does not substantiate.

In Act II, which contains a direct presentation of the family, the protagonists' universe narrows considerably. Two years after Jim and Ella flee New York and settle in Europe, a neutral zone where their marriage is tolerated, they return to America. While abroad, they find, as O'Neill's characters generally do, that they cannot elude their destinies through spatial remove; for they can never escape the determinants of fate--heredity, their selves, and universal, inevitable conflict between humans.

Scene i of Act II begins on the morning of their arrival. During the time they were in Europe, Ella's mental health has deteriorated because her marriage has caused inner turmoil that she is unable to resolve. Like Nat, who is adversely affected by Captain Bartlett's madness in Cross and Gold, Jim has been infected by his wife's instability to the extent that, following her lead, he has become depressed and nervous and has begun to imagine things.

Immediately after she enters the Harris apartment, a gift to her and Jim from his mother, Ella and her sister-in-law Hattie are at odds. The arena in which these characters claw at one another is at this point both a symbolic and a realistic setting; in succeeding scenes it reflects the protagonists' psychological states.

In Scene i the apartment is dominated by two dissimilar "works of art." One is a primitive Congo mask that connotes African creativity and religion; the other, a modern representation of an Afro-American. The mask and the photograph of Jim's garishly attired father signify two possible choices black characters have in the world of Chillun. In addition to accepting uncomplainingly their station as Mrs. Harris does, they can, like Hattie, elect to advance the race through belief in black worth and service; or they can, like Mr. Harris, imitate whites and advance themselves materially without concern for the greater good of their fellow blacks. Like the tasteful pieces of furniture in the apartment, chosen no doubt by Jim's sister Hattie, and the gaudy items, surely selected by the older HARRISES, the mask and the photograph also suggest the dissimilar perspectives of two generations of the same black family.

In the domestic sphere egos clash because Ella treats Hattie condescendingly. In Jim's sister, who is allied with black strength, achievement, and pride, Ella sees the same threat to white superiority she perceives in the Congo mask, Hattie's wedding gift to her brother. An advocate of absolute separation of the races, Mrs. Harris intercedes and ends the conflict temporarily by taking her daughter away.

Formerly, the Harrises were a closely knit family, but they are unable to maintain much unity once Ella becomes an actively divisive force. Shortly after seeing his sister for the first time in two years, Jim threatens her; he wants to force her to treat Ella in a manner he deems proper. When Hattie recognizes her sister-in-law's destructiveness and charges her with malevolence, Ella pleads that Jim send his sister away. Losing control, Jim exclaims furiously to his sister, "Either you leave here--or we will!" (p. 329). Forced to make a choice between his kinship family and his wife--between his father's family covenant and his own--Jim is willing to forgo blood relatives to please Ella. Since Mrs. Harris does not come to the apartment again; Hattie visits rarely; and Jim and Ella do not call on his mother, his sister, or anyone else, the second act of the play implies that his blind loyalty to his wife creates a permanent rift between him and his kinship family.

In Scene ii Ella becomes a doppelgänger of sorts. Pulled between her affection for Jim, need of his solicitude, and desire for his ascent and her destructive impulses, she alternates between love for him and hatred for the "dirty nigger." The marriage she envisioned as a sanctuary from life's cares has become a source of woe. She feels guilty because she and Jim consummated their marriage after they had

been wed for a year; suffers anguish because his blackness precludes their having children; and is so haunted that, extremely sensitive about her position, she imagines the loathing and scorn her fellow whites feel for her. To retain some degree of self-respect, she must believe that she is superior to someone. Solely because she is a member of the white race and not because she possesses outstanding personal qualities, she thinks she is better than Jim and other blacks. To maintain her higher status, Ella, blood sister to Mrs. Rowland in Breakfast, must methodically undermine her husband's ambitions by doing all in her power to prevent him from passing the bar examination. Not even her recognition that he is the "only white man in the world," the only morally superior man she knows, saves him from her subversive acts.

As Ella's inner turmoil increases, her murderous mania intensifies proportionally. Reflecting the couple's feelings of entrapment in marriage, the apartment appears to have shrunk and to have become more confining, while the Congo mask seems to have grown larger and more threatening. In this scene Jim believes in freedom, a stand that suggests a weakened mental state. Contradicting his earlier contention that individuals are only free to do what they have to do, he claims that he and Ella can be free if they subdue their weaknesses, i.e., if he conquers his fears and she rises above her prejudice. The exigencies of his situation compel support of this new attitude just as those of Rob's in Horizon are responsible for his stand on sacrifice during the closing moments of the play. In both works such views, born of frustration and disappointment, are suspect.

Motivated by love for her brother, Hattie admits that she could kill Ella to save Jim and suggests that he remove danger, his wife, from

the home. Angered by her recommendation that Ella be placed in a sanatorium--the ubiquitous solution in O'Neill's plays when a family member succumbs to madness, drugs, or tuberculosis--Jim ejects his sister from his world and from his life entirely. With her banishment, the couple's progress toward total isolation reaches its final stage. Only the mask, Jim, Ella, his fears, and her demons remain in the apartment.

In Scene iii Ella's malignity culminates in her constant wielding of a knife, which prevents her husband from sleeping and thus contributes to his failing the all-important examination once more and in her actual assault upon the mask, an act Bogard calls "symbolic genocide."⁸ Through her violence, metaphorically she attempts to bring to fruition her earlier prediction of the black man's continued subjugation. In the throes of dementia she has prophesied that Jim, exemplum of his race, will not pass the test in a thousand years.

In the final scene Jim's and Ella's isolation is unusually extreme, for not only are they alienated from larger society and kindred as in Act I; their separation has gone a step further. Throughout most of Act II they do not even have each other. The only way they can neutralize their destructive union and continue living together is to relinquish their adult sexual selves and to regress to their past asexual relationship as playmates or to create a fictive relationship as an emasculated Uncle Jim Crow (Uncle Tom) and Little Ella (Little Eva).

As the play ends, Jim is exhausted by life. But his resignation is transformed into religious ecstasy and humility as he deludes himself

⁸ Bogard, pp. 197-98.

once more about the cosmic force's interest in mankind. Because her madness has rid Ella of hatred and permits her to confess her love, he interprets their new roles as evidence of God's goodness. Tom Scanlan believes "O'Neill must mean us to take Jim's submission as a triumphant, if twisted acceptance: . . . What is being celebrated is Jim's recognition of the eternal fixity of their dilemma and his resignation to it."⁹ Törnqvist says that Jim can accept his and Ella's struggle once he sees that "theirs has been a suffering in imitation of Christ" and becomes convinced that "as God's true chillun they will soon reach 'the gates of Heaven.'"¹⁰ But Jim's "awareness" seems to be closer to Rob Mayo's final grand illusion than to true revelation. And like Rob's rhapsodic ejaculations, Jim's words are not heard by his wife.

The play comes full circle when Ella repeats an earlier gesture of affection and a formerly expressed wish. Before she kisses Jim's hand in the last scene, she says she wants to lose her individual self and become him, while he yields his identity and becomes her. This dissolution of self and merging with another is envisioned as a means of ending isolation through union with a loved one. Unlike Sara's creative loss of self through mystical connection with Simon in Touch, a union that reconciles the animal and the spiritual, loss of self in Chillun carries with it neither true belonging nor acceptance of opposing drives; it means destructive loss of the adult sexual self only.

As a play about marriage and family life, Chillun contains a bleak vision. Although the play presents through exposition the elder

⁹ Family, Drama, and American Dreams (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1978), p. 89.

¹⁰ A Drama of Souls, p. 84.

Harrises' successful union, in the main it offers little hope for marriage, which is characterized by schism. In most of O'Neill's plays, when a marital partner is unable to withstand his spouse's attacks any longer, he chooses to escape. While some of the playwright's early protagonists select death, Jim opts for insanity.

Like many of the dramatist's devouring wife-characters, Ella succeeds in destroying her husband only because of his inherent frailties. At one point in Chillun, Hattie suggests that a strong wife of Jim's own race might have given him the support he needs to succeed. But his behavior throughout the play suggests that his sister errs. A pathetic, weak character, he seems to be doomed to fail no matter whom he marries. Ella simply accelerates the inevitable.

The overall picture of family life is not much brighter than that of marriage. Even though the play admits the possibility of harmonious family life through its portrait of the Harrises' life before Jim's marriage, parent-child and sibling relations are in general contentious. Hattie has more family feeling than any other character, but her efforts to help Jim elicit the same reaction that the little girls' attempts to protect their brothers prompt in Act I, Scene i. Both she and her offers of help are rejected, as is the kinship family ultimately.

Unlike Chillun, Mourning presents not a single character who is chiefly responsible for discordant domestic relations but instead a group of family members who bring ruin to one another. A trilogy that consists of Homecoming, The Hunted, and The Haunted, Mourning focuses on a family that self-destructs because its members are caught in a web of hatred and life denial that none can escape permanently. Through several generations the Mannons, slaves to dead ideas, have repressed

their craving for love and joie de vivre. Abiding by puritan tenets that impose outer form upon their lives but which retain relevance and meaning no longer for the adherents, the family--and those with whom they have close, constant contact--merely exist, as their faces, lifelike masks, intimate. They do not thrive.

Indebted to the works of Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Strindberg and Ibsen, Mourning is loosely based on the Orestes myth. In "Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Dairy," O'Neill delineates his plans for a modern psychological drama of "murderous family love and hate" that focuses on a nineteenth-century Electra-figure and her family. In Mourning the playwright attempts to correct a "weakness in what remains to us of [the] Greek tragedy." He does not allow his modern Electra to "escape unpunished" and to end her life in "undramatic married banality" but traces the retribution that awaits the mother-murderess.¹¹ Her crime and punishment occur during the period immediately following the Civil War, a time distant but near enough for the spectators/readers to associate themselves with, "yet possessing costume, etc.--possessing sufficient mask of time and space, so that audiences will unconsciously grasp at once, it is primarily [a] drama of hidden life forces--fate--behind lives of characters."¹² The place in which most of the action unfolds is the circumscribed world of a New England seacoast town.

The trilogy's pervasive aura is one of death and despair. Sung at least twice during each play, the chantey "Shenandoah" first establishes

¹¹ In European Theories of the Drama: With a Supplement on the American Drama, ed. Barrett H. Clark, rev. ed. (New York: Crown, 1947), p. 530.

¹² "Working Notes," pp. 530-31.

this mood. Initially associated with the Mannon's longing for escape from a confining homeland through spatial remove, it becomes a dirge when the only release the characters win is death. Historical events, Abraham Lincoln's recent assassination and the mournful temper of the country, and the playwright's predilection for dusk and night scenes add to the gloom. That the fate of the father of the nation foreshadows the lot of the Mannon paterfamilias is suggested by the constant refrain that the family's leader is "able" and by the Whitmanesque lilacs that bloom near his home. The unfolding of the play consistently during the late afternoon and during the blackness of night signifies the Mannons' darkness of spirit. Their murderous tendencies are implied during the sunset scenes by the changing colors radiated by the dying sun. Its golden mist becomes crimson before it darkens to somber grayness.

For convenience's sake, O'Neill provides his major characters with given names that both are appropriate for nineteenth-century New Englanders of puritan stock and suggest those of their Greek counterparts. In his jottings the playwright claims that he did not force resemblances since the names have minimal significance. Usually, the similarity is limited to the use of the same initial letter of a character's name. Hence, Clytemnestra becomes Christine; Orestes, Orin; Aegisthus, Adam; Pylades, Peter; and Hermione, Hazel. O'Neill's name for the Agamemnon-character is an exception. Displeased with Asa, the original name he selected for the head of the family, the playwright decided eventually upon Ezra. Unable to arrive at a satisfactory modern equivalent of Electra, he chose Lavinia, which resembles Laodicea,

Homer's name for the mythic matricide.¹³ The playwright's selection of Biblical first names for his Greek-based characters emphasizes the trilogy's major conflict, the clash between paganism and puritanism. The family's surname Mannon suggests the final syllables of Agamemnon and thus links the American characters with their Hellenic predecessors. And their last name is so resonant that it brings to mind Mammon and manor as well.

Contrasts between the New Englanders and their Greek counterparts are implied through the Mannon home, a visual key to its inhabitants' psyches. Circa 1830, the mansion is in the Greek Revival style, a popular architectural mode during the early- and mid-nineteenth century in America. Sepulchral, the Mannon residence is, however, a perversion of the life-celebratory Attic temple. In its tomblike quality it suggests less Hellas and more Adam Forrester's and Lilius Fay's "Temple of Happiness" in Hawthorne's allegory "The Lily's Quest" and most the gloomy, haunted Rosmersholm, which imprisons and ultimately consumes Ibsen's protagonists, the pagan Rebecca West and the conventional Pastor Johannes Rosmer.¹⁴ As Mourning does, Hawthorne's tale contrasts elusive temporal happiness and the permanent peace and joy of death. A structure meant for social contact, Adam's and Lily's summer house, modeled on an "antique temple," is erected in love, however, while the Mannons' temple is raised in hate. And like its residents' masklike faces, the house in O'Neill's play is designed to conceal their crimes against and malice toward kindred from larger society's scrutiny.

¹³ "Working Notes," pp. 531-32.

¹⁴ For a full discussion of the resemblances between the Norwegian and the American dramatists' works, see Törnqvist's "Ibsen and O'Neill," 211-35.

Because he believed the family's former dwelling had been ineradicably polluted by his brother David's seduction and impregnation of Marie Brantôme, a Canuck nurse girl whom all of the Mannon males adored, Ezra's father Abe Mannon ordered that the Greek Revival mansion be built. Although Abe convinced himself that he acted out of moral compulsion, he was actually motivated by jealousy and ill will. Married to another, he fell in love with Marie nonetheless. But his ardor was converted into hatred when he learned she was his brother's "fancy woman." To revenge himself, Abe cheated David out of most of his inheritance and indirectly sentenced Marie to death by starvation.

Like Ibsen's Rosmers, the Mannons are the repressed victims of a restrictive faith. The hidden cravings of O'Neill's puritans for sensual, affirmative experience surfaces in the males' fatal attraction to Marie, the quintessential vital "animile," and to women who resemble her physically and thus concretize their yearnings. The Mannons' inability to reconcile the desire for paganism--for voluptuous fertility goddesses with abundant curly copper brown-bronze gold hair--and the demands of puritanism precipitates their offenses against family. As Abe's love-hatred for the nurse girl causes him to destroy his brother, Ezra's love for a woman like Marie initiates another chain of crimes against family in the next generation. Suggesting the son of the Christian God, Christine's name, ironic since she is associated with paganism, identifies her as the successor to and figurative daughter of the goddess Marie.

To society in the world of Mourning, the Mannons' home is tangible evidence of its inhabitants' successful and profitable compliance with the Protestant work ethic and of their inclusion among the elect. In

O'Neill's corpus, however, material success is not viewed normally as a positive achievement. A character or group that strives for and attains wealth and power is, as Doris Alexander says, personally weak and lacks creative strength. Indebted to Nietzsche, O'Neill's plays that examine the theme of materialism generally present, Alexander continues, such characters as individuals who cannot master themselves and hence attempt to rule others.¹⁵

Unable to penetrate beneath its exterior, the neighboring townspeople perceive the Mannon mansion as a "purty house." They fail to see beyond the white temple portico to the somber gray ugliness. They do not perceive that the mansion is imprisoning as the shadow of the black bars on the gray wall, cast by the six white columns of the portico, suggest. And they do not sense that the house is so oppressive that it becomes an animate force to the Mannons. In Chillun the windows of the church in which Jim and Ella are married and those of the nearby buildings mirror the characters' awareness of society's antipathy toward their union; the windows are like "staring, brutal eyes that pry callously at human beings without acknowledging them" (Act I, Scene iv, p. 318). Similarly, in Mourning the windows of the Mannon mansion convey the contents of characters' minds. As the trilogy begins, relations between Lavinia and her mother Christine are characterized by stealth and strife; and the windows "reflect the sun's rays in a resentful glare."¹⁶ In the final act of the third play, Lavinia

¹⁵ "O'Neill as Social Critic," American Quarterly, 6 (1954), 357.

¹⁶ Plays, II, Homecoming, Act I, p. 5.

convinces herself that she has freed herself from the Mannon dead. The open windows and fastened-back shutters in this act signify her temporary delusion; they indicate her faith in the ascendancy of life affirmation. Their manner of reflecting the sun suggesting the collective spirit of her deceased relatives, the windows suggest also that her dream of escape has never been truly realized and that her belief in this dream will be short-lived: "On the ground floor, the upper part of the windows, raised from the bottom, reflect the sun in a smouldering stare, as of brooding revengeful eyes" (The Haunted, Act IV, p. 169). As Lavinia accepts her bondage to the past and prepares to immure herself within the mansion, the closing of the windows and the decisive bang of shutters accompany her final entrance into the charnel house. The closed windows and nailed shutters signify the everlasting victory of the Mannon way.

Although Mourning occurs on a level where "outer reality is [the] mask of true fated reality," the playwright's mode requires that he capture surface verisimilitude.¹⁷ In addition to setting the play primarily in a historically appropriate mansion, O'Neill achieves the appearance of reality by including among the dramatis personae Hazel Niles and her brother Peter, essentially one-dimensional characters who suggest that goodness, innocence, and contentment can typify the lives of upper-class non-puritans, and choruses of townspeople, flat representations of New England types who are ridiculous, lewd, and malicious Peeping Toms or gossips. The fiancés of the younger Mannons briefly, Hazel and Peter are stable characters who have reconciled

¹⁷ "Working Notes," p. 535.

antagonistic (pagan and puritan) impulses. For a time they mean possible freedom from death and from hatred for Lavinia and Orin through marriage. Ultimately, they are the characters the protagonist must rescue from the blighting influence of the Mannons by denying herself life and love. The choruses of townspeople stress the Mannons' separation from and lack of accountability to any individual, group, or deity outside the family unit. In this respect they are dissimilar to comparable figures in Greek drama who reinforce the audience's belief in the hero's membership in society and his responsibility to the gods. In their expositional function, the choruses in Mourning resemble their antecedents most. The questions of two different groups of townspeople evoke disclosures of family history from Seth Beckwith, the Mannons' occasionally loquacious caretaker and gardener.

Ultimately, the family is the only valid structure the Mannons encounter during their lifetimes. In fact, Chester Clayton Long insists that, if O'Neill is not granted the premise of "the absolute autonomy of the familial unit in shaping human destiny," the play "can have no satisfactory 'meaning.'"¹⁸ Not only do order and justice emanate solely from this most basic structure. In the godless universe of Mourning, a "black-as-pitch" world "without a star to guide" the characters (The Haunted, Act II, p. 151), the family's ranks provide the only viable deities the Mannons serve. Ancestors whose portraits attain the status of icons, these gods convey their considerable power and malevolence in the same manner F. Scott Fitzgerald's billboard advertising the services of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg suggests the ineffectuality and indifference of the cosmic force in The Great Gatsby. Reflecting the fears of the

¹⁸ Long, p. 147.

protagonist near the end of the trilogy, the eyes in the Mannons' "portraits seem to possess an intense bitter life, with their frozen stare 'looking over the head of life, cutting it dead for the impropriety of living,' . . . " (The Haunted, Act II, p. 157).

The Mannon pattern of destruction and increasing inwardness establishes itself as a chain of murders committed against and suicides induced by kindred which must be concealed to protect the family's honor. The deathly cycle continues until the family is gradually reduced to a lone individual. The Mannons' fates become inevitable because none is willing to relegate self-interest to family survival and stability. Christine initiates the current series of crimes against family when, to be with her lover Adam Brant without fear of reprisal, she murders her hated husband Ezra. In turn, their daughter Lavinia enlists her brother Orin's aid in avenging Ezra's death. Prompted primarily by jealousy of his mother's lover and accomplice rather than by love for his father, Orin slays Adam Brant, Marie Brantôme's and David Mannon's son. Unable to endure life without her paramour and hounded by her children, Christine commits suicide. A year later Orin and Lavinia have attempted to escape their New England mansion by traveling to its antithesis, the Blessed Isles in the South Seas, which all in the family envision as the panacea for their spiritual ills. When they return to their home, he succumbs to his personal furies and to his sister's coaxing. In Mourning memory brings guilt; tortured by his role in his mother's death, Orin emulates her by shooting himself in the room in which she took her life. Until this time Lavinia's stance toward the ruin that surrounds her resembles the attitude of her grandfather Abe, who remained dishonest with himself. She does not

acknowledge that her cries for justice, which cause most of the deaths, have an impure motive. However, a Freudian slip effects her recognition that she arranged Adam's murder and contributed to her mother's suicide not only because she was a loyal daughter bent on righting a wrong done to her father but also because she loved Adam, was just as enraged by his preference for Christine as her grandfather had been by Marie's choice of David Mannon, and was driven by malice to punish the man who scorned her. Since public and divine laws are meaningless in the Mannon world, Lavinia is compelled to punish herself for her offenses against family. And she acquiesces to the spirit she perceives in her forebears' portraits. Signaling the end of the Mannon line, her self-entombment is the sentence she imposes.

Lavinia is able to amass and wield power enough to enforce her death-dealing code of justice because of the factionalism and egalitarianism that characterize domestic relations in the Mannon household. This state of affairs is the result of members' violations of four family laws that Long outlines:

- 1) that the husband and father fulfill not only his own sexual needs, but those of his wife, also;
- 2) that the wife and mother reciprocate in this;
- 3) that neither husband nor wife seek external satisfaction of their needs, and that neither of them break the familial hierarchy of command within the family by alienating the affections of their offspring from either husband or wife;
- 4) finally, that the offspring recognize the relative authority (father primary, mother secondary) in the joint family rule, wherein the father is controller of the family in all external matters, food getting, provision for domicile, et cetera, while the mother is controller of the distribution within the family of the life sustaining commodities the father acquires.¹⁹

¹⁹ Long, p. 170.

In the Mannon family the pagan mother and her son take an anti-Mannon stand; their common foes are the puritan father and his daughter. Christine's partiality for Orin and hatred for Ezra and Lavinia lead to the eternal verbal skirmishes that typify their family life. The mother's failure to love both of her children elicits Lavinia's hostility and jealousy. Lacking any reason for filial respect and hence for restraint, the daughter acknowledges no distance between her and Christine. Love or fear of the mother inoperative, Lavinia is able to plot against Christine with few qualms. During the early moments of the trilogy, domestic democracy is increased by the prolonged absences of Ezra and Orin, both of whom are serving in the Union Army. Without the Mannon males between them, the females engage in a savage war that has grown out of their long-extant competition for masculine attention. Fighting not now for the affection of Ezra or Orin, each woman wishes to win Adam Brant.

According to Hugh Dickinson, whose analysis is indebted in part to Freud's assessment of domestic turmoil, a major cause of family divisiveness and friction in the world of O'Neill's plays is the rivalry between the child and the parent of the same sex for the affection of the parent of the opposite sex. Since love begins and ends with the family in the dramatist's works, Dickinson concludes that all love is thus both psychologically and literally incestuous and jealousy among kindred is inevitable.²⁰ While the family is the center of love as well as the breeding ground of hatred, hostility erupts among Ezra, his wife, and their children not primarily because kindred are sexual competitors

²⁰ Myth on the Modern Stage (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1969), pp. 157-58.

but because characters with polar orientations to life clash within a limited space. As a matter of fact, early in the trilogy Adam Brant specifically indicates that the Mannon family should not fit the classic Freudian pattern:

BRANT. . . . [Y]ou must be very happy at the prospect of seeing your father again. Your mother has told me how close you've always been to him.

LAVINIA. Did she? (Then with intensity) I love Father better than anyone in the world. There is nothing I wouldn't do--to protect him from hurt!

BRANT. (watching her carefully--keeping his casual tone) You care more for him than for your mother?

LAVINIA. Yes.

BRANT. Well, I suppose that's the usual way of it. A daughter feels closer to her father and a son to his mother. But I should think you ought to be a born exception to that rule.

LAVINIA. Why?

BRANT. You're so like your mother in some ways. . . .

(Homecoming, Act I, p. 22)

Repressing all resemblance to her mother, Lavinia emulates her father by wearing unfeminine black clothing, by walking in a rigid martinet-like manner, and by assuming a gruff, commanding voice. She denies Christine's role in her creation not because she has sexual designs upon or fantasies about her father but because her mother has consistently rejected her proffers of love. Repudiation of all things associated with Christine is one of Lavinia's few defenses against the pain her mother's disaffection brings.

Revealing once more the destructive power of romantic idealism in O'Neill's canon, Christine's indifference to her daughter is the result of her disenchantment with the "silent and mysterious and romantic" Ezra after she married him and reality intruded. On their wedding night, his lovemaking, devoid of gentleness and expertise and sexually unfulfilling for her, flooded her with disgust and shattered her dream of him forever. Though Christine has performed her wifely duties for over

twenty years, her resentment and revulsion have become hatred; and an impenetrable wall of silence separates her and Ezra. The consequence of their honeymoon, Lavinia is unloved because she is a living reminder of her mother's traumatic deflowering. The romantic idealism that leads to the transformation of Christine's love for her husband into hatred and thus to her inability to love her child makes her vulnerable to Adam Brant. Representing freedom from the blighting influence of the Mannons, he attracts Christine chiefly because, possessing physical qualities in common with Ezra, he conforms to the ideal she formed of her husband before marriage exploded her dream:

He has a broad, low forehead, framed by coal-black straight hair which he wears noticeably long, pushed back carelessly from his forehead as a poet's might be....His wide mouth is sensual and moody--. . . He is dressed with an almost foppish extravagance, with touches of studied carelessness, as if a romantic Byronic appearance were the ideal in mind.... (Homecoming, Act I, p. 21)

Normally, Lavinia displays venomous hatred for Christine. But as her jealousy of Orin--who enjoyed their mother's affection until he betrayed her by submitting to the enemy, Ezra and Lavinia, and joining the army--reveals, Lavinia's hostility masks a desperate need of and desire for maternal love. In one of the most poignant moments in the trilogy, she expresses this yearning explicitly. Alone after Christine and Ezra, the latter who has just returned from the war, have retired for the night, Lavinia allows her wooden pose to crumble momentarily. "[A]lmost with a sob, hiding her face in her hands," she beseeches her parent, who is beyond hearing range, "Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? What harm had I done you? . . ." (Homecoming, Act III, p. 57).

In the final play, The Haunted, Orin's incestuous proposal to Lavinia is another scream for the mother. Merging Marie Brantôme, his

mother, and his sister into a single mother-figure after Lavinia is metamorphosed into a sensual woman, Orin attempts to reverse the course of the past by devising a means to prevent his sister, who plans to establish a family covenant with Peter Niles, from deserting him as his literal mother planned to do with Adam Brant. By threatening to expose the skeletons in the Mannon closet, Orin forces Lavinia to agree to remain unwed and to yield to his control. To eliminate any possibility that she may break her promise and may elude him in the future, he wishes to chain her to him by making her as guilty and as damned as he believes he is. Compelling her to violate the universal taboo against incest, as reprehensible a crime against family as matricide, the offense for which Orin feels culpable, is the only way he thinks he can prevent her eventual flight. In intent, his incestuous overture echoes his mother's effort to bind Adam to her forever by involving her lover in Ezra's murder. After her seafaring paramour acquiesces to her scheme, Christine, alone for a moment, gloats, "You'll never dare leave me now, Adam--for your ships or your sea or your naked Island girls--when I grow old and ugly!" (Homecoming, Act II, p. 42). History repeats itself a year after the deaths of Ezra, Christine, and Adam when Orin explains the purpose of the incest to his sister: "How else can I be sure you won't leave me? You would never dare leave me--then! . . ."

(The Haunted, Act III, p. 165). Although Orin is aware of Lavinia's physical attractiveness, he suggests that they breach the ancient prohibition not because he is in the throes of overwhelming passion but because, without some degree of certainty in his life, he will succumb to madness. The security of her continued presence is his only defense. Repulsed and horrified, Lavinia denies implicitly the relevance of the

family romance in Mourning when she exhibits a total lack of sexual desire for this man who, like Adam, resembles her father.

At this point Lavinia believes Adam's murder and Christine's suicide were acts of justice, and she does not share her brother's need for punishment and atonement. To rid herself of Orin, the final obstacle to love and life, she speeds him on the path his incest longing indicates he wishes to travel. This path is, according to Jung, one that does not lead to cohabitation but rather one that has as its terminus the maternal shelter, from whence the individual hopes to be reborn.²¹ Since obliteration of the old self is concomitant with the desire for regeneration, Orin's incestuous suggestion is in the final analysis an expression of a death wish. Denied symbolic passage to his goal through his surrogate mother Lavinia, Orin achieves shortly thereafter the peace of the womb-tomb through another route: he shoots himself.

The destruction that occurs in Mourning is less the result of sexual rivalry and more the consequence of the Mannons' inability to harmonize the demands of a patriarchal faith that teaches that life "was a dying" and their desire for the vitality and joy they link with God the Mother. In adhering rigidly to a puritanical creed, the Mannons refuse to acknowledge, as Angela Belli says, the romantic aspects of their natures that are manifested both in their yearnings for the exotic

²¹ See "Part Two," in Symbols of Transformation, Vol. V of The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Bollingen Series, 20, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1956) p. 223. Hereafter cited as Collected Works.

and in their choice of sea-related vocations.²² They can gain a semblance of the pagan experiences they crave only by raising as their ideal Marie Brantôme. That the French Canuck nurse girl is a mother-figure to Ezra and is Adam's literal mother does not signify that the men's attraction to Christine is the manifestation of Oedipal impulses. As Abe and David wanted Marie, who was not a mother-figure to either, Ezra and Adam as well as Orin and even Lavinia yearn for the green-garbed, "furrin looking" Christine because both women personify the Mannons' hidden desires.

Allowing her pagan self to become ascendant, Lavinia blooms into an "animile" while she and Orin are visiting the South Sea island that beckons all of her family members but which only she, her brother, an uncorrupted Adam, and earlier, freer seafaring Mannons ever attain. In O'Neill's oeuvre characters such as Mary and Jamie Tyrone in Journey attempt to escape the unpleasant realities of family life, the equivalent of life in general, by resorting to intoxicants, while Ezra Mannon in Mourning copes with domestic disharmony by immersing himself in business, civic affairs, and war. Including the Mannons, figures in O'Neill's plays dream as well of release from life's cares, of avoidance of the past, or of achievement of ideally harmonious relations with family or other loved ones through spatial remove. The ubiquitous lure of the horizon, the California gold fields, the Blessed Isles, and other comparable Edens that signify freedom to these characters attest to the power of the paradisiac myth.

²² Ancient Myths and Modern Drama (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1969), p. 25.

In Mourning the earthly paradise and the mother-figures are indissolubly linked. Before his fall Adam gained access to a tropical Eden. His descriptions of his mother Marie Brantôme early in the trilogy and shortly thereafter of the isle where he was shipwrecked on his first voyage suggest that she and the island are one in his mind. A felt presence who attains mythic stature, Marie had, Adam tells Lavinia in "reverent, hushed tones," "beautiful hair like your mother's, that hung down to her knees, and big, deep, sad eyes that were blue as the Caribbean Sea!" (Homecoming, Act I, p. 22). Of the literal island, he adds during this exchange:

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! (Homecoming, Act I, p. 24).

On a socio-economic plane, the green and blue island is the opposite of the gray and white mansion that forbids Adam entry and whose residents' ill will guaranteed his childhood poverty and his mother's humiliation. A place where labor, competitive enterprise, and the pursuit of wealth are superfluous, the island is also on this level the antithesis of capitalistic New England, governed by the Protestant work ethic and the puritan belief in man's depravity.

On a metaphysical plane, the isle promises transitory belonging, which Adam's verbal portrait connects with the security of the prenatal and the suckling phases, periods of almost absolute unity between mother and child. This tie severed during weaning, Adam and the other characters can express their longing for a return to this bliss only by embracing a dream of an Eden that approximates the almost irretrievable experience of harmony. An island paradise, modeled on Herman Melville's

Typee, summons Orin as well; and to this Civil War veteran, who longs for an eternal respite, the tropical paradise of his dreams becomes inseparable from the body of his literal mother Christine.

Reaching the Blessed Isles also connotes attaining mutually satisfying sexual love untainted by puritanism. The follower of God the Father, Ezra is unable to treat sexual love as a reciprocally pleasurable, tender act. Hence, he fails to fulfill the physical needs of his wife, one of the incarnations of God the Mother. Dreading her continued participation in a marriage that alienates rather than joins, Christine conspires to dissolve it during the same period Ezra attempts to save their union, which has meant self-contempt and isolation for him. After he returns from the war, he envisions sailing to a South Sea island, where he hopes, alone together, he and Christine can rejuvenate their marriage. Ironically, she and Adam have selected a similar tropical paradise as their destination once they dispatch Ezra.

Alone with Orin, at the time a staunch supporter of puritanism who reads moral corruption into the instinctual behavior of the natives, Lavinia journeys to the Blessed Isles, where she witnesses and appreciates the innocence of the islanders' sexual conduct. Though her purity remains intact, she becomes sufficiently unrestrained to kiss one of the noble savages in the moonlight as she had much earlier kissed Adam before she learned that he was her mother's lover and was only feigning interest in her. Although her stay on the green and blue island completes Lavinia's transformation into the pagan mother, its effects are fleeting. Three days after she and Orin return to the gray and white mansion of hate and destruction, she abandons her mother's green, casts out the flowers that suggest affirmation of life, and

resumes the black mourning attire and the military mannerisms associated with patriarchy. Lavinia's final actions imply that she learns what many of O'Neill's characters eventually discern, a truth Jamie Tyrone articulates explicitly in Misbegotten:

We can kid the world but we can't fool ourselves, like most people, no matter what we do--nor escape ourselves no matter where we run away. Whether it's the bottom of a bottle or a South Sea island, we'd find our own ghosts there waiting to greet us--'sleepless with pale commemorative eyes,' as Rosetti wrote. . . . (Act III, p. 63)

When Lavinia resigns herself to the ineluctability of her invincible ancestors, she releases Peter by lying to him about her activities on the Blessed Isles. Repeating the epithet she used earlier to refer to Marie Brantôme, she confesses that she was the "fancy woman" of a native.

A strict code of justice which excludes no one, not even herself, from its laws forces Lavinia to repudiate life and love and to prevent Peter from sharing her dark destiny. What would have awaited the bridegroom had she not saved him is suggested by two townspeople who are members of the chorus. As they spy on Christine early in the trilogy, they indicate that prolonged exposure to the Mannons produces changes in spouses and retainers:

MINNIE. . . . 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.
 (Homecoming, Act I, p. 9)

Apparently, even a brief betrothal to one of them alters personalities. After Peter becomes engaged to Lavinia, tension develops in the erstwhile happy, mutually sustaining Niles family; and pugnacity, suspicion, and filial disrespect emerge rapidly in the formerly even-tempered, ingenuous, and dutiful young man. That his fate as the

marital partner of a Mannon will resolve itself as Christine's does--in love that becomes hate and in a desire for escape from gloom and evil that manifests itself in suicide--and that the deathly cycle will recur are implied in his sister's predictions of the ruin his union with Lavinia will bring. Hazel's attempts to save Peter from unhappiness strike the most responsive chord when she appeals to his fiancée's sense of honor and justice. Because of these pleas, Lavinia tells the life-saving lie that evokes his horror and provokes his flight from her.

As Christine's explanation of her lifelong antipathy toward her daughter suggests, Lavinia is a nineteenth-century perversion of Athena, the temperate patriarchal goddess of wisdom who sprang from the head of Zeus without aid of woman: "I tried to love you. I told myself it wasn't human not to love my own child, born of my body. But I never could make myself feel you were born of any body but his [Ezra's]! You were always my wedding night to me--and my honeymoon!" (Homecoming, Act II, p. 31). In the Oresteia Athena resolves the conflict between matriarchy and patriarchy by espousing forgiveness, by reconciling the opposing world views, and by providing for the public good by establishing the Areopagus. But in O'Neill's trilogy matriarchal values are decisively defeated by the only gods that have meaning to the protagonist, the ancestral Mannons; and society is superfluous. Totally committed once more to puritanism as the trilogy ends, Lavinia proves herself to be a true Mannon when she, the judge, jury, and executioner of her kindred, imposes the severest sentence upon herself after she faces the truth that her single-minded pursuit of "justice" has been actually a ruthless quest for revenge.

In view of a desperate disclosure she makes as she anticipates Orin's death, Lavinia's self-punishment requires superhuman will. Subjugating personal needs, she embraces a lot that is anathema to her affirmative self. Clutching life (Peter), she proclaims loudly and hysterically her desire for love and happiness as if, like Annie Keeney in Ile who attempts to combat the cosmic force with loud music, she believes sheer volume and extreme emotion are effective weapons against the threat she senses:

Oh, won't it be wonderful, Peter--once we're married and have a home with a garden and trees! We'll be so happy! I love everything that grows simply--up toward the sun--everything that's straight and strong! I hate what's warped and twists and eats into itself and dies for a lifetime in shadow. . . . I can't bear waiting--waiting and waiting and waiting--! (The Haunted, Act III, p. 167)

Before Lavinia decides upon years of solitary confinement in her dark ancestral home, entrapment as a major motif has been suggested by the mansion's portico columns/prison bars. That the Mannons' imprisonment is a matter of attitude rather than of place is demonstrated by their inability to escape the past through spatial remove or to perceive that paradise (life affirmation), symbolized by the flowers and greenery that surround their sepulchral mansion as well as by the islands, has always been within their reach. Failing to allow their hidden selves to emerge and masking their yearnings for life's joys, they remain captives of their heritage and of their psyches. Lavinia's final entombment is but the last in a series of "stage symbol[s]," in Dickinson's words, "of the implications O'Neill has drawn from his scheme: the self as jailer and jailed, the tortured and the torturer."²³

²³ Dickinson, p. 158.

The spirit in which she confronts her end, with arrogance, defiance, and ghoulish pleasure in her ability to withstand any assaults her ancestors launch against her, suggests that Lavinia has come full circle. A static character, she has only shifted her sights. Now she directs destructiveness against herself. Meager consolation, pride in her toughness is all she will have to comfort her through the long years of immurement.

Long claims that mourning will become Lavinia because she comprehends, or will comprehend, what she laments; she mourns, he says, the barrenness in her race and not her personal losses.²⁴ While she acknowledges the inescapability of the Mannon dead and gains some self-knowledge, Lavinia is, like Dreamy, Con, and a legion of O'Neill's characters, unable to harmonize antagonistic aspects of her being. This failure must qualify any claims for larger perception on her part. Mourning becomes her because death is the Mannon way, and except for a brief span Lavinia is a slave to life denial.

While it presents the family as the center of love-hatred, destruction, and isolation as Mourning does, Iceman does not deny its characters egress from the home or force them into lives devoid of human contact. Instead, the derelicts who frequent Harry Hope's shabby New York City hotel flee their kindred and find in a metaphorical family of fellow dreamers a level of acceptance and understanding that is rarely possible in the domestic milieu. En masse the escapees from home and kindred embrace illusions and, the pervasive funereal imagery implies, death in life in a barroom that epitomizes the surcease from family

²⁴ See Long, p. 140.

strife sought by John Brown, Bill Carmody, Con Melody, and a plethora of O'Neill's male characters.

The setting of Iceman is as much an index of the inner states of its dramatis personae as the divided taproom is a key to Con's psyche in

Touch:

The back room and a section of the bar of HARRY HOPE'S saloon on an early morning in summer, 1912. [T]he right wall of the back room is a dirty black curtain which separates it from the bar. At rear, this curtain is drawn back from the wall so the bartender can get in and out. . . . Two windows, so glazed with grime one cannot see through them, are in the left wall, looking out on a backyard. The walls and ceiling once were white, but it was a long time ago, and they are now so splotched, peeled, stained and dusty that their color can best be described as dirty. . . .²⁵

As the room was once spotless, the habitués of the saloon were once successful participants in the mainstream of life, some actively serving social and political causes and others winning praise in academic and professional circles. Now inert failures, the characters place figurative blinders, black curtains, over their eyes and dwell in a bounded universe in which "truth has no bearing on anything" and the "lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten lot of us, drunk or sober" (Act I, p. 578). With the aid of mind-clouding five-cent whiskey and with the cooperation and encouragement of their companions, each of whom accepts the others' tales of yesterday and illusions about the future in exchange for similar courtesies, the barflies achieve, as the impenetrable windows suggest, almost total separation from reality and from the outside world.

Their most important dreams focus on tomorrow. Articulated at length as early as 1914 in the play Bread and in 1917 in the short

²⁵ Plays, III, Iceman, Act I, p. 573.

story "Tomorrow," the tomorrow doctrine is succinctly and mockingly defined in Iceman by one of the play's chief characters, "de old Foolosopher" Larry Slade:

I'll be glad to pay up--tomorrow. And I know my fellow inmates will promise the same. They've all a touching credulity concerning tomorrows. . . . It'll be a great day for them, tomorrow--the Feast of All Fools, with brass bands playing! Their ships will come in, loaded to the gunwales with cancelled regrets and promises fulfilled and clean slates and new leases! (Act I, p. 578)

On this day some of the derelicts dream of returning to the bosoms of their families. One expects to elude the sins of his father. And others hope to support meaningful causes once more. Although the characters are aware that tomorrow will never come, they cannot admit this knowledge because they require illusions and hopes to sustain some semblance of physical life. Only through a ritualistic game that confirms these dreams are they able, John H. Stroupe says, to mask the hopelessness and pointlessness of their situation.²⁶

After Larry describes the participants in this game to Don Parritt, an outsider who has recently arrived from the West Coast, he sums up, "Well, that's our whole family circle of inmates, except the two barkeeps and their girls, three ladies of the pavement that room on the third floor" (Act I, p. 594). Toward their pimp Rocky, two of these prostitutes behave like "maternal affectionate sisters toward a bullying brother whom they like to tease and spoil" (Act I, p. 611). When the whores in his stable become too independent or abusive, Rocky boasts to Chuck, a fellow pimp, "I just give dem a slap, like any guy would his wife, if she got too gabby. . . ." (Act II, p. 633). Harry Hope deems

²⁶ "The Abandonment of Ritual: Jean Anouilh and Eugene O'Neill," Renaissance, 28, (1976), 153.

these ladies of the evening "good kids." When the title character appears at last, he calls the assembled group "Brothers and Sisters," an address that has multiple associations. These characters' frequent recourse to kinship terms indicates that the dipsomaniacs, flesh peddlers, and whores constitute a pseudo-family that is headed and provided for by Harry Hope.

In a play in which the characters' backward glances reveal that relations with literal kindred neither provide peace nor alleviate loneliness, the imposition of family structure upon this motley collection of losers is both ironic and profound. Like Bound East for Cardiff (1914), an early play in which the ship is the equivalent of the bar, Iceman suggests that mutually sustaining, tolerant, affectionate relations are more likely to be found in the company of men without "good" women rather than inside the family circle where the individual instinctively expects to find harmony but where ambivalence limits or precludes its existence. That this most basic of units is the model for the lives of characters who have abandoned the domestic milieu by choice or at the urgings of relatives indicates that the family retains as much currency here as the source of all as it does in Mourning.

As Iceman begins, Don Parritt does not belong to this family. He attempts to establish, however, a kinship relationship with Larry, a former revolutionary who was one of the many lovers his mother Rosa Parritt took. Since he abandoned the Movement, life, and the woman he loved, Larry has assumed a pose of detachment and has announced a desire for death. Although, honest about such matters, Rosa has told her son that Larry is not his father and he claims not to have met her until after Don was born, the young man wistfully clings to a childhood

fantasy of their consanguinity nonetheless. Larry's impassioned denial of paternity may be construed as an admission of involvement in Don's creation, as resistance to assuming duties that signify relinquishment of "the grandstand of philosophical detachment," as resentment toward the individual who is attempting to awaken him from psychological death, or as a combination of these possibilities. Regardless of its meaning, the issue of biological parentage becomes irrelevant as a relationship between father-figure and son-figure congeals and Larry hears Don's testimony and passes sentence on the guilty young man during the play's final act.

Early in the play Don tries to involve his old acquaintance in his fate while Larry and the other dreamers await the arrival of Theodore Hickman (Hickey), a hedonistic hardware salesman who joins them for an annual debauch on Harry Hope's birthday. When Hickey enters, he is no longer the happy-go-lucky drunk of old but has been transformed into a teetotaler who wishes to play Jesus. Like Parritt, with whom he immediately suspects he has something in common, Hickey does not belong in the bar; for as the young stranger threatens Larry's peaceful, fixed existence, the salesman endangers the barflies' life style.

In the throes of what Rosamund Gilder calls the greatest illusion of all, the belief that disillusionment is a panacea for man's ills, Hickey comes as a savior.²⁷ Confused and misguided, he claims he wants to bring his friends peace; but since what he promises is what they have already found through liquor and dreams, his attempts seem unnecessary. He wants to rid them of dreams so they can accept themselves as failures

²⁷ "Each in His Own Way," Theatre Arts, December 1946, p. 688.

without guilt. But just as Sara's messianism in Touch does not yield the results she expects, neither does his. In the wake of his salvation, despair engulfs the family of Hope; and, without dreams of tomorrow, life becomes completely meaningless. Also, the liquor loses its "kick," divisiveness and animosity supplant comradeship and affection, and nihilism replaces amniotic quiescence in the "Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller." Harmony and friendship become ascendant again only when the habitués of Hope's saloon grasp a pipe dream that allows them to regain the illusions that Hickey has attempted to destroy.

Two characters can no longer return, however, to their past dreams. His surname suggesting both his offense and his function in the play, Don Parritt is a "stool pigeon" who confesses to betraying the Movement, which is synonymous to him with his mother, by informing the police of the anarchists' activities. Involved in a recent bombing that caused several deaths, Rosa Parritt has been arrested as a result of her Judas son's aid to the authorities and will undoubtedly be given a life sentence for her role in the violence. For such a free woman, this fate amounts to living death. An act of revenge, Don's treason is the culmination of years of bitterness. The child of a socially committed woman who neglected him consistently and who gave herself in the name of free love to such a host of men that their home seemed a brothel and she a whore, Don Parritt has succumbed to his hatred of Rosa and has ended her participation in the Movement forever. Believing himself a matricide, he is unable to justify his murderous behavior as Lavinia Mannon, a similarly unloved child, does in Mourning. Instead, like her brother Orin, he experiences overwhelming guilt that can be expiated only through his own death. As her brother requires Lavinia's

encouragement and approval of his atoning-punishing suicide, Don needs his "father" Larry's sanction of the same act.

A mirror character who repeats parrot-like or anticipates portions of Hickey's confession, Don Parritt ultimately forsakes all illusions that obscure his true motives for delivering his mother to her enemies; but his salesman counterpart is never able to cope with his actual reason for revenging himself against the woman in his life. Triggering Don's disclosure of hatred for Rosa and of his betrayal of her, Hickey's admission of murder and his explanation of his motives reveal that he is at no time more completely the dreamer than when he believes that he has faced reality and attempts to persuade his friends to do likewise. At first, he claims to have slain his wife Evelyn because he loved her. Unable to rescue her from the ignominy of being the spouse of a profligate by killing himself or by deserting her because these acts would have brought her greater pain, Hickey was forced to resolve the dilemma his marriage posed by murdering his wife as she slept. But as an involuntary ejaculation reveals, he was prompted not by unadulterated love but by hatred to take her life. Always granting him absolution for his adulteries and for his other lapses and never wavering in her love, Evelyn cherished a pipe dream of her husband's eventual reformation. Nourished by this life-saving illusion, her constancy and her Christlike forgiveness laid waste to his self-respect. To save himself, he had to destroy her. Believing the calm he experiences after the crime is the result of his putting to rest both his and her pipe dreams, Hickey spreads the gospel of disillusionment and attempts to bring peace to others. When his salvation brings despair, he is forced to reexamine the act from which his doctrine sprang. Incapable of confronting the

Gorgon head of truth, he seeks refuge in another dream: he claims that he was insane when he murdered Evelyn and when he let slip his loathing for her. Reiterating that, except for resigned or extraordinarily strong beings such as Larry Slade or Lavinia Mannon, self-knowledge and truth are unbearable, Hickey's seizing of this illusion allows the pimps, whores, and derelicts to reclaim the pipe dreams that the salesman wrests from them earlier. Forgetting that their illusions about tomorrow have been shattered, they return to the ritualistic, dream-confirming game. Blind to Hickey's effect on Larry and deaf to the sound of Don Parritt's suicide, they raise their voices in joyous cacophony as Iceman concludes. Once more they become members of a family of dreamers that tolerates individual differences and gives its members affection and relief from aloneness. The only insider who fails to participate in their reaffirmative frolicking, Larry Slade is thrown free of the wavelike movement that Eugene M. Waith sees in the play. Beginning in lethargy, building to its greatest peak of activity as the characters are forced to deal today with dreams of tomorrow, and returning to calm after their illusions become reentrenched, the play ends, Waith says, as Larry is no longer able to pretend that he yearns for the end but must face his fear of both life and death.²⁸

According to Eric Bentley, the reality-illusion antithesis in Iceman diverts attention from the play's major theme, the love-hate paradox.²⁹ Although Winifred Dusenbury Frazer and Ruby Cohn agree that

²⁸ "Eugene O'Neill: An Exercise in Unmasking," Educational Theatre Journal, 13 (1961), 189.

²⁹ Eric Bentley, "Trying to Like O'Neill," in In Search of Theater (New York: Vintage-Random House, 1959), p. 229.

these two sets of polarities receive considerable attention in the play, these critics see them not as competing motifs but as aspects of a single theme--that love is the most pernicious illusion.³⁰ Frazer goes beyond this assessment to point out that, while Bentley and other critics assume that "love and death are contraries" and that "love and hate are opposites," in Iceman "the great truth at which O'Neill arrives is that psychologically and physiologically they result in the same things."³¹ The playwright reinforces this sameness by naming the detectives who come to take Hickey to jail Lieb (love) and Moran (death).

In the play all intimate relationships are characterized by ambivalence; leading to destruction ultimately, love is inevitably revealed as hatred. Supporters of emotional illusions, Don Parritt, Harry Hope, Hickey, and a minor character Jimmy Tomorrow claim that they love their women. After Hickey explodes their dreams, the first three admit at least momentarily that they hated the "bitches" who ruined their lives as much as they loved them. The fourth confesses that he never loved his wife: he reveals that he welcomed her infidelities because they provided him with an excuse for drinking. Since Jimmy was generally indifferent toward his wife Marjorie, he neither killed her nor was destroyed by her love or neglect.

³⁰ See Frazer's Love as Death in The Iceman Cometh (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1967), p. 4, and Cohn's "The Wet Sponge of Eugene O'Neill," in Dialogue in American Drama (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1971), p. 49.

³¹ Frazer, pp. 34-35.

In Act I Don Parritt has dropped enough hints for Larry and the spectators-readers to suspect his crime and has thus laid the foundation for a comparison between himself and Hickey long before the salesman appears. When the hardware drummer arrives, he senses an affinity between himself and the stranger immediately and soon suspects that Parritt is a "damned kid." What they have in common is a traumatic childhood, Don Parritt as the insecure son of a strong anarchist woman who pursued freedom while denying him liberty and Hickey as the rebellious, hell-raising son of a minister whose proselyting the salesman emulates in the saloon. Also, both are victims of women's pipe dreams. In quest of a dream of social justice, Rosa denies her humanity and deprives her son of maternal love. Her indestructible faith in her husband's ability to correct his faults produces an inhuman and inhumane capacity to love and forgive in Evelyn.

Although, as Engel says, these female dreamers represent polar orientations toward love, the wife providing an overabundance and the mother a dearth, each evokes murderous hatred from the man closest to her.³² The males' enmity develops, Törnqvist believes, in each instance because of the disparity between their own opinion of themselves and the women's assessment.³³ Thinking he deserves more affection than his mother gives him, Parritt is devastated and must revenge himself upon Rosa, who has slighted him and hence robbed him of self-esteem throughout the years. Believing he receives more love than he deserves, Hickey reacts to the affection Evelyn bestows in the same fashion Parritt responds to indifference. To rid themselves of self-hatred,

³² Engel, p. 286.

³³ A Drama of Souls, p. 227.

each man subconsciously determines to eliminate the source of this feeling. Loving as well as hating the female family member who delivers blows to his pride, he knows intuitively what Orin and Lavinia Mannon learn only after a journey to the Blessed Isles. He realizes that he cannot win his freedom simply by removing himself from her physical presence. To liberate himself truly, he must irrevocably crush her. Ironically, his murder of her leaves him free only to die himself.

Parritt attempts to meliorate his matricide by articulating pipe dreams that he betrayed his mother for patriotic reasons and for money to spend on a tart. But even he is aware of how unconvincing his explanations are. Apparently less deluded than Hickey, he experiences no compulsion to influence others but comes to the saloon to be judged by the only other person who loves his mother and for whom Rosa cares. Hickey's confession and his own need to unburden, to know, and to punish himself result in Parritt's conquest of pipe dreams. Unlike Hickey, who takes refuge in another illusion when he cannot cope with his love-hatred for Evelyn and with his detestation of her dream, the young man does not avoid the truth by "putting up any bluff, either, that I was crazy afterwards when I laughed to myself and I thought, 'You know what you can do with your pipe dream now, don't you, you damned old bitch'" (Act IV, p. 720). After Larry finally forsakes the grandstand and decides Parritt's fate, the young stranger is transformed from the contemptible, sniveling character he is in the first three acts into an almost heroic being who acquires the "guts" and the "decency" to take a "hop" off the fire escape of the tenement that houses Hope's saloon. Gladly he goes to the womb-tomb, for which his destructive behavior and his disappointment with life indicate he has long yearned.

At the close of Iceman Hickey wishes for death as much as Parritt does. But he cannot meet his end without a pipe dream that confers mercifulness upon his murder of Evelyn. Fleetinglly, the truth--that he laughed and articulated his hatred after he shot her--robs him of the certainty that he acted out of compassion and out of a desire "to give her peace and free her from the misery of loving me" (Act IV, p. 716). His spontaneous admission of deep-seated hostility must be renounced because it means that his love for Evelyn, which alone gave value to his life, was an illusion. To give his existence meaning again, he seizes a dream that both explains his behavior after the murder and allows him to recover his illusion of love. The derelicts welcome this opportunity to return to the game that characterizes their relations before Hickey's arrival; each will believe the others' dreams if in return they credit his life-sustaining illusion. The barflies support Hickey's claim of insanity in exchange for his permitting them to regain and retain their dreams of tomorrow. If he admits that he was mad when he stripped them of their dreams, they will agree that he was insane when he voiced his loathing of Evelyn. Although Hickey knows he was not mad when he was, in Harry Hope's words, "pulling" all that "crazy bull...about bringing us peace--like a bughouse preacher escaped from the asylum!" (Act IV, p. 718), he claims he was insane so that they will confirm the dream that will enable him to go guiltless to his death. By participating in this game, Hickey becomes a full-fledged member of the dreamers' lodge.

That Hickey requires a pipe dream during the final phase of his life is consistent with his past pattern of behavior. As a young man, he clung to a pipe dream of freedom. Rebellng against parental

authority, he rejects the faith of his father. Like Captain Alving in Ghosts, Hickey had a zest for life but resided in a provincial region that provided few socially approved outlets for his youthful spirits. To the minister's son, "home was like jail, and so was school, and so was that damned hick town" (Act IV, p. 709). In dissipation, he expressed his craving for life's fullness and his yearning for liberty. Then, like Rob Mayo and Simon Harford, with relative ease he replaced his dream of freedom with an ideal of love when the wrong woman came along.

In Hickey's case, love was linked with a dream of purity. According to Rolf Scheibler, Evelyn awakened the young "hell-on-wheels sport" to his spiritual needs, which he believed he had left behind when he rose up against his father, a Fundamentalist minister.³⁴ Occurring partially as a result of values which were instilled in him while he was a child, Hickey's marriage to the Christlike Evelyn implies the inescapability of past and family. In the salesman's case the reemergence of needs engendered originally in the home caused him to wed a woman who offers the maternal love of the Virgin Mary and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ but blinded him to their incompatibility. Dreams ascendant, he fails to perceive that he would have been far wiser to marry a woman who could have satisfied some of his demands other than spiritual ones. Instead, feeling ennobled by her moral superiority because her uprightness complements his weakness and thus believing he needs her, Hickey subordinated reality and wed Evelyn.

³⁴ Scheibler, p. 164.

Like the fanatical Mrs. Bartlett in Gold, Evelyn ultimately represents both love and censure. As her antecedent attempts to be, she became her husband's conscience. Hounding her partner less stridently than Mrs. Bartlett does, she elicits greater guilt and hatred because her example and her method forbid Hickey's expression of the animosity that grows as the years pass, while her counterpart's fierce frontal attack encourages Captain Bartlett's airing of his antipathy. Neither of their approaches to salvation possessing efficacy, both women meet death as their efforts, and their husbands, turn on them. After Captain Bartlett defeats her during a passionate confrontation, his wife exits life willingly, thus signaling the temporary quelling of his conscience. Unable to endure Evelyn's silent, gentle onslaught, which grates on him more than direct condemnation would have, Hickey shoots her and thus rids himself of his gnawing super-ego. Ultimately, as Tom Driver says, the salesman's destruction of the individual who was associated with his conscience implies a latent death wish:

His sensual nature (Id) desires unbridled life and convinces Hickey (Ego) he could live more successfully if his wife Evelyn (Super-Ego) were removed. Hickey yields, ostensibly to find peace but actually because he knows that this peace will be the prelude to permanent peace³⁵ (death). The Ego-instincts, said Freud, are death-instincts.

Evelyn might have avoided death at Hickey's hands if she had adopted a less oppressive dream, one that was closer to those of two other morally superior Patient Griseldas whom she resembles in several respects. The illusions of Alice Roylston in Servitude and Nora Melody in Touch do not center on stubborn belief in their husband's ability to

³⁵ "On the Late Plays of Eugene O'Neill," Tulane Drama Review, 3 (Dec. 1958), 15.

change and in hopes for the future but in pliant, unquestioning acceptance of their partners' weaknesses and strengths. Evoking contempt and indifference rather than hatred, these characters pose minimal threats to their husbands' dreams and self-worth; and so Alice and Nora need not die.

Scheibler asserts that Evelyn finds that happiness can be achieved by giving and forgiveness and that it is this acceptance which she has in common with Hope.³⁶ But her forgiveness is a double-edged sword. To her husband, it connotes masked judgment which destroys him. The deleterious effects of this pure woman's forgiveness imply that she is the antithesis of the sustaining saloon owner who is a sinner among sinners, feels superior to no one, and has no need to pardon others since he neither judges his fellows nor forms dreams that affect anyone but himself. If Evelyn's stance brings happiness to her, she is the only person well served by it; her persistent faith implies callousness, which neither characterizes the selfishness-selflessness of Alice and Nora nor the mutually supportive relations of the barflies in Hope's saloon. Whether her ruinous impact is the consequence of Hickey's projection or of her badly concealed, but real, disgust at his fallings and failings is irrelevant since to him her forgiveness and the guilt it awakens are unendurable burdens regardless of origin.

For the most part, Evelyn appears, from Hickey's description, to have been meek, pure, and loving; but the obstinacy and strength she reportedly displayed when she defied her parents so that she could be with him and her refusal to yield the dream that gives her life purpose suggest that her indomitableness rivals that of another shaper of men,

³⁶ Scheibler, p. 201.

Harry Hope's blatantly shrewish wife Bessie. Considering O'Neill's reliance on parallel relationships in Iceman, a comparison of these superficially dissimilar wives is inevitable. Harry Hope's glowing description of Bessie, who to him becomes loving and beloved only after her death, echoes Hickey's words about his deceased wife and may be interpreted as a warning against accepting the salesman's assessment of Evelyn at face value. However, none of the barflies can disprove Hickey's claims about his wife as they can Harry's about Bessie because none has ever met the numinous Evelyn.

In addition to wives that their memories have made saintly in death, what Hickey and Hope have in common are unhappiness with these women while they lived and a great need to be with men in a setting without respectable women. Culminating the long-established opposition of bar and home in O'Neill's plays, Iceman goes against the usual pattern. As plays such as Bread, Straw, Touch, and Journey demonstrate, the home is the usual setting of the action, while the bar to which the male characters flee is never or only briefly glanced. This change implies that no contest exists any longer between the two places. For as Hickey's expressed need of it during his confession of hatred and murder suggests, the bar has won:

And as the time got nearer to when I was due to come here for my drunk around Harry's birthday, I got nearly crazy. I kept swearing to her every night that this time I really wouldn't, until I'd made it a real final test to myself--and to her. And she kept encouraging me and saying, 'I can see you really mean it now, Teddy. I know you'll conquer it this time, and we'll be so happy, dear.' When she'd say that and kiss me, I'd believe it, too. Then she'd go to bed, and I'd stay up alone because I couldn't sleep and I didn't want to disturb her, tossing and rolling around. I'd get so damned lonely. I'd get to thinking how peaceful it was here, sitting around with the old gang, getting drunk and forgetting love, joking and laughing and singing and swapping lies. And finally I knew I'd have to come. And I knew if I came this time, it was the finish. . . . (Act IV, p. 715)

To Hickey, all-accepting male comradeship in a "Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller," which suggests the calm of the womb-tomb, is preferable to the literal family, which makes demands of its members and forces the individual to compromise for the sake of collective harmony and stability. The metaphorical family is sought, Hickey indicates, because it assuages isolation that begins in but cannot be alleviated in the domestic milieu. Indirectly, his unconquerable need of the non-judgmental atmosphere of the bar leaves him, he believes, with no alternative but to slay Evelyn. But when he reaches the refuge, he attempts to divest his comrades of their illusions, the lies that are the basis of the peace he craves. Hickey's paradoxical efforts to destroy what lures him to the saloon seem to stem not only from an unselfish, but muddled, desire to help his friends and a selfish wish for others to join him in what he believes is disillusionment; also they seem to be related to his needs to mitigate the murder by destroying in circuitous fashion the indirect causes of the crime--the liquor, derelicts, and whores that brought Evelyn pain and him guilt and self-hatred--and to punish himself by eliminating that which he always placed above his wife's dream.

The literal family fails not only the hardware drummer, who was as alone in his father's house as he was in his own and who in his youth found self-confidence through non-sexual contact with whores in brothels and companionship through interaction with men in pool halls and barrooms. Judging from its inability to provide sanctuary or support to other characters in the play, who represent diverse nations and social classes, the literal family's failure in the world of Iceman is ubiquitous. The sterility of marriage is suggested through the

barrenness of Hickey's, Harry Hope's, and Jimmy Tomorrow's unions, which produce no offspring. Hickey's, Hope's, and Parritt's use of two epithets indicates that female family members, be they mothers or wives, are bitches or whores and are best loved when dead. The course of Parritt's life suggests that hate is likely to triumph over filial love and that progeny betray their parents. Or as in the case of Willie Oban, a "Harvard Law School Alumnus" and scion of a millionaire father, the child may fail to resolve his ambivalence toward parents, may be so undone by the sins of the father that he can no longer function, and, deemed an unsalvageable wreck, may be finally cast adrift by his family. If individuals expect forgiveness, understanding, and compassion from kindred, the lives of Cecil Lewis, a "one-time Captain of British infantry" and Piet Wetjoen, a "one-time leader of a Boer commando," indicate that they will be disappointed; for the family does not welcome erring members back into its fold once they have brought shame upon the group.

The island of peace and concord which opposes the literal family is made possible through Harry Hope's generosity, which he attempts to conceal beneath a mask of irascibility, and his softheartedness, which he unconvincingly attempts to counter periodically by threatening both to cut off the supply of liquor to his dependent children and to collect their past-due room rents. The spongers react to his threats as a similar collection of hangers-on respond to Con's in Touch: they flatter him and encourage his dreams, and he relents. Financially able to absorb the loss of revenue that results from their penury, Hope provides for his family of friends because in their company, as Larry says, "He's so satisfied with life he's never set foot out of this place

since his wife died twenty years ago. He has no need of the outside world at all" (Act I, p. 594). Hope claims that he has not ventured beyond the doors of his establishment because the death of his beloved wife Bessie deprived him of the will to succeed in politics or in business. But as in Mrs. Keeney's case in Ile, memory in Iceman produces nostalgia and reorders the past. As her brother discloses, Bessie was not an ideal loving wife but was a "God-damned bitch" who found fault with and prodded her indolent, complaisant husband incessantly. When Hickey removes the veil of illusion from the saloon owner's eyes, Hope admits that indeed his wife was in reality a "nagging old hag" whom he despised. Finding happiness among his fellows that was absent in his marriage, Hope expresses his resentment of Hickey's salvation vociferously; for as he suspects before and knows after the salesman explodes his comrades' dreams, his secure island will be one of the casualties of messianism.

Lost and ultimately regained, the closeness among members of the metaphorical family headed by Hope attests to the achievement of a level of spirituality in the saloon that the characters found infrequently in the outer world governed by middle-class morality. Their dreams and their friendships are the only buffers between them and existential nothingness and loneliness. Without illusions, harmony gives way to schism. Liquor loses its kick. And physical and psychological death seems imminent. Without one another, each character is alone in a universe in which the literal family has become a subtractive force and is unable to sustain its members.

As the actions of Parritt and Hickey show, when friendship, liquor, and dreams cannot anesthetize a character, a possible approach to those

who make domestic life so unbearable is murder--destruction of the person who causes anguish in the home. If a character chooses this path, the next step is confession; for it is his only means of dealing with guilt. His final act is atonement through death.

In terms of O'Neill's canon, one of the most striking qualities of Iceman, Mourning, Chillun, Breakfast, Bread, and Recklessness is the bleakness and horror of domestic life. From each phase of O'Neill's career, these plays imply little change in his view of the family through the years.

If marriages are endurable at all, these essentially retroactive plays suggest that they are so only at the outset and deteriorate rapidly thereafter. As the Mannon, Rowland, and Baldwin unions indicate, many of the characters do not even have auspicious beginnings to remember nostalgically. Caused in part because men and women make abysmal choices of mates, the failure of marriage to fulfill and to nourish is suggested through the childlessness of all of the couples who are major characters except the Mannons, the latter who produce progeny who are as figuratively stillborn as the Rowland child literally was in Breakfast.

Overtly or covertly disapproving wives are the norm in these plays. These women do not possess the love or selflessness required to release their unhappy partners but cleave to their husbands because spite or dreams compel them to continue disharmonious marriages. As Ezra Mannon's and Arthur Baldwin's determination to retain their wives suggests, tenacity is not restricted, however, to the female of the species. The desire of partners of both sexes for escape from stifling, imprisoning unions is evidence of the death, dearth, or temporary

subordination of love. But when characters violate their marriage vows and find love or surcease outside its bounds, death follows adultery; for as in the worlds of most of O'Neill's plays marital infidelity rarely goes unpunished.

According to Barrett Clark, O'Neill once said, "Life doesn't end. Our experience is but the birth of another. Violent death is seldom the solution of anything, in life or in fiction. It is too often a makeshift device."³⁷ Yet, in approximately one-half of his plays, violent or unnatural deaths occur; and in the bulk of them cessation is a welcome release from life's miseries and disappointment. In accordance with this pattern, the characters in Recklessness, Bread, and Breakfast who elect suicide perceive death as infinitely more desirable than their continued participation in marriages in which they experience overpowering isolation and in which, in spite of their entreaties for understanding and mercy, they cannot expect to communicate truly with their spouses. In these plays the deaths are less true suicides and more indirect murders. As such, they underline the plays' contention that in the domestic sphere a contest between love and hatred is likely to be won decisively by the darker emotion. What the triumph of hatred signifies is not treated fully in the "lost" and early plays--Recklessness, Bread, and Breakfast--but is explored in greater depth in the later plays--Chillun, Mourning, and Iceman. These works suggest that bowing to feelings of jealousy, rage, and guilt toward kindred means yielding to murderous impulses towards those the individual loves as well as loathes. Since the victims are closely tied to the slayers, annihilation of family members signifies destruction of the killers'

³⁷ Clark, p. 122.

selves. And since hatred ensnares characters so that they are unable to procreate and instead must decimate their ranks, it signifies the doom of family lines as well. For those who survive the blood bath and retain their sanity, death in life awaits them in a constricted space, while for those who succumb to madness, death of the adult self is a consequence of their regression to earlier hate-free times.

CHAPTER IV

ATTEMPTED DESTRUCTION

Midway through Welded, John, one of the minor characters, articulates a sentiment that allies him with the barflies in Iceman. Heartbroken, humiliated, and embittered, but attempting to mask his pain, he tells Eleanor, the woman he has hopelessly loved for years, "friendship is sounder, saner-- . . ." ¹ It is certainly a lot less potentially devastating than domestic life, which Iceman, Mourning, Chillun, Breakfast, Bread, Recklessness, and other O'Neill plays indicate is rife with discord and violence.

In Welded and Days, strife is once more the timbre of marital relations. But in these two plays the dramatis personae are neither driven to snuff out the lives of family members, nor are they so ravaged by marriage that they commit suicide. Instead, the major characters lacerate each other verbally and attempt to "murder love." As in Strindberg's The Bond (1892), The Dance of Death, The Father, Creditors (1888), and Miss Julie, marriage in Welded and Days means primarily misery and unceasing wrangling between partners. In the Swedish playwright's oeuvre, characters frequently cite children as the reason for their continuation of marriages that are typified by the husbands' and the wives' tearing "one another as bloodily as wild

¹ Plays, II, Act II, Scene i, p. 470.

beasts."² But in Welded and Days the protagonists' unions have not produced progeny. Their marriages are barren because they love possessively and are loath to share the beloved. They are narcissistic and disintegrated and desire only someone who is a mirror reflection or who completes their selves. Also, their unions have not borne fruit because the husbands are eternal children. In the tradition of Attis of myth and Peter Pan of fable, these male characters have never truly grown up. Always needing protection from the harsh world, they have attempted to gain a state that approximates intrauterine calm by wedding women who are in varying degrees surrogate mothers. That the childless protagonists in these two plays remain together and bear the vicissitudes of marriage suggests that, for both the son-husbands and the mother-wives, their love for each other and their need for the peace and harmony matrimony promises are great enough to offset the suffering and schism that inhere in wedlock.

Although the protagonists in these plays desperately need "love as a faith in which to relax" (Welded, Act I, p. 444), they also feel antipathy toward their partners that rivals in ferocity the enmity that exists between Strindberg's husbands and wives. In the Swedish playwright's canon, the continually fluctuating nature of such relationships is exemplified in The Bond. In this play two characters who are directly involved in the decision of the Baron's and Baroness' case marvel at the ambivalence and cruelty that characterize close ties:

JUDGE. [I]t is horrible to see two people who have loved one another destroying each other in this way. It is like looking on at a slaughter.

² The Bond, in Plays of Strindberg, trans. Elizabeth Sprigge (Chicago: Aldine, 1962), p. 194. All future references to this work appear in the text.

PASTOR. That you see, Judge, is love.

JUDGE. What then is hate?

PASTOR. It is the lining of the garment. (pp. 197-98)

As these observers of humanity indicate, hostility is ineluctable in any relationship that has its basis in love. In Welded and Days the validity of the Pastor's and Judge's equation (love = destruction = hate) is proven not through literal murders of kindred or family-induced suicides but through verbal assaults upon marital partners that wound but do not kill. Although hate thrives in these plays as it does in Iceman, Mourning, Chillun, Breakfast, Bread, and Recklessness, it is not the clear winner of its eternal contest with love. In Welded and Days the competition ends at worst in a draw.

Punctuated occasionally by truces, domestic warfare is a constant because major characters want love, which in both plays can ease metaphysical loneliness, but paradoxically hate and resent the partners who are the means of securing this abatement. Sometimes dread contributes to the growth of these negative feelings. At other times a character finds himself faced with a problem he cannot solve: he wants the potential boons of family membership but resents the unavoidable compromise of individuality which marital or kinship ties mean. In Welded the wife fears that total immersion in another will deprive her not only of personal liberty but also of selfhood. Like Stephen Murray in Straw, whose traumatic loss of parents leads him to claim disinterest in love and family, the husband in Days attempts to minimize his vulnerability to the pain that the deaths of loved ones bring. To eliminate the possibility of any future suffering that might have its source in his wife and to revenge himself against love, which he hates because of the agony it can mean, he tries to slay her feelings of

affection for him and thus to sever his last truly meaningful bond with another human being.

Welded pits two egoists--Eleanor Cape, an actress, and her playwright-husband Michael--against one another in a Strindbergian duel. Throughout the play "two circles of light, like auras of egoism, emphasize and intensify" the protagonists. "There is no other lighting. The two other people and the rooms are distinguishable only by the light of ELEANOR and MICHAEL" (Act I, p. 443). Welded employs these circles at one point in conjunction with pseudo-soliloquies during which the protagonists "speak, ostensibly to the other, but showing by their tone it is a thinking aloud to oneself, and neither appears to hear what the other has said" (Act I, p. 452). The playwright's innovative use of lighting and his modification of the conventional soliloquy combine to suggest the state of the Capes' marriage: it is one of both juncture and disjuncture. Influenced by Strindberg's works, Welded, one of O'Neill's "behind-life" plays, is well served by these devices. Through them, the dramatist attempts to peer "beneath physical surfaces and appearances" so that he can examine "the spirit or soul that lurks behind life's exterior."³

Granted the shortcomings Ludwig Lewisohn perceives when he says that in clarity and thought Welded does not approach "utterly complete, crystalline" Strindbergian plays such as Comrades (1888) and Creditors; the Gelbs point to when they condemn its puerile vision of the ideal marriage; Robert Brustein sees when he comments on O'Neill's singular

³ "Strindberg and Our Theatre," Provincetown Playbill No. 1, Season 1923-24 (January 1924), rpt. in O'Neill and His Plays, pp. 108-09.

ineptitude in presenting love between the sexes and on the dramatist's naive view of sexuality; and Oscar Cargill discerns when he asserts that the play's resolution is unconvincing in view of the characters' earlier violence, the play does possess at least two redeeming qualities.⁴ As an example of a modern morality play, Welded deals effectively and persuasively with universal Man and Woman, who are locked by love and hate in a marriage that threatens to smother the wife's individuality. Balking at surrendering her self in love, she resists her husband's Grand Ideal of marriage, which requires each of the partners to subordinate his identity so that together they may achieve a total union. Also, Welded succeeds in its convincing presentation of ambivalence. While O'Neill stumbles habitually when he attempts to depict love between the sexes, he soars when he portrays love-hate among marital partners, parents and children, siblings, and other intimates.

In Welded the pendulum that swings between affection and animosity is set in motion once more when Eleanor expresses aversion to her husband's ideal, she and Michael allow professional rivalry to erupt, and they unearth the past.

In a godless universe Michael, a "relentless idealist" according to the more realistic Eleanor, has raised love and marriage, as he reminds his now-wavering wife, to the level of faith:

Not for us the ordinary family rite, you'll remember! We swore to have a true sacrament--or nothing! Our marriage must be a consummation demanding and combining the best in each of us!

⁴ See Lewisohn's review of Welded, The Nation, 2 April 1924, rpt. in O'Neill and His Plays, p. 163; Gelb and Gelb, p. 518; Brustein's The Theatre of Revolt (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), pp. 335-36; and Cargill's "The Freudians," in Intellectual America: Ideas on the March (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 694.

Hard, difficult, guarded from the commonplace, kept sacred as the outward form of our inner harmony! (With an awkward sense of having become rhetorical he adds self-mockingly) We'd tend our flame on an altar, not in a kitchen range! . . . (Act I, p. 448)

Michael must base his hopes on love and marriage because, Sophus Winther says, he possesses too much intelligence to rely on faith but does not have the intellectual tools that would enable him to remain faithless and live solely by reason. To satisfy his emotional needs, he must, the critic continues, "indulge in the dangerous business of making idols which his reason constantly convinces him are really clay."⁵

Ironically, the Capes' marriage is supposed to mirror their inner harmony; but as their physiognomies, an index to psychological life in O'Neill's "behind-life" plays, imply, their internal states are discordant. Lacking unity, Eleanor's face is "dominated by passionate, blue-gray eyes, restrained by a high forehead from which the mass of her dark brown hair is combed straight back," while Michael's face "is a harrowed battlefield of supersensitiveness, the features at war with one another--the forehead of a thinker, the eyes of a dreamer, the nose and mouth of a sensualist" (Act I, p. 443). His brainchild alone, the Grand Ideal is the means through which Michael hopes to experience the harmony that his face suggests has consistently eluded him. Instead of attempting the formidable task of resolving his psychological conflicts or resigning himself to inner division, he tries to achieve the concord he lacks by relinquishing his selfhood, merging with another, and thus forming an integrated self. But as his fleeting self-mockery and his need to be reassured that he and Eleanor have achieved the dream in the

⁵ Eugene O'Neill, p. 24.

past imply, he suspects that the Grand Ideal has never been reached and has little chance of ever being attained.

Overcoming momentary doubt about the life-sustaining dream, he casts himself as Everyman and Eleanor as Everywoman and promotes total sexual and spiritual union in response to what he deems is a universal craving:

Then let's be proud of our fight. It began with the splitting of a cell a hundred million years ago into you and me, leaving an eternal yearning to become one life again. . . . You and I--year after year--together--forms of our bodies merging into one form; rhythm of our lives beating against each other, forming slowly the one rhythm--the life of Us--created by us!--beyond us, above us! . . . (Act I, p. 448)

As Richard Dana Skinner says, Michael's desire for harmony links him with Juan Ponce de Leon, who wishes to merge with the fountain. An example of man's vain striving to find harmony where it does not and cannot exist, the Ideal expresses Michael's need to discover, in the critic's words, "a complete self in the periphery where there can be only divided selves."⁶

Initially, Eleanor supported her husband's dream. Before he entered her life, she had lost faith in everything. His love saved her; their marriage was, she acknowledges, "revelation then--a miracle out of the sky!" (Act I, p. 447). During this time her yearning for love's rewards was so overwhelming that she lost herself, began living in him, and wanted to die and become him. Five years after their marriage Eleanor is no longer so willing to be absorbed in another. Instead of supporting Michael's dream, she attributes their wrangling and her dissatisfaction to the Grand Ideal she approved of originally but which

⁶ Eugene O'Neill: A Poet's Quest (New York: Longmans, Green, 1935), p. 126.

has become, she says, too difficult to achieve: "Sometimes I think we've demanded too much. Now there's nothing left but that something which can't give itself. And I blame you for this--because I can neither take more nor give more--and you blame me! . . ." (Act I, p. 448). Her inability to sustain the dream is crucial because it means the loss of a common goal that lends a semblance of oneness to their marriage. And it signifies the diminishment of ardor and the increased likelihood of the dissolution of the only relationship that gives meaning to their lives.

How far Eleanor has drifted from her initial commitment is indicated by her hesitation when Michael entreats her to ascend with him the staircase, an act which equates, as Törnqvist mentions, to the progress of sexual intercourse in Freudian dream symbolism.⁷ He wants her to join him in their bedroom, where indeed he intends them to come together physically and spiritually, the two planes on which love operates in Welded. Desiring and fearing both dependence and independence, she faces a dilemma, from which she is rescued temporarily when an outsider enters their apartment, which is as insulated and isolated as the Harris apartment in Chillun, and whose residents, Everyman and Everywoman, seem to exist in no specific time or place like Jim and Ella in Act II of Chillun. Passion and ecstasy producing

⁷ See A Drama of Souls, p. 57. Also, consult Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, in The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud, trans., ed., introd. A. A. Brill (New York: Modern Library-Random House, 1938), p. 372n. The psychoanalyst says that "stairs (or anything analogous to them) represent a definite symbol of coitus. The basis for this comparison is not difficult to find; with rhythmical intervals and increasing breathlessness one reaches a height, and may then come down again in a few rapid jumps. Thus the rhythm of coitus is reproduced in climbing stairs. Let us not forget to consider the colloquial usage. This tells us that 'mounting' is, without further addition, used as a substitutive designation for the sexual act. . . ."

obliviousness, Michael does not hear a series of knocks at their door, but significantly the first sounds from this direction elicit "a sort of gasp of relief" from Eleanor. The second, "sharper" knock "acts like a galvanic shock on her." And the third, authoritative and assured, causes her body to react "as if she were throwing off a load" (Act I, p. 449). Before the caller can knock a fourth time, she defies her husband, hurries to the door, and admits John, a theatrical producer who is one of their best friends and one of her past and present admirers.

Eleanor's first ordeal involving doors and stairways, the major scenic elements in Welded, precipitates an argument that ends in the triumph of hate. After the disharmony-increasing visitor departs, Michael expresses rage and bewilderment at her preference for the downstairs door that opens outward and connotes freedom to her over the matrimonial staircase and the bedroom door that signifies loss of self to her. As Skinner, Doris Falk, and Winifred Frazer suggest, Eleanor welcomes John's appearance because she senses that strict compliance with the Ideal, living so completely for and in one another, threatens not only to divest them of selfhood but to end the freedom of their love.⁸ What she fears most, she tells Michael, is that such total absorption will ultimately turn on them and effect their undoing:

It's so beautiful--and then--suddenly I'm being crushed. I feel a cruel presence in you paralyzing me, creeping over my body, possessing it so it's no longer my body--then grasping at some last inmost thing which makes me me--my soul--demanding to have that, too! I have to rebel with all my strength--seize any pretext! Just now at the foot of the stairs--the knock on the door was--liberation. (In anguish) And yet I love you! It's because I love! If I'm destroyed, what is left to love you, what is left for you to love? (Act I, p. 453)

⁸ See Skinner, p. 126; Falk, p. 87; and Frazer, p. 58.

According to Freud and Jung, the individual is acutely aware of his self, which has specific bounds and distinguishes him from other beings. Without his consciousness of separateness, Jung says, relationships with others cannot develop.⁹ With a single exception, the ego--the facade of the id--maintains its independence, Freud asserts, toward all that is external to it: "There is only one state--admittedly an unusual state, but not one that can be stigmatized as pathological--in which it does not do this. At the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away. Against all the evidence of his senses, a man who is in love declares that 'I' and 'you' are one, and is prepared to behave as if it were a fact."¹⁰ Welded suggests that, although Eleanor continues to love her husband, she is no longer so much in love that she is unwilling to discern their twoness.

Michael's continued support of the dream does not mean that he is more enthralled than she. Instead it signifies that he needs the Ideal more. Eleanor ascribes his persistence to unrelenting selfishness, and it is to a degree. However, as Michael reminds her, neither is she a guiltless victim of his egoism nor are his motives for pursuing the Ideal as simplistic as she indicates:

You fight against me as if I were your enemy. Every word or action of mine which affects you, you resent. At every turn you feel your individuality invaded--while at the same time, you're jealous of any separateness in me. You demand more and more while you give less and less. And I have to acquiesce.

⁹ "Marriage as a Psychological Relationship," in The Development of Personality, Vol. XVII of Collected Works, 1954, p. 190.

¹⁰ Civilization and Its Discontents, trans., ed. James Strachey, standard ed. (New York: Norton, 1961), pp. 12-13.

Have to? Yes, because I can't live without you! You realize that! You take advantage of it while you despise me for my helplessness! . . . (Act I, p. 453)

Acceptance of her selfishness is a small price for him to pay in order to preserve that which gives purpose and value to his existence.

Disinclined to think well of a philosophy that requires her obedience to its laws but which she had no role in formulating, Eleanor is, however, not as able as he to accept encroachments upon her selfhood. More independent than Michael, she is no longer convinced that her relegation of individuality serves an achievable or desirable higher goal.

As Michael's accusation intimates, in Welded the female and the male protagonists are evenly matched. Exceeding perhaps the bitterness that develops between embattled characters with dissimilar temperaments, the violence that erupts between similarly disposed figures such as Michael and Eleanor is so intense, Joseph T. Shipley asserts, that each allows the conflict to turn inward and must then master himself before he is able to reconcile with the other.¹¹

A harridan is not set against a weak, dreaming husband. Nor is a humble, accepting wife placed at the mercy of a callous dreamer or realist. Although Eleanor attempts to shatter her husband's dreams as man-eaters like Maud Brown, Ruth Mayo, and Ella Downey do successfully, she is no shrewish Strindbergian destroyer. Although she paints herself as a victim of Michael's need to consume her, she does not placidly endure domestic contention as Nora Melody and Alice Royston do. Believing she has as much right as her husband to define the terms of

¹¹ The Art of Eugene O'Neill (1928, rpt. Folcroft, Pa.: Folcroft Library Editions, 1974), pp. 10-11.

their marriage, she is fearless like Chillun's Hattie Harris and fights to preserve her identity not by resorting generally to the unscrupulous practices of Strindberg's Laura or Baroness Helene but by confronting her enemy forthrightly. Neither all good like the self-sacrificing Eileen Carmody in Straw nor all evil like Mrs. Atkins in Horizon, Eleanor is, although a representative of Woman, a convincing character in her own right. Also, as Bogard notes, she enjoys the distinction of being one of O'Neill's most sympathetic female characters.¹²

During the quarrel that follows John's departure, Michael rakes up the past once more. A dangerous course for this particular idealist to follow, his dredging up of the unalterable reality of yesteryear indicates that they have consistently failed to achieve the Ideal. Their remembrances reveal that not loftiness but jealousy and suspicion have persistently characterized their relations. Typically, he has displayed antipathy toward anyone who has a claim upon her and who diverts her attention from him and their marriage. Furthermore, their backward glances disclose that bickering has always been the norm in their home.

For the sake of peace in the present, they must change topics. Unfortunately, no subject appears to be safe. Instead of reducing the likelihood of engagement, a discussion of their careers and their relative creativity produces attacks and counterattacks. Eleanor charges sarcastically that Michael's periodic overinvolvement in his writing constitutes pseudo-adultery. Since in Welded work can promote happiness that is almost as satisfying as the joy that love can bring, she has a legitimate reason for the jealousy she reveals but denies

¹² Bogard, p. 184.

feeling. Michael attempts to shield himself from her assault by devaluing her profession. Showing his egotism, he believes that Eleanor is his creation because his plays have been the only vehicles in which she has gained acclaim as an actress. It is this claim that reveals the narcissism that is at the bottom of his wish to make of himself and Eleanor mirror reflections. Like most narcissists, Michael has an exaggerated sense of his self-importance, has difficulty loving anyone who is not an extension of himself, and cannot cope with reality.¹³

His disparaging words followed immediately by his exhumation of her past again, tempers flare. In the tradition of Strindberg's *Laura*, Eleanor lies to her husband in an effort to torment him. She tells him falsely that John was her lover during his absence. Michael then "chokes her, forcing her down to her knees. She does not struggle but continues to look into his eyes with the same defiant hate" (Act I, p. 460). He does not opt for literal murder. He releases her, and both she and he resolve to murder love once they gain the outside world.

Eleanor flies to John. In his home she undergoes another ordeal that involves a door and a staircase. Cherishing a hopeless hope of her eventual love for him, he is overjoyed by her arrival. Consistent with the play's overall view of love as the basis of faith, John expresses his undying love for Eleanor and his constant willingness to accept her in words that sound suspiciously like both marriage vows and the Lord's Prayer: "Then--now--forever after, amen--any old time at all, Nelly. . . ." (Act II, Scene i, p. 463). Contrasting him with Michael, she welcomes

¹³ Gregory Zilboorg delineates the characteristics of narcissism and relates it to loneliness in "Loneliness," Atlantic, January 1938, pp. 50-51.

the love of someone who is "unselfish and kind." But she is paralyzed when John asks her to mount the stairs and to enter the first door upstairs on the right. Linking his request with Michael's earlier attempts to lure her into their upstairs bedroom, and hence with annihilation of her identity, she becomes so hysterical that she imagines that her husband actually awaits her at the top of the stairs in John's home. She is therefore unable to ascend.

Enlightenment follows this, her second, ordeal. Accepting her bondage to both her husband and his Ideal, she grasps what in Servitude Alice Royston and in Touch Nora Melody have known for years and what in Touch Sara Melody discovers after she and Simon consummate their love. Eleanor learns, in her own words, that "My love for him is my own, not his! That he can never possess! It's my own. It's my life!" (Act II, Scene i, p. 469). Once she realizes that her love can survive domestic turmoil unscathed, she feels able to reenter the lists. And she returns to her home.

Meanwhile, Michael has been tested during an ordeal in which stairs figure as well. He has climbed a staircase to a prostitute's apartment. But once he is inside, he is unable to sully his flesh, and thus to destroy love, because he discerns what his wife has also learned: they can never be free of each other and will always be welded in love and hate. As James M. Salem states, the dual failure of Eleanor and Michael to engage in extramarital coitus iterates the central view of copulation in the play: more than a physical act, sexual intercourse is the Holy

Communion of marriage; and the complete exposure of the ego demanded by sexual relations is possible only by married couples.¹⁴

Like many of Shakespeare's and Ibsen's plays, Welded depends for its form upon repetition and the cycle. Beginning in a constricted sphere inhabited by two characters, then moving outward as each attempts to exploit another being and to revenge himself against the other, and finally returning once more to a private, limited world that accommodates only the two protagonists, Welded resembles Iceman, Mourning, and many other O'Neill plays in its reliance on mirror characters and on parallel scenes and passages. The scene between Michael and the maternal prostitute resembles the one between John, a father-figure, and Eleanor. And in the third act Eleanor acquires some of the soothing, maternal qualities that the motherly whore alone possesses at the close of the second act.

Like John, the prostitute had almost given up hope when one of the Capes appears. Soon after Michael enters her warm, dark bedroom, he launches a sardonic verbal assault upon love that indicates that he continues to link the emotion with faith. Perverting Eleanor's earlier confession that his love had saved her, he extols the prostitute as his salvation; but now redemption has a different twist. "You have," Michael tells the whore, "the power--and the right--to murder love! You can satisfy hate!" (Act II, Scene ii, p. 473). But when, by kissing her, he tries to prove to himself that he is committed to revenge, an involuntary shudder, which parallels exactly Eleanor's response to John's kiss and embrace, reveals his aversion to adultery. Continuing

¹⁴ "Eugene O'Neill and the Sacrament of Marriage," Serif, 3 (June 1966), 27.

his attack, Michael has recourse to language that suggests both the marriage vows and prayer. But unlike John, who uses similar faith-based expressions but who refuses to surrender to hate even when love uses him badly, Michael employs these words in an attempt to debase holy wedlock. Parodying the marital rites, he asks the prostitute, "How long have you and I been united in the unholy bonds of--bedlock?" (Act II, Scene ii, p. 473). Ridiculing one of Jesus' teachings in practical piety (Matthew vii.6) and a children's bedtime prayer, he anticipates that his participation in sexual relations with the prostitute will not only slay love and his dreams but will also "'lay me down among the swine'" (Act II, Scene ii, p. 474).

Soon thereafter he abandons his love- and life-denying mission, and the prostitute emerges as his and love's true savior. A confidante like Mrs. Frazer in Servitude and Miss Gilpin in Straw, who similarly convert egoists, she encourages Michael to accept unquestioningly life and love: "Oh, you'll go back aw right! Don't kid yourself. You'll go back no matter what, and you'll loin to like it. Don't I know? You love her, don't you? Well, then! There's no use buckin' that game. Go home. Kiss and make up. Ferget it! It's easy to ferget--when you got to! . . ." (Act II, Scene ii, pp. 476-77). Her wisdom adumbrates that of Cybel in Brown, a character based on the Asiatic goddess Cybele, a fertility goddess who in one version of the myth falls in love with her son Attis.

Like Cybel, also a prostitute who advises a son-figure, the streetwalker in Welded is an Earth Mother who combines maternity and sexuality. The explicitly bovine whores' possession of the former quality is iterated through their connection with cows--in Desire the literal sources of motherly warmth and comforters of Ephraim Cabot, who

feels isolated from his wife Abbie and from his rebellious sons. Further, the streetwalker in Welded is associated with maternity through a visual symbol that suggests the Pieta and through gestures and language that indicate motherliness:

(He [Michael] flings himself on the chair in a violent outburst of dry sobbing.)

WOMAN. (bewilderedly) Say! Say! (Then touched, she comes to him and puts her arms around his shoulders, on the verge of tears herself) Aw, come on, kid. Quit it. It's all right. Everything's all right, see. (As his sobbing grows quieter-- helpfully) Say, maybe you ain't ate nothin', huh? Maybe soup'd fix you. . . . (Act II, Scene ii, p. 475)

In accordance with literary convention, her hair, which cascades over her shoulders in peroxidized abundance and of which she is childishly proud, links the prostitute with female sexuality and with mythic fertility goddesses. No doubt she believes she has increased the attractiveness of her hair by altering its color; but in actuality her bleached locks announce that she has perverted nature, just as her vocation--its ugliness objectified in the dirty, stained, match stroke-scarred bedroom wallpaper--signals the cheapening and corruption of human sexuality.

In Welded the sex drive should ideally be accommodated within the bounds of marriage and should culminate in physical and spiritual union; but the prostitute, whose bedroom is the antithesis of home, treats sex for the most part as a purely physical act she performs in exchange for money. Ironically, she walks the streets because the man she loves forces her to earn a living in this fashion. In return for the money she gives him, her lover beats her for little or no reason. She accepts and endures his ill treatment because, like Michael and Eleanor, she requires love to assuage cosmic aloneness. Her admission of this need,

her wisdom, and her transcendent maternity raise her above her otherwise sordid existence.

When Michael realizes that love still survives in her, he genuflects before the Earth Mother and begs her forgiveness for his inconsiderateness. Grasping his savior's message and "joining" her "church," he kisses her reverently on the forehead and addresses her as "Sister." Accepting that he must relinquish possessiveness and egoism and must, like O'Neill's Lazarus, affirm life through Dionysian laughter, he departs for home, a destination toward which his feet, those of universal man, have been walking for "thousands of years--blindly."

After Michael and Eleanor return to their timeless, placeless apartment, they delay thought, the enemy of love here as in Servitude and in Touch, and reaffirm their love. When, momentarily believing that there is nothing left for them but resignation, he challenges her to end their marriage, she makes a final attempt to go through the door that leads into the outer world. The fourth ordeal that involves doors and stairs resolves in her weary acknowledgment of love's power, in her certainty that the door "opens inward," and in her resolution never to "again 'come out.'" "[S]horn of all the ideas, attitudes, cheating gestures which constitute the vanity of personality" (Act II, p. 487), they forsake the light of egoism, commit themselves once more to the impossible Ideal, and decide to comfort and try to ease the loneliness of each other as they stumble through labyrinthine life in the dark. Their unwillingness to live without the dream makes Michael and Eleanor one with the spongers, whores, and pimps who frequent Hope's saloon in Iceman and with O'Neill's other incorrigible idealists.

The dream the Capes need to go on together guarantees in the future their frequent unhappiness; for it thrives on passion, an emotion that, Denis de Rougemont says, requires suffering and obstacles, both of which doom marriage.¹⁵ Generally, this institution needs not these elements for success but instead demands fairly consistent partners who, through compromise, avoid what nurtures ardor and thus achieve domestic stability, passion's antithesis.

Welded, the play's title, suggests that, although the Capes are legally married, they have never been and will never be in the usual sense wedded, a state that has mutual understanding and respect and fairly constant affection, tranquillity, and equilibrium among its desiderata. Instead, Michael and Eleanor are welded by an emotional attachment they cannot ignore. To preserve the passion that binds them but is so inimical to domestic calm, they are willing to grasp temporary peace whenever they can, fully aware that such cessations of hostility cannot last. Egoism will return. And as the marriage of the Captain and Alice, residents of an island they call "Little Hell," alternates in Strindberg's The Dance of Death between love and hate until death dissolves their bond, the Capes' union will continue to be characterized intermittently, they predict, by discord. To retain at its maximum level the ardor that usually loses its intensity soon after marriage in O'Neill's plays, Michael and Eleanor will endure the pain that inheres in passion.

As he does in Straw, Horizon, and a host of plays, O'Neill has up to the final scene in Welded dichotomized the woman-figure. The half

¹⁵ Love in the Western World, trans. Montgomery Belgion, rev. ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), pp. 288-95.

represented by Eleanor is educated, artistic, and, Falk says, slightly masculine in her aggressive pursuit of career and personal liberty.¹⁶ Her complement, the streetwalker, is passive, tractable, languid, and motherly. In the final moments of the play both halves converge in a single figure, Eleanor. Acquiring the comforting maternity of the prostitute-Earth Mother, she becomes the new goddess-savior, the mother-wife-lover for whom O'Neill's male characters frequently yearn. Falling before his wife as he did before the streetwalker, Michael, overcome by passion, suggests interestingly Mary Magdalene when he "kisses her feet ecstatically" and pleads for her forgiveness for all he has ever done and will do just as earnestly as he had begged the whore's pardon. Echoing the twenty-six-year-old prostitute who constantly addresses her thirty-five-year-old client as "Kid," Eleanor responds to his supplication in a manner that indicates her newly gained sanctity and maternity: "No. Forgive me--my child, you!" (Act III, p. 489).

The play completes its cycle when they then arise and mount the marital staircase. Significantly, Eleanor now initiates their upward climb. At the top of the stairs, she and Michael joyously stretch out their arms and come together to form a single cross with their bodies. Not only does this visual image signify attainment of the spirituality Michael glibly ascribes to their marriage early in the play but which it lacks until their enlightenment; it also suggests, as Engel points out, that they have achieved the condition for which they have been striving. Simultaneously, they lose their discrete identities in a mystical union that is, the critic adds, an integral part of the Dionysian

¹⁶ Falk, p. 86.

orientation to existence.¹⁷ That this balance has been finally reached is indicated too through the Capes' manner of declaring their love during the last moments of the play; Eleanor says "I love," and Michael completes the sentence by adding "you."

While the crucifix image that closes the play suggests the resurrection of love, it also connotes the death that precedes rebirth. As such a device, the cross symbolizes the cycle that is a corollary of the ebb and flow of emotions in the Capes' marriage and that gives the play its overall structure.

Love as the basis of faith is at the center of Days as well. Once more, characters are primarily morality-play figures and as such are spokesmen for ideas or personifications of particular qualities. Again, an idealistic husband and wife who love possessively and live for and through each other attempt to destroy the affection that binds them; and they fail. As in the close of Servitude and Welded, Pan dissolves into Logos and Logos into Pan during the denouement. In Days that part of the husband associated with Logos--humbled but ever proud like Lavinia Mannon--surrenders to Pan and to Christ; thought, hatred, and sardonic laughter are subordinated to feeling and faith, love, and affirmative laughter. His wife forgives his sins, and they gain transitory peace. As the pseudo-Pieta tableau at the close of Servitude and the Pieta and the human-cross images in Welded connect love, marriage, and faith and make this relationship part of the visual experience of the plays, serving a similar function in the resolution of Days are the crosslike stances of the male protagonist and his alter ego and a literal cross before which the major character rejects his destructive impulses, says

¹⁷ Engel, p. 115.

"Nay" to thought, takes the great leap, embraces paradoxically both Christianity and Dionysianism, and thus solves the dilemma of metaphysical nothingness.

While Welded and Days possess many features in common, they are not as similar as they appear to be at first glance. As Louis Sheaffer points out, Days is an ironic epilogue to Welded. Examined together, the two plays suggest that achieving a dream is not necessarily a better state than pursuing and failing to attain it.¹⁸ The Capes are consistently unable to make the Grand Ideal a reality until they do so temporarily at the close of Welded. When Days begins, the Lovings have already realized Michael's dream, but attainment of the Grand Ideal has not brought lasting bliss and harmony. John Loving has been unable to prevent himself from jeopardizing marital stability. He does not create obstacles so that passion may thrive; in Days this intense emotion does not characterize the Lovings' union. He acts because achievement of the dream has brought with it fear of losing its blessings and has resulted in the reemergence of something within him that compels him to shatter his and his wife's happiness.

Although it contains references to the Depression and a fleeting attack on modern materialism, Days, set in 1932 in New York City, is not a social drama. Instead, it is both a metaphysical and domestic play. The two strains are inseparable; for Days, the marriage play, is a means by which O'Neill addresses man's need for faith, which John Loving's dalliances with diverse isms and his alliance with Elsa reveal. As

¹⁸ O'Neill: Son and Artist (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 412.

metaphysical-domestic drama, Days treats marriage and adultery, which on the cosmic level equate to faith and profanation, and presents the consequences of marital and religious infidelity.

As the play begins, John Loving, a 40-year-old businessman, has been experiencing psychological conflict for some time. His inner strife objectified through manifest doubles, this single character is represented on stage in a manner that recalls Alice Gerstenberg's expressionistic one-act play Overtones (1913). Each of the two figures who comprise Gerstenberg's cast is played by two actresses, one who is the "cultured" half of the character and the other who is the "primitive" aspect. The "cultured" halves Harriet and Margaret are the personas the characters display to each other and to the world at large. Only Harriet sees and hears her primitive alter ego Hetty, and only Margaret is aware of Maggie's existence. In Days the protagonist is split into John, who loves and affirms life and desires faith, and Loving, who wears "the death mask of a JOHN who has died with a sneer of scornful mockery on his lips."¹⁹ Generally, the other characters are not aware of John Loving's disintegration. When Loving is at his most destructive, as he revenges himself on love, the women with whom he is intimate--Elsa, to whom he is legally wed, and Lucy, with whom he has committed adultery--vaguely sense his evil presence.

O'Neill's dichotomization of the major character in this fashion links Days not only with twentieth-century expressionsim but also with earlier dramatic modes. As the play progresses, Loving's growing venomousness and power make him seem the incarnation of a devil, a figure that archetypally exemplifies man's inclination to personify

¹⁹ Plays, III, Act I, pp. 493-94.

inner and outer forces that menace ultimate values. In the twentieth-century work by O'Neill the association of man's alter ego, the normally negative Jungian shadow, with the diabolical seems to stem from the Middle Ages, a time when man was obsessed with the Seven Deadly Sins and with original sin and when this concern was manifested in morality plays that isolated human traits and concretized them through actors that represented specific qualities.

That O'Neill was influenced by plays of this period is further suggested by his adherence to another convention of these works. Reflecting as well the playwright's penchant for irony, his assignment of a name that connotes goodness to the force of evil conforms to traditional practice in the medieval morality play. Associated with reason, O'Neill's Loving opposes pipe dreams of faith and love. He relegates Christianity to the level of superstition, denies Dionysian values, and teaches that days have an end (that physical life and death are followed not by immortality gained through the spirit's survival or through eternal recurrence but by nothingness). Like Iago, he reduces love to mere "lust of the blood and permission of the will." Bent on exploding dreams, he works to terminate the affirmative aspect of John Loving, the marriage that sustains this part of the character's self, and Elsa's life. The ultimate end of the death-worshipping alter ego is John Loving's suicide.

The protagonist's disintegration into two pseudo-allegorical figures is tied to his family. Like the Dreamy Kid, he enjoyed a childhood period of unity within himself and with the world beyond him. While Dreamy's inner division may be traced to his family's relocation to an environment in which flourished primarily his hard, violent self,

John's began when, as a fifteen-year-old, he lost both of his parents during a flu epidemic in which they contracted pneumonia. Up to this time, life had meant love for him. And like his parents, he was a devout Catholic. After their death, however, his view of his parents' religious beliefs changed. Outraged by a God that permitted two such dedicated, trusting followers to perish, he sounded a death knell for the faith of his father. For a few years John's only link with a family was provided through his guardian, an uncle who is a Catholic priest. He broke ties with this relative as soon as possible and faced the world alone.

After scurrying from ism to ism for years, John established a family covenant of his own when he married Elsa. He is an orphan, she seems to have no living relatives, and their union is childless. In the world of Days this absence of progeny and blood kindred does not, however, signify a void; for the Lovings are an almost entirely self-sufficient domestic unit. A puer aeternalis, John gains not only a wife and a lover when he weds but a surrogate mother as well. She exhibits no need for parents or for siblings; he fills for her the roles of father and lover in addition to child and husband. The only family member who cannot be provided through their domestic arrangement is a temporal father-figure for John, who requires one briefly.

It is just as well that their family world is as nearly complete as it is, for in Days neither progeny nor blood relatives mean happiness or relief from loneliness. A character can experience passing surcease of cosmic aloneness only in the arms of the beloved. Under optimum conditions such love is essentially spiritual. Frequently, it is possessive and narcissistic as well.

With his marriage, once more love entered John's life; it was so important that it became the basis of his faith. But with love came vulnerability again, followed by the compulsion to arm himself against suffering. John's need to protect himself manifested itself in the ascendancy of his alter ego Loving, whose initial mission was to eliminate the possibility of love-caused anguish by destroying the marriage and whose strength grows to such proportions that he imperils not only the Lovings' union but also their very lives. Through adultery, Loving expects to slay them and their dream.

Soon after the play begins, Father Baird, the guardian-uncle John has not seen for many years, makes his first appearance. Like the sudden wealth that enables Uncle Nat, the good-father figure in James A. Herne's Shore Acres, to save the family farm, the unexpected arrival of the priest smacks of deux ex machina. Even John seems aware of Father Baird's function; for he asks Elsa, "What do you think of the big event today: Uncle dropping out of the blue?" (Act II, p. 528). Acting in loco parentis, the priest comes because he feels responsible somehow for John's loss of faith.

In Days the father-son relationship operates on two levels. Earthly representative of the heavenly father, the priest desires to save one of God's children. Literally related to John Loving, he wants to help his sister's son. On this second level, Father Baird is one of O'Neill's few good fathers/father-figures. Not only is he, a priest, asexual; also, he is wise and unthreatening. Feeling doubly accountable, the priest-uncle--who embodies the oneness of love, faith, and family in Days--senses the needs and danger of his "child" and speeds to him in

response to what he interprets as God's command and what he intuitively feels as a "parent."

Father Baird quickly discerns Loving's increasing domination, but initially he has no impact upon the evil alter ego's efforts to control John. As a matter of fact, after the priest's arrival, Loving attempts to kill Elsa; he encourages her to go to a death that parallels that of John's parents. After he has made sure that she knows of her husband's unfaithfulness, he suggests that she, recovering from flu, go out into a cold, drenching rain, an act that leads to pneumonia and near death. No doubt, Loving hopes that the similarity of her and John's parents' fates will devastate his positive self to such an extent that this aspect of his being will join forces with the death-desiring alter ego and, bereft of love and a purpose in life, choose suicide as a response to Elsa's demise.

Had John elected to take his life, Loving would have then achieved his goal, the "only one sensible, logical end." Throughout Days the nihilistic alter ego coaxes the life-affirming John to seek oblivion in a womb-tomb that means complete annihilation. Loving does not perceive death that leads to rebirth and hence to sacrality, spirituality, or immortality, which Mircea Eliade says are archetypally associated with a return to the womb.²⁰ Instead, the alter ego offers an absolute end that attracts John for a time because, like many of O'Neill's male characters, he yearns for the lost mother and hopes to find some semblance of her again in death, a state that approximates intrauterine

²⁰ Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), pp. 58-59.

bliss, innocence, and absence of conflict and trauma. Loving's scheme fails because he underestimates the strength of Elsa's love and John's need for their love to transcend death. She overcomes despair and a wish for death that knowledge of her husband's infidelity and that the explosion of her dream of marriage bring. She forgives him. And the past does not become the present. The miracle John prayed for when his parents lay dying, but which did not occur then, takes place now. Elsa and love live.

Like Mrs. Frazer in Servitude and the Mannons in Mourning, who try to flee home and family, John learns that, in Father Baird's words, "the road finally turns back toward home" (Act I, p. 504). In Days home means ultimately both the hearth and Christianity-Dionysianism. Like the Prodigal Son, who is alluded to in the play, John returns to his faith and his family after deserting them, confesses his sins, asks for forgiveness, and is welcomed back into the fold by benevolent temporal and divine fathers. John Loving's regaining of his home follows the resolution of his inner conflict and follows, at Father Baird's encouraging, his acknowledgment of the dependence of earthly love upon love of God. Without the promise of eternity that love of God brings, the protagonist learns, temporal love cannot triumph over death.

The Lovings' union is one of four marriages that are treated in Days. Their recollections of their harmonious union and John's of his parents' blissful marriage make these alliances among the most idyllic in O'Neill's canon. Two other unions that are described in the play are characterized by at least one partner's constant adulteries.

The past is resurrected in Days through John's memories of his parents' devotion to one another and to him and through his remembrances

of the happy, love-filled, sustaining family milieu of his youth. His father was a "fine man," and his mother was, he says, "a wonderful woman, a perfect type of our old beautiful ideal of wife and mother" (Act I, p. 509). On a literal level, John's father is a rare good biological father. No self-righteous patriarch as he is described, he may be remembered in such kind terms because he died before John reached an age when he might have rebelled against parental authority. Most sons in O'Neill's plays know the father's wrath, for they defy their male parents at some point. Consequently, they do not recall their sires fondly. Also, John's portrait of his father may be so favorable because the passage of time has meant selective retention of facts; reality may have been replaced by nostalgia.

Sons in O'Neill's plays typically see women as either saints or sinners. They worship the woman who is a wife-mother but who curiously remains pure in their eyes. Although she may have borne children, they refuse to desecrate the ideal female by associating her with sex. Normally, the son is most intimate with and feels the closest ties to this parent.

On a metaphysical level, the state of the temporal home in Days equates to the status of the protagonist's faith. John's earthly father mirrors the heavenly father, whom the major character, a devout Catholic during his childhood, perceived as beneficent. It is a short step from the idealized earthly mother to the Virgin Mary, the ultimate pure, kindly, loyal wife-mother.

John attempts to recreate the home of his past when he establishes his own family covenant. He weds the perennially white-clad, simply garbed Elsa, an ideal woman who recalls both his virtuous, compassionate

earthly mother and the Holy Mother. Unlike Eleanor in Welded, whose name resembles hers, Elsa has a past that is above reproach; she has always been able to subdue and continues to conquer rare impulses to stray from the morally upright path.

Through his wife, John Loving tried to regain the mother in a way other than through death. Untainted by incest strivings, his quest for his parent culminated in a union that had as its aim intrauterine harmony. His relationship with Elsa, his substitute mother, however, is characterized not by unadulterated affection and contentment but instead by ambivalence toward her and hence toward his dead biological mother, whom he professes to love. A part of him (Loving) wants Elsa to die not only because he fears the pain to which love makes him vulnerable and because her death moves him a step closer to suicide and the womb-tomb but also because something in him hates her. Törnqvist states that the source of the alter ego's animosity toward Elsa could be a need to retaliate against love in general: "Psychologically, it is quite possible to see Loving as representing the strong attachment to the mother, the inability to accept any other love but hers, resulting in a desire to revenge oneself on all other loves including Elsa's."²¹ The alter ego's hatred seems to stem not only from the source the critic cites but may also be tied to the protagonist's feelings for his literal mother, who betrayed him by dying. His glowing memories of her (and of his father as well) may be attempts to compensate for his negative feelings. He seems to have transferred this antipathy to her temporal replacement and to the sacred mother, her counterparts.

²¹ A Drama of Souls, p. 131.

The earthly wife-surrogate mother is linked with the Holy Mother in a manner that Servitude, Welded, and other plays indicate is fairly common in O'Neill's oeuvre. Like Mrs. Roylston and Eleanor Cape, each of whom assumes a pseudo-Pieta position with her confessing child-husband/husband-figure, Elsa is associated with the Virgin Mary when she strikes a similar pose, albeit not with John. In an instance of dramatic irony, she consoles her erring friend Lucy Hillman, who suffers great anguish as a consequence of her brief adulterous encounter with John Loving. After unburdening herself of her transgressions through confession but remaining careful not to reveal the identity of the man with whom she has violated her marriage vows, Lucy immerses herself in self-hatred, which is assuaged to an extent by the comforting, entwining arms of the madonna-figure:

LUCY. . . . How horribly shocked you look! Are you going to order me from your virtuous home?

ELSA. . . . [P]lease don't think I'm condemning you. You know how I love you, don't you?

LUCY. . . . Don't, for God's sake! I don't want you to love me! I'd rather you hated me! (But ELSA pulls her to her and she breaks down finally, sobbing, her face buried against ELSA's shoulder) (Act II, p. 520)

According to Timo Tiusanen, Elsa, especially as she is presented in this act, exemplifies O'Neill's tendency to glorify central characters. She is so sympathetic, gentle, and good-natured that Tiusanen finds her boring.²² Not only is her cloying sweetness wearying; it is unbelievable if she is seen as the playwright's rendering of a realistic character. But Days is foremost a morality play and need not satisfy the criteria of realistic drama. While Elsa functions as a

²² O'Neill's Scenic Images (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1968), p. 202.

literal wife in Days, the domestic drama, and as such possesses an adequate degree of humanity, she operates on another plane as an embodiment of the Christian principles of love and forgiveness. Hence, she is characterized in such a one-sided manner in the scene with Lucy.

In Days, as in Welded, the state of marriage and family life is not concretized through the furnishings of the home as it is in plays such as Warnings, Straw, and Horizon. Instead, Elsa's face and vocal tone reflect the condition of the Lovings' alliance. When she first appears, she "is beautiful with that Indian Summer renewal of physical charm which comes to a woman who loves and is loved, . . ." (Act II, p. 514). But her beauty is "a trifle dimmed now by traces of recent illness. Her face is drawn and she fights against a depressing lassitude" (Act II, p. 514). There is a correlation between the dimming of her beauty because of the flu and the corruption of the Grand Ideal upon which her marriage is based. When she enters initially, Elsa does not know of her husband's adultery, but her face is nonetheless such an unwitting index. Also, at this early point in Days, her facial appearance foreshadows the play's resolution. When, in response to Lucy's frank envy of her beauty, Elsa claims that she looks "like the devil" (actually her antithesis), her jealous friend responds, "Flu makes no never mind. It doesn't affect--what I mean" (Act II, p. 517). As Elsa's beauty transcends illness, her marriage to John and their love for each other will, the denouement implies, survive the trials that they must undergo to win back his faith in a divine being and in eternity, his self-integration, and their happiness.

After Elsa learns of her husband's lapse, she is metamorphosed. Acquiescing to Loving's wishes, she increases the likelihood of her death and the achievement of his true goal, the death of John Loving, by venturing out into the cold rain. While she is out, she attempts to duplicate her husband's infidelity. He was at a party at the Hillmans' home when he succumbed to Loving and was unfaithful. Wanting to revenge herself on love and on her husband, Elsa goes to one of their parties; but like Michael and Eleanor Cape she cannot commit adultery. When she returns from her walk in the rain, her face "is pinched and drawn and pale, with flushed spots over the cheekbones, and her eyes are bright and hard" (Act III, Scene ii, p. 548). At this point, her eyes evoke memories of Mrs. Rowland in Breakfast. Elsa's formerly gentle, compassionate, understanding tone is cold and mocking. The Lovings' marriage is now in great peril. When it is in maximum danger--when she has lost the will to go on--her face is "pallid and wasted." Corpse-like, she does not open her eyes. She speaks in a tone of "despairing bitterness." When she senses that John's life is in jeopardy after he rushes from her sickroom for a showdown with Loving and with God, she "suddenly comes out of the half-coma she is in with a cry of terror and, . . . , she springs up to a half-sitting position in bed, her staring eyes on the doorway" (Act IV, Scene i, p. 563). At this moment she undergoes a miraculous change of heart that is the result, Sheaffer states, of mystical intuition.²³ This sudden insight enables her to forgive her husband. She smiles. Peace regained, she drifts off into sleep. That the half coma is replaced at this point by the slumber of the regenerated signifies on one level that a wife has forgiven her

²³ O'Neill: Son and Artist, p. 412.

erring husband and that marriage and its sacredness have been reaffirmed. On another plane, it means that sin and suffering have been followed by confession and forgiveness. Such is the Christian way.

The Lovings' marriage is, as these changes in Elsa indicate, all that sustains the couple during most of the play. That love and she have become the basis of a new faith for John and that they are for a time satisfactory substitutes for his childhood faith have been signaled by the cessation of his writing. As in Breakfast, marriage in Days affects the husband's productivity, but with a difference. In the earlier play, the general wretchedness of the marriage, caused to some extent by Mrs. Rowland's inability to understand and her antipathy toward her husband's aspirations, leads to a diminution of his powers and a decrease in his output. At no time in Days does Elsa make an attempt to dissuade her husband from writing. Indeed, she eagerly looks forward to hearing him read a novel he has been composing. No aspiring artist but a utilitarian writer, John Loving produced articles in the past that supported various isms as part of his quest of faith. When he found faith, he needed to write no longer. Significantly, his return to writing--in the form of an autobiographical novel through which he hopes to understand himself--corresponds with the growing danger his marriage, the basis of his new faith, is in.

His and Elsa's union has been jeopardized not only by the growth of Loving's power but also by the nature of the couple's affection for one another. Like Eleanor and Michael Cape, the Lovings equate love and marriage with salvation. Also, they love as possessively as the Capes, even though neither wants to consume the other so totally that he or she

lobbies for a closed family world; the Lovings, their friends, and their relatives freely and frequently enter and exit their home.

For John and Elsa, love is, as Stamm indicates, the sole affirmative experience that makes life meaningful.²⁴ When her life was in ruins, John offered her a marriage that he claimed would be different from all others. Like Michael, he proposed an ideal union that would be a sacrament of faith. Believing John shared her view of marital fidelity, Elsa accepted his vision. She adopted it so completely that, shorn of the dream when he confesses his unfaithfulness, she does not want to continue living.

Until her mystical moment of insight, she is unable to forgive his dream-crushing adultery because she loves him possessively. When she identifies the quality in him that won her, she not only contrasts him implicitly with her first husband but also reveals the selfish nature of her love for John:

It was what made me love him, more than anything else--the feeling that he would be mine, only mine, that I wouldn't have to share him even with the past. If you only could realize how much that meant to me--especially at that time, when I was still full of the disgust and hurt of my first marriage. (Act II, p. 523)

Once she discovers that he has broken faith, she copes initially with his adultery no better than Emma Crosby, the puritanical New England maiden in O'Neill's Diff'rent, responds to her fiance Caleb's betrayal of her ideal of complete chastity. Emma's possessive love for Caleb turns to ashes when she learns that he has been false to her dream. While Elsa and her love are not ultimately as narrow as Emma and hers, for the most part Elsa exhibits such a dearth of compassion and

²⁴ Stamm, 14.

understanding toward her beloved when he fails her that Lionel Trilling sees her as a humorless plaster saint who personifies "all the warping, bullying idealism" O'Neill had assailed in earlier plays.²⁵

John's love for Elsa is equally self-serving. In addition to caring for her because through her he regains his mother and some semblance of past love, harmony and innocence, he appears to love her because he needs her as much as Michael requires Eleanor to maintain self-unity. What happened through their love and marriage was a coming together of two partners--each an incomplete person but he more so than she--to form a whole being made up of each character's positive, life-affirming self. Temporarily, John subdued or ignored Loving; but he did not reconcile inner conflict. All went well until Elsa left John alone for the first time. While she was away on a trip, he was seized by fear and dread. When she, a part of him, was no longer present, he could no longer blot out Loving; and the life-affirming part of his self was quickly relegated to his destructive impulses.

This swift change may be attributed to the psychological role Elsa plays. In Jungian psychology man has a shadow and also an anima. According to M. -L. von Franz, the anima is an embodiment of the male's feminine psychological tendencies, which include, among others, his ability to love and to intuit.²⁶ In Days John appears to have projected his anima into the world outside his self, into Elsa, a woman who has qualities similar to those his anima has. Her possession of these

²⁵ "Eugene O'Neill," The New Republic, 23 September 1936, pp. 176-79; rpt. in After the Genteel Tradition: American Writers Since 1910, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: Norton, 1937), p. 112.

²⁶ "The Process of Individuation," in Man and His Symbols, introd. John Freeman, ed. Carl Jung and M. -L. von Franz (New York: Dell, 1964), p. 186.

traits no doubt was a factor in his selection of her as a wife. A dangerous act, his projection made contact with his feminine tendencies possible only through her; consequently, he became compulsively dependent upon her. Hence, when Elsa left, Loving easily gained the upper hand; for with her went not only a wife whose love was the foundation of John's faith but also went his ability to love.

The play's denouement suggests that the protagonist has eliminated his inner division and that the Lovings have solved most of their problems. But if they have accomplished these feats, they have done so in unconvincing manners. At the end of Days the protagonist proclaims that he is "John Loving" and thus indicates his reintegration. But the alter ego has heretofore been so crafty, persistent, and resilient that it is difficult to believe he has been overcome forever. The protagonist's announcement is also suspect because he has not, the play implies, learned to live with the rational, nihilistic, death-seeking part of his self under some degree of control but has squelched this aspect of his nature. Because the protagonist does not assimilate his alter ego, as man must to be integrated and happy, John Loving's announced reunification appears to be self-delusion.

While the conclusion of Days implies that the Lovings can possibly overcome John's infidelity and become again mutually sustaining partners, a suggestion that is undercut by Elsa's barely credible moment of mystical intuition and by John Loving's difficult-to-believe recommitment to his childhood faith, it offers no such hopeless hope for marriages in which husband or wives are regularly unfaithful.

In the world of Days, adultery is a norm. Elsa's first husband Ned Howell was unfaithful to her. Lucy Hillman reveals that her father had affairs to which her mother resigned herself; to cope with his infidelity, Lucy's mother rationalized his behavior, convincing herself that it was the unavoidable nature of males to be unfaithful. Lucy's husband Walter has "open affairs with every damned floosie he meets!" (Act II, p. 519). When she learned for the first time that Walter had committed adultery, Lucy returned to her parents' home; like Pastor Manders in Ghosts, her mother encouraged her to go back to her husband and accept her lot. Walter never knew that she had fled and returned. The implication of adultery's pervasiveness, of Lucy's mother's philosophy and advice, and of Lucy's unwilling acceptance of her husband's affairs is that, in the view of the general society represented in Days, infidelity is not a sufficiently dire offense to warrant dissolution of a marriage.

In public Lucy pretends that she is not wounded by Walter's adulteries. But in private she acknowledges to Elsa that his behavior has embittered and tortured her. As Elsa's physical appearance and voice are keys to the quality of her marriage, Lucy's face, clothes, and vocal tone convey the effects of matrimony upon her:

LUCY HILLMAN is about the same age as ELSA. She is still an extremely attractive woman but, in contrast to ELSA, her age shows, in spite of a heavy make-up. There are wrinkles about her eyes, and her small, full, rather weak mouth is drawn down by sharp lines at the corners. She is dressed expensively in clothes a bit too youthful and extreme in style. She responds to ELSA's greeting with a nervous constraint. (Act II, pp. 515-16)

Her make-up and clothes attempt to conceal her inner plight. But married life has devastated her to such an extent that she cannot hide

that she is, echoing Nat Bartlett in Cross, one of life's wrecks. Her face is a mask of tragedy. It suggests that her married life will continue to be wretched; for it possesses no transcendent beauty, as Elsa's does, that foreshadows an eventual triumph of love and a return to happiness.

Lucy endures her husband's abuses for the same reason Evelyn remained with Hickey in Iceman and the whore in Welded stays with her pimp. Memories of early happy, harmonious marital relations keep Lucy's love alive and bind her to Walter forever as similar remembrances prevented Evelyn from forsaking her marriage. As long as Lucy and Walter remain wed, she, like Evelyn and the prostitute, retains a dream of love, the only defense she has against cosmic loneliness. Nothing else, Lucy attests, not even her children, can assuage this aloneness.

Usually, she accepted Walter's affairs passively. But on one occasion she was compelled to act. This change occurred because she lost control of a dark part of her self that she was normally able to restrain. Hard, vindictive, and flippant, this aspect of Lucy wanted revenge against Walter and, like Loving, against love. Envyng the Lovings' happiness, this part of Lucy attempted to destroy it by seducing John. She engaged in adultery, something Walter had always recommended, but never meant that she should do.

Lucy's course of action invites a contrast with Elsa other than the inevitable one based on appearances and vocal tone. When Elsa discovered her first husband's unfaithfulness, she was strong enough to resist that aspect of her self that urged her to gain revenge by becoming an adulteress. Firm, she preserved her moral purity and her

inner and outer beauty. Her reward for defeating this dark wish was a second chance for love and marriage. Too weak to oppose the desire to retaliate, Lucy is punished. Her single unfaithful act has such an impact that it overwhelms her with guilt and disfigures her. She has made an already miserable existence even more so.

When Lucy committed her offense against matrimony, she sensed that her dark self had triumphed momentarily; and she felt that a similarly malicious, destructive self had ascended in her partner. Indeed, she and her fellow adulterer were at the moment of their infidelity mirror characters; for, she tells Elsa, as she had metamorphosed, so had he:

Suddenly, I don't know how to explain it, you'll think I'm crazy, or being funny, but it was as if he were no longer there. It was another man, a stranger whose eyes were hateful and frightening. He seemed to look through me at someone else, and I seemed for a moment to be watching some hidden place in his mind where there was something as evil and revengeful as I was. It frightened and fascinated me--and called to me too; that's the hell of it! (Act II, p. 522)

In Days characters are responsible for controlling their impulses. As Elsa's resistance to adultery implies, each character exercises a large measure of free will. Because they determined largely their actions, Lucy Hillman and John Loving must assume the blame and punishment for their offenses as Jack Townsend must in Abortion after he is confronted with crimes that may be attributed to his failure to keep the primitive part of himself in check. As violators of their marriage vows, Lucy and John are punished twofold. Not only are they consumed by guilt, but also the two adulterers do not enjoy their illicit act. As Christine Mannon's and Adam Brant's ends in Mourning, as Alfred

Rowland's death in Breakfast, and Mildred Baldwin's and Fred's ultimate lots in Recklessness show, adulterers in O'Neill's plays do not usually elude retribution. In Days even Walter Hillman will eventually suffer when his wife destroys his self-esteem by revealing her infidelity to him.

In both Days and Welded sex without love and marriage is unsatisfying because it is an animal act totally lacking in the spirituality that makes man and woman lose their selves in Dionysian ecstasy and become truly one in the manner of Sara and Simon in Touch. Through Elsa, adherent to and spokesman for the dream John forms and explodes, the significance of this property is articulated:

He said no matter if every other marriage on earth were rotten and a lie, our love could make ours into a true sacrament-- sacrament was the word he used--a sacrament of faith in which each of us would find the completest self-expression in making our union a beautiful thing. . . . You see, all this was what I had longed to hear the man I loved say about the spiritual depth of his love for me--what every woman dreams of hearing her lover say, I think. (Act II, pp. 523-24)

His words were so appealing to her, no doubt, because her first marriage had lacked this quality and because physical love had not been enough to make her and Ned Howells happy. In reaction to this first failure, she embraced an ideal of marriage that stressed the spiritual dimension.

In Days and Welded thought leads to adultery. Rationality and a dream of love and marriage cannot co-exist in these plays just as knowledge and facts cannot abide peacefully with dreams and belief in Cross and Gold. The Lovings and the Capes experience harmonious love and marriage now and then and keep their illusions only if they ignore reason. Also, only in this way can they have faith, which is inseparable from a dream of love and marriage.

Borne of thought, adultery, a lack of faithfulness on two levels, is the chief means of attacking dreams in Days and Welded. Until the main characters affirm fidelity in their domestic relations, there can be no faith in a cosmic force. In these plays the need to believe in a divine order or in a Grand Ideal that gives meaning and form to life is so great that the protagonists do what is necessary to gain them. They subjugate reason and reality as the derelicts in Hope's saloon do, for they need these dreams to protect themselves from life's agony and chaos.

In an analysis of Days, which reverberates with Freud's thoughts on religion in Civilization and Its Discontents, Lionel Trilling says "the annihilation of the questioning mind also annihilates the multitudinous world."²⁸ There is no doubt that the questioning mind will reassert itself in Welded. But as Days ends the play's resolution would have readers/spectators believe that Loving and the questioning mind have been quieted forever and eternal life has been purchased at the cost of the multitudinous temporal world. If Days is perceived in this manner, then it contains for the humanist a darker world view than Welded; for it posits that man cannot cope with life if he relies primarily upon his own resources. Rather, in Days he must conquer his rational faculties, and thus ally himself with antihumanism, if he wishes to have family and faith, which are inseparable in both plays.

²⁸ p. 112.

CONCLUSION

Regardless of a character's attitude toward his family, in O'Neill's plays he usually has negative experiences within its bosom. Self-sacrificers fare no better than those who selfishly sacrifice family to maintain dreams or personas, promote the suicide of or slay kindred, or attempt to lay waste to the love that binds them in marriage. Within the bounds of family, virtue is infrequently rewarded; and vice is very likely to go unpunished. The irrelevance of poetic justice suggests that morality is not a significant factor in the outcome of domestic interaction and that no safe approach to family exists. In most of the plays, failure in the domestic arena is preordained by the inherent disharmony of family relations.

Since O'Neill's domestic dramas function generally on at least two levels, their vision is particularly dismal; for in the bulk of them literal homelessness is a prelude or companion to cosmic homelessness. The plays' view implies that existence is chaotic, that man's lot is misery, that lack of true contact with his fellows or with the cosmic force is the norm, and that surcease from domestic and metaphysical loneliness is rarely possible.

That self-sacrificers in O'Neill's plays do not meet the same happy destiny many of their American antecedents do and that their orientation toward family life does not in the long run benefit the unit make for unrelieved bleakness. As the final fates of James Knapp in Warnings, the Old Man in Wife, Jack Townsend in Abortion, and Eileen Carmody in

Straw show, a character's motives matter not. Whether self-sacrifice is prompted by selfless love of the highest Christian order, cowardice, or guilt, it has a subtractive effect upon the family. Selfish-selfless sacrificers, Alice Roylston in Servitude and Nora Melody in Touch elude the suicide, loneliness, or lingering death that other self-sacrificers face because they have armed themselves with impregnable ideals that are grounded in love in general and which flourish in spite of their families' treatment of them.

Just as deleterious as self-sacrifice to the unit are thoroughly selfish attitudes toward kindred. Such approaches result in the relegation of family interests to the individual's need for a dream or a persona and in hatred-caused murders, suicides, or psychological deterioration. The acts of the first group of selfish characters are meliorated to some degree by their need for ideals or self-images. David Roylston in Servitude and Con Melody in Touch must have their personas; and thus they will have them, regardless of the cost to family. At the close of both plays, their wives have reason to hope for more harmonious relationships, though the males' behavior is irrelevant to each woman's happiness. These two plays and indeed O'Neill's canon as a whole imply that the stances of the two women are the most feasible approaches not only to the family but to the cosmos. Unassailable illusions that depend upon nothing but the dreamer are the strongest armor against domestic and metaphysical loneliness.

When characters' dreams are vulnerable to mutability, dramatic personae do not fare so well. The greedy dreams of Captain Bartlett in Cross and Gold and the shifting ideals of Rob and Andy Mayo and Ruth Atkins Mayo in Horizon do not protect them because, unlike Alice's and

Nora's dreams, they depend upon factors external to the individual if they are to be retained. For the same reason the derelicts in Iceman are unable to withstand Hickey's assault; their dreams hinge upon each other's acceptance and reinforcement. Hence, their illusions and their world succumb easily to the salesman's messianism.

O'Neill's characters who slay family members or induce kindred's suicides are in an abyss. Not only is there no star to guide them; they have few dreams that enable them to endure life. Thus, adrift without family or cosmic force, they respond to others, even those they might be expected to love, in a malicious manner. Without fear of social or divine punishment, they judge themselves.

In all of the plays in which a character allies himself with destruction, the domestic setting is a battlefield where foes are related by marriage or blood. Closeness breeds hate and spite which, in turn, lead to murder or suicide. Though the plays offer hope for marriage and family--through, for example, O'Neill's presentation in dialogue of Bessie Brown's successful marriage and Babe Carter's supportive family in Bread and of the Niles' harmonious relations in Mourning--the dominant and more aesthetically convincing, because directly presented, view of the family is one of utter rupture and disjuncture. In Recklessness Arthur Baldwin's execution of his wife's lover leads to her suicide, the only escape she sees from a loveless marriage. Representative of the middle-class' lack of understanding, Maude Brown's antipathy toward her husband's aspirations in Bread results in the suicide of the sensitive, artistic John. Consumed by a need for revenge, Mrs. Rowland leaves her husband no choice but suicide as a release from their misalliance in Breakfast. In Chillun the

madwoman Ella's hatred is largely responsible for her husband's insanity and regression to a pre-adult, pre-sexual self. A group of kinsmen, and not one individual as in the other plays of this kind, slays relatives or leaves them no alternative but suicide in Mourning, which presents a world in which the family is all. In Iceman both Hickey and Don Parritt are prompted by hate and love to kill the female relatives that mean the most to them. In the tradition of Lavinia Mannon, Parritt metes out punishment to himself. Like many O'Neill characters, he makes death by suicide the final resolution. Unlike Parritt and the other oblivion-embracing characters, Hickey will be punished by society; for he does not admit the truth of his situation and his actions. Hence, he cannot act against himself. A force external to his self must decide his ultimate fate.

In Welded and Days contention also typifies domestic relations but with a difference. Spouses stalk one another but do not have the fangs and uncontrolled hatred they need to finish one another off literally. Instead of attempting to snuff out life's candle, they try to extinguish love. The Capes in Welded wound each other verbally, but neither partner is capable of the killing blow to the emotion that chains them. Elsa in Days comes closer than anyone else to suicide and her husband's alter ego Loving nearer to indirect murder, but neither character succeeds. Both plays end during a lull in a storm that will apparently rage for as long as the marriages continue.

In these two plays the states of faith and marriage are parallel. In Welded faith is not restricted to an organized religion. Though rife with Christian visual images and allusions, the play presents human love itself as faith. Armed with such an emotion, Michael and Eleanor can

face the cosmos without need of anything but each other. Humanistic, Welded ends as the characters accept that they require only another mortal being to survive. In Days love and faith are also one and the same. In this play, however, faith is patently Christianity as John Loving wrestles with his beliefs and goes through corresponding ups and downs on both the domestic and religious fronts. Antihumanistic, Days admits the possibility of coping with life's agonies only when the individual has embraced Christianity, without which he cannot know a love that is meaningful during his lifetime and that thrives beyond his corporeal existence. Without such faith the individual's soul will not flourish beyond the grave; thus, his love cannot live on forever.

In plays such as Welded and Days, pre-adult and adult children are conspicuously absent. They are not featured in these and many other works by O'Neill because they can do little to dispell the pervasive despair that characters know in the bosom of the family or in what is often a cosmic wasteland. As Days shows, even in a beneficent universe, children are unnecessary for happiness (witness the Loving marriage) and cannot assuage their parents' pain if they do indeed exist (witness the Hillman marriage).

On those occasions when adult children are among the dramatis personae, they may be as venomous or as lost as their parents. Armed with malice and hatred, they are at least equal to the domestic warfare. When adult children are good, they do not encounter similarly disposed relatives very often. Actually, such characters seem to find themselves in direr straits than their evil counterparts; for frequently good children appear to lack the resources to withstand the assaults of family. In the long run progeny's orientation to domestic life matters

naught. Most meet cruelty, hatred, or indifference in the family circle regardless of their attitudes.

Only in the arms of the beloved, to whom the character is married hopefully; in the womb or in infancy; in the arms of a mother-figure; in death; in fleeting union with nature; or in the throes of an impregnable dream can the aloneness and despair of a parent or adult child be alleviated. If a married character seeks to assuage his pain in the embrace of someone other than his spouse, he is ultimately punished.

That in the bulk of the selected plays family life is a negative experience means life is generally painful. Although O'Neill tries to balance his view of the family--and, therefore, his vision of human existence--his attempts are unpersuasive, largely because he chooses, except in Wilderness, to present positive domestic life indirectly rather than to allow his audience to see and hear supportive families. Throughout his canon relations among kindred seem to be isolating and shattering consistently. Only a fortunate character finds at best transitory peace, love, support, and unity. And rarely does he find them in the domestic milieu.

While playwrights such as Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Edward Albee would probably have written family plays in which ambivalence or hatred sets the tone of domestic relations or in which words among kindred or spouses seem to have crimson claws, O'Neill's dramas undoubtedly facilitated their works. In a sense these later playwrights never reach Parnassus' heights as O'Neill does. Their dramas are not as resonant as his, for theirs do not in the main transcend the domestic and strive for the cosmic. At most, they produce social plays, while he is not limited to relations between man and man

but goes beyond to explore man's relations with a universal force that, paralleling the family, may be indifferent, caring, or cruel.

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SHORTENED PLAY TITLES

The first time a play by Eugene O'Neill is discussed its complete title and date of composition are cited. Thereafter, an abbreviated title appears. Any name that is not included below has been retained in its entirety or has been shortened only by omission of an article.

<u>Anna</u>	<u>Anna Christie</u>
<u>Ape</u>	<u>The Hairy Ape</u>
<u>Bread</u>	<u>Bread and Butter</u>
<u>Breakfast</u>	<u>Before Breakfast</u>
<u>Brown</u>	<u>The Great God Brown</u>
<u>Chillun</u>	<u>All God's Chillun Got Wings</u>
<u>Cross</u>	<u>Where the Cross Is Made</u>
<u>Days</u>	<u>Days Without End</u>
<u>Desire</u>	<u>Desire Under the Elms</u>
<u>Horizon</u>	<u>Beyond the Horizon</u>
<u>Iceman</u>	<u>The Iceman Cometh</u>
<u>Interlude</u>	<u>Strange Interlude</u>
<u>Journey</u>	<u>Long Day's Journey into Night</u>
<u>Lazarus</u>	<u>Lazarus Laughed</u>
<u>Mansions</u>	<u>More Stately Mansions</u>
<u>Marco</u>	<u>Marco Millions</u>

<u>Misbegotten</u>	<u>A Moon for the Misbegotten</u>
<u>Mourning</u>	<u>Mourning Becomes Electra</u>
<u>Touch</u>	<u>A Touch of the Poet</u>
<u>Wife</u>	<u>A Wife for a Life</u>
<u>Wilderness</u>	<u>Ah, Wilderness!</u>