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AESTHETICS AND BEAUTY IN MODERN AMERICAN DRAMA: EUGEN O'NEILL'S "BEYOND THE HORIZON", "MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA" & "THE GREAT GOD BROWN"

Thesis Submitted to the Department of English in Candidacy of the Degree of "Doctorat"

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TO THE ONE

WHO GAVE ME

ENDLESS LOVE

SUPPORT

& ENCOURAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Theater in America reached its peak by the early part of the twentieth century, importing good theater norms from Europe. This period marked a real turning point in the history of the American theater; people were living a kind of psychological exhaustion as a result of the Great War. Hence, American playwrights explored the space of theater to expose what is hidden beneath a silent cry of a desperate nation. Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), is the first American playwright to receive world-wide recognition. He could, with artistry, address peoples' minds and psyche without getting the least out of the norms of drama. Thus, the beauty of his plays is highly noticed in the way he communicates modern psychological meanings using specific aesthetic values that go back on time to the golden age of the ancient Greeks. Mythic plot and characters are his enchanted world that he aesthetically explores to be close to his audience' hearts and feelings.

The research work *Aesthetics and Beauty in Modern American Drama: Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra" & "The Great God Brown"* is divided into four chapters. The first chapter entitled *Stimulating Dramatic Context through Modern American Theater* marks a contextual overview about drama with a particular emphasize on the Greek tragedy as being the major component of the research work as a whole. The second chapter *Aesthetics and Beauty between Philosophy and the Art of Drama* is an attempt to define aesthetics using its philosophical context as a means to reach its artistic meaning mainly in drama. This chapter also includes modern aesthetic theories which emphasize the subjectivity of aesthetics that was directly supplied by the complex and contradictory changes brought about by "modernity". The third chapter *Mythic plot and Character in "Mourning Becomes Electra"* deals with the question of myth versus reality. Eugene O'Neill in this play undertakes the myth of Electra to depict the deep confusion of the American individual in a time of war and loss relying on Freud's theory of the subconscious. The fourth chapter called *Wearing Masks to Unveil Realities in "The Great God Brown"* refers to O'Neill's use of the mask as a tool to dramatize the duality of personality and the human subconscious. His objective is to reveal the inner dualism through the conflict between the conscious and the subconscious using the mask as a symbol to manifest this kind of psychological struggle. The conclusion of the research work will try to make a kind of a synthesis of the major aesthetic devices O'Neill uses in both plays constituting the corpus of the present study. At the same time, it will open a gate for new suggested themes in the field of teaching, mainly Aesthetics in Drama Education and its importance as being part of the curriculum of English literature.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Like fiction and poetry, drama is a genre of literature; it is a story performed by specific actors in a given context, in front of an audience in a theater. In fiction, the events are usually reported to us as having already happened and conversation represents what characters have already said. In drama, however, the events are revealed to us as they unfold, and the dialogue is what characters are saying now. Watching or reading a play, we feel the action as it takes place. We are there; only drama brings us this close to characters and the significance of their actions.

Drama has its roots in the classical Greek Theater of the early fifth century BC following the steps of religious rituals. Ancient tragedies and comedies were performed during festivals in honor of Dionysus, the god of wine. In the ancient world rituals usually required animal sacrifices, in tragic drama, the hero is sacrificed onstage. It is perhaps because ancient Greek religion strongly emphasized the power of the gods in their daily lives that drama became a chosen form for the honor of the divine.

In a modern context, however, this kind of rituals and god's worshipping vanishes and does not exist anymore. The sacrificed is neither an animal nor a hero; instead, it is fate, destiny, and human dignity. Presumably, what pushed modern playwrights to be influenced and inspired by the classical Greek theater is not only because it represents the early origins of Western drama, but also because of the close similarity they sensed and observed in terms of divinity. In contrast to ancient people who used to worship gods offering a goat as a sacrifice, modern men worship wealth and prosperity offering their human souls as a symbolic sacrifice.

In the modern American theater, Eugene O'Neill is regarded as a pioneer in updating ancient Greek dramatic norms into modern analogues. He creatively manifests taboo subject matters on stage that the audience themselves are not allowed to speak even to think about, at that time in America i.e. at the dawn of the twentieth century. He undertakes various aesthetic issues such

as mythic plots and characters, the chorus, the mask and other dramatic techniques such as soliloquies, internal monologues and asides just to arise the beauty and the pleasure of reading and watching his plays.

Academically speaking, aesthetics refers to the branch of philosophy, which deals with issues of beauty and artistic taste. It is the way; we interact with different experiences of the beautiful, charming, elegant, fine arts, or a sensuous enjoyment. Even the ugly when it comes to fine art it is used to denote something beautifully alluring. Since antiquity, philosophers have been interested in our experiences and judgments of beauty and ugliness. They have often tried to understand the nature of these experiences and judgments. However, this kind of investigations, took sharpened form in the 20th century because of the different technological changes that took place. Moreover, terms such as beautiful and ugly seem too vague in their application and too subjective in their meaning to divide the objects to those issues that do and those that do not exemplify them.

In the play "The Great God Brown", for instance, O'Neill uses the Dionysian mask to symbolize the beauty of Dion's human soul. Although, such a mask may seem ugly and even terrifying for a little child, but O'Neill explores the ugly to depict the beautiful in order to evoke an aesthetic context. This is the way we interact with art, the sense we grasp, the beautiful feeling and emotion we feel whenever we are in front of something artistic no matter what it looks like.

The word aesthetics can qualify many different kinds of things: judgments, experiences, concepts, properties or words. It is probably best to take aesthetic judgments as central. What kind of judgment is it that results in our saying, for example, "that is a beautiful sunset!" Judgments of aesthetic value rely on our ability to judge at a sensory level, but they usually go beyond that. Judgments of beauty are sensory, emotional, and intellectual all at once.

The aesthetic object is ambiguous and its interpretation may suggest two separated philosophical programs. According to Puffer (1905) the expression may denote either *intentional* or *material* object of the aesthetic experience. It may be briefly characterized as follows: when someone responds to an object, his response depends upon a conception of both material and intention. Accordingly, saying that the aesthetic judgment depends mostly on the human's state of mind, may lead us to Kant's theory, which denotes that our perception of beauty is related to our understanding of objects. Thus, the inspirations of life is the means and material of all arts, where the level of imaginative thought is linked to the human's range of experience.

Of all other arts, drama to some extent is different. It is perhaps the simplest, the easiest, or the most complicated, may be it is the closest to the human's heart and soul. The art of drama is the one that imposes upon the stage the obligation of depicting at once the inner-processes of life realistically and the external aspects of life delusively. Theater within all its components forms a paradoxical art. It is a literary production and concrete performance at the same time. It is a written text that is communicated physically, vocally and emotionally. Theatre is not only seen, but also understood.

Theater is an open-ended world of both text and performance; still the latter is the most powerful side because without it the theatrical text can never come into existence. One cannot deny that performance for the theatrical text is like gallery stands in relation to painting; however, one's interest in the present research work is circled around the text rather than the performance. Dealing with both is not such an easy task, therefore, because of time constraint and the lack of sufficient data on both fields, aesthetics and drama, and for more accuracy and reliability, it was preferable for the researcher to focus only on one side rather than the other.

O'Neill's language is inspiring and the way he treats and describes his characters in the stage directions is striking. It is only there, where we can know them, feel them and interact with

them without even seeing the play performed on stage. The beauty of his drama lies in his deep influence of the Greek theater. He often tries to bring it again into existence with all its precious aesthetic components particularly the use of the myth and the notion of masking, mainly in his two tragic plays *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *The Great God Brown*. In an attempt to prove this hypothesis, a series of questions may raise. What are the main aesthetic values O'Neill uses to enhance the authenticity of his drama? Where does the beauty of his plays lie? Is it in his enchanted influence by the ancient Greek drama or is there another secret? Since Eugene O'Neill is famous of his tragic genre of drama and his influence by the Greek theater conventions symbolizes an inspiring innovation in modern time, then what is the reason behind his tragic vision of life?

The present research work: *Aesthetics and Beauty in Modern American Drama: Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra" & "The Great God Brown"* is made of four chapters. The first chapter entitled *Stimulating Dramatic Context through Modern American Theater* is an opened gate to the art of drama, its various elements, norms and conventions, with a particular emphasize on the tragic genre; mainly the Greek tragedy. Greek Mythology also takes a major part in this chapter, since it represents the founding roots of this genre. As a matter of fact, using ancient mythology as a raw material in modern drama is the major area of interest. Eugene O'Neill sees in mythology a source of inspiration, a world similar to his world, a tool that he uses to express what he feels toward his nation and people. Indeed, with his genius he could create a harmonious mixture between classical and modern leading the American theater into an unprecedented success. The majority of O'Neill's plays are tragedies that highly reflect the social sufferings of his time; therefore, it might be necessary primarily, to shed light on the social and political background of the American theater before and after the coming of Eugene O'Neill.

The second chapter *Aesthetics and Beauty between Philosophy and the Art of Drama* is an attempt to get the concept of aesthetics out of its philosophical context and investigate its role in art mainly in drama. In terms of terminology, aesthetics is the art of the beautiful; it is how we get the pleasure from seeing or hearing something beautiful, pleasurable and enchanting. The emotions we feel, whenever we are in front of something attractive and amazing at the same time. In order to realize such an aim O'Neill's drama is the right space. In most of his plays the fascinating is juxtaposed with the mundane, it is there when we can cry and be happy, where we can dream and experience reality. The growing success of scientific method in manipulating the nature of the human being, altogether with aesthetics as a new branch of philosophy contribute to liberate art from natural objects or human products. Art becomes the ability to apprehend something as beautiful and the ability to make something beautiful, as well as the ability to create new meanings without following fixed traditional rules. O'Neill's reinvention of the Greek tragedy in a modern time is a kind of breaking the rules, he uses the sublime to get the awful, and he deploys the fantastic to reveal what is hindered inside his soul as an artist.

The third chapter called *Mythic Plot and Character in "Mourning Becomes Electra"* shows O'Neill's search for new dramatic and aesthetic issues that enhance the extent of his themes and make them sound more logical and close to the audience. He uses the myth of Electra as an attempt to find a modern analogue to an ancient mode of experience. O'Neill has reworked the myth of curse on *House of Atreus* by Aeschylus in a modern context. His interest in mythic plot is purely Freudian related to the understanding of the human psyche. He explores Freud's psychoanalysis, which reflects the irrational, non-logical, dark side of man's life to depict the American individual at that time of crisis and spiritual grievances. O'Neill on the other hand, has been always interested in the inner drama of his characters more than their physical or social world, and he usually evokes psychological states through powerful metaphorical settings.

The fourth chapter labelled *Wearing Masks to Unveil Realities in "The Great God Brown"* sheds light on the most fascinating dramatic technique O'Neill has ever used in his drama, the mask. It is widely recognized that the dramatic mask has its roots deep into the Greek theater or may be before. It is said that even primitive people used animal-like masks to worship their gods. Nevertheless, O'Neill's inspiring use of such a theatrical device lies in his creativity in getting the complex through the simple. Seeing an actor wearing a mask on stage is not so inspiring but the reason behind doing that is what really matters. Again, O'Neill finds himself drowned into the mysteries of Greek Mythology, this time; the Dionysian Mask is his target. O'Neill sees in Dionysus the savior of the Americans, therefore, he uses Dionysus mask to reveal what is hidden and forbidden. Indeed, he embodies the Apollonian/Dionysus dichotomy to show Dion and Brown as two opposing characters.

The conclusion of the research work will try to make a synthesis of the two plays *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *The Great God Brown* in terms of their aesthetic values analyzing both similarities and differences. The aim of the conclusion is to recapitulate what has been analyzed in the previous chapters. At the same time, it opens a new gate of research within the field of aesthetics in drama, mainly Aesthetics in Drama Education as a suggested field of research in the English Literature Curriculum at the University.

***Because of administrative constraints, the researcher could not manage to delete the title "Beyond the Horizon" from the thesis' major title, for it does not effectively belong to its content. A more relevant title would be as follows:**

Aesthetics and Beauty in Modern American Drama: Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra" & "The Great God Brown"

CHAPTER ONE

STIMULATING DRAMATIC CONTEXT THROUGH MODERN AMERICAN THEATER

CHAPTER ONE: STIMULATING DRAMATIC CONTEXT THROUGH MODERN AMERICAN THEATER

1.1 Introduction

The word theater means a "place for seeing," but it is also more than just a building where plays are performed. It is the whole idea behind what happens there. Theater is where playwrights write scripts, directors supervise rehearsals, set designers and technical crew work behind-the-scenes, and the actors perform on stage. All of these people have an important role in the theater, but it is not a true theater until an audience is there to experience it.

Exactly when theater began is a mystery. Prehistoric hunters acted out stories about their hunting expeditions. Ancient Egyptians performed sacred songs and danced for their gods in religious ceremonies, but the idea of theater as a dramatic entertainment came later.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, two thousand years before Shakespeare, Western theater was born in Athens, Greece. Between 600 and 200 BC, the ancient Athenians created a theater culture whose form, technique and terminology have lasted two millennia, and they created plays that are still considered among the greatest works of world drama. Their achievement is truly remarkable when one considers that there have been only two other periods in the history of theater that could be said to approach the greatness of ancient Athens, Elizabethan England and, perhaps the Twentieth Century. The greatest playwright of Elizabethan England was Shakespeare, while the Twentieth Century produced thousands of playwrights and fine plays, which form and content is based on the innovations of ancient Athenians.

1.2 Defining Drama

The word Drama has a Greek origin. It goes to the religious rituals associated with the cult of Dionysus[1] in Ancient Greece, in which well-known stories and myths were not only told but *enacted, represented* by actors.

The notion is still essential in some modern definitions. For instance, the *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that "a drama is a composition in prose or verse, adapted to be *acted* upon the stage, in which a story is related by means of *dialogue* and *action*, and is represented with accompanying gesture, costume, and scenery, as 'in real life'. A drama is what we commonly call a play". Also according to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms "*drama, is the general term for performances in which actors impersonate the actions and speech of fictional or historical characters (or non-human entities) for the entertainment of an audience, either on a stage or by means of a broadcast; or a particular example of this art, i.e. a play". (Baldick, 2001: 71) When the word drama is used with the definite article *(the drama)*, it refers to that branch of literature which produces plays, the dramatic art.

> *Drama is the performance of a story by actors in front of an audience. Like fiction and poetry, it is a genre of literature. That is when we contemplate its language as written, it is literature; but when we regard its language as spoken, it is theatre. (Dubé & Franson,1983: 727)*

[1] The Cult is a festival celebrating the annual arrival of spring, notably flower blossoms of the grapevine cultivation, and takes place over three days. Offerings to the God were made at the sanctuary of Dionysus. The entire population of free women, men, and children, as well as slaves, participated in the festival. For children, who began to participate at age three, the festival was one of four major lifetime events. The festival begins at sunset when the first day begins with the opening of the first wine of the year and a first offering is left in the sanctuary for Dionysus.

Playwrights share with the writers of fiction many of the problems that grow out of the process of selecting the materials that they ultimately mold into their creations. All want to create interesting, believable characters, exhibit a struggle, present complications designed to thicken the plot, sustain interest, and express some attitude toward the meaning of life.

But dramatic art is unique, because action on stage unfolds before our eyes. The story dramatically enacted on stage achieves a lifelikeness and intensity that fiction can never attain. The playwright can be more direct and more powerful than the fiction writer can.

Watching or reading a play, makes us feel the action as it takes place. We are there, and only drama that brings us this close to characters and the significance of their actions. In his book, *The Critic and the Drama,* Nathan (1922) says, "Great drama is the rainbow born when the sun of reflection and understanding smiles anew upon an intelligence and emotion which that drama has respectively shot with gleams of brilliant lightning and drenched with the rain of brilliant tears. Great drama, like great men and great women, is always just a little sad."

Playwrights usually find themselves obliged to fit their materials into a tight structure; they condense and compress the depiction of characters, their actions, and their speeches because so many things are going to be shown to the audience in a limited time. At the other extreme, novelists often write a lengthy story that runs on a wider track; they may introduce long, descriptive passages, digressions, and many of the details that crowd our daily experiences. Furthermore, playwrights are generally restricted to a single point of view. They do not permit their own voices to be heard commenting upon an event or character, explaining motivation, or interpreting the significance of an action, except through a character or in the stage directions. Therefore, we can infer meaning from what the characters do and say.

Another constraint is a playwright's nearly absolute dependence on dialogue to tell the story. Dialogue is everything to drama, whereas it is one means among several in fiction. Playwrights

also find themselves obliged to keep in mind the physical realities of the theater in which their plays will be performed. For instance, in Ancient Greek Theater the play was performed before gigantic audiences in huge outdoor amphitheaters. By the time of Shakespeare, the staging of drama had become considerably more flexible and intimate. In the Elizabethan theater, most of the action is presented on a platform stage, surrounded on three sides by the audience.

In the nineteenth century, as drama achieved a much higher standard of realism, staging developed as well. The modern approach to staging is characterized by flexibility. One twentieth- century innovation is the *arena theater* where the action takes place on a central stage, surrounded by the audience. The fact that increases the proximity of the audience to the action, resulting in greater intimacy and immediacy.

> *Drama appeals to us for no fewer reasons than fiction does. We are witnesses to a story: our emotions are stirred and our sympathies aroused. We enjoy drama because it is entertaining and because the world of make-believe affords us an opportunity to escape the monotony of the daily details of life. In addition, we may find companionship, perhaps comfort, in a play, and we may be enlightened. Finally, we take pleasure in great dramas as literary masterpieces, enjoying the stories, the ideas contained in them, or the beauty of the artistry. (Barnet et al., 1997: 1203)*

A play is written to be seen and heard; we must see it in the mind's eyes and hear it in the mind's ear. We go to see a play in a theater (*theater* is derived from a Greek word meaning, *"to watch"*), but in the theater we also hear it because we become an audience (*audience* is derived from the Latin word meaning *"to hear")*.

Seeing a play is to see the characters costumed and moving within a specified setting. We hear not only their words but their tone, their joy or hypocrisy or tentativeness or aggression. Costumes tell us something about the people they wear them to identify the characters as

soldiers or kings or farmers or whatever, and changes of the costumes can be especially symbolic.

Though the fullest enjoyment of a play may come from seeing it performed, pleasure and profit are also gained by reading it. As readers of drama, however, we accept enormous responsibility; we are at once the director, the set designer, the makeup artist, all the actors; and sometimes the playwright. Any paly that we read can live if we bring it to 1ife in our imagination. Indeed, the reader of a play may have an advantage over the viewer, who can miss some points because so much happens so fast on the stage. Hence, to achieve such a goal, it is preferable to study first what are the different elements that contribute to form a play.

1.2.1 Elements of Drama

Plays are not written in paragraphs like a novel or short story. Instead, they are written as lines of dialogue in the form of a script. Typically, these scripts are broken down into one or more acts, or major divisions of the play and each act is then subdivided into a scene, or smaller divisions within the act. Usually a change in setting means there will be a change in either the act or the scene.

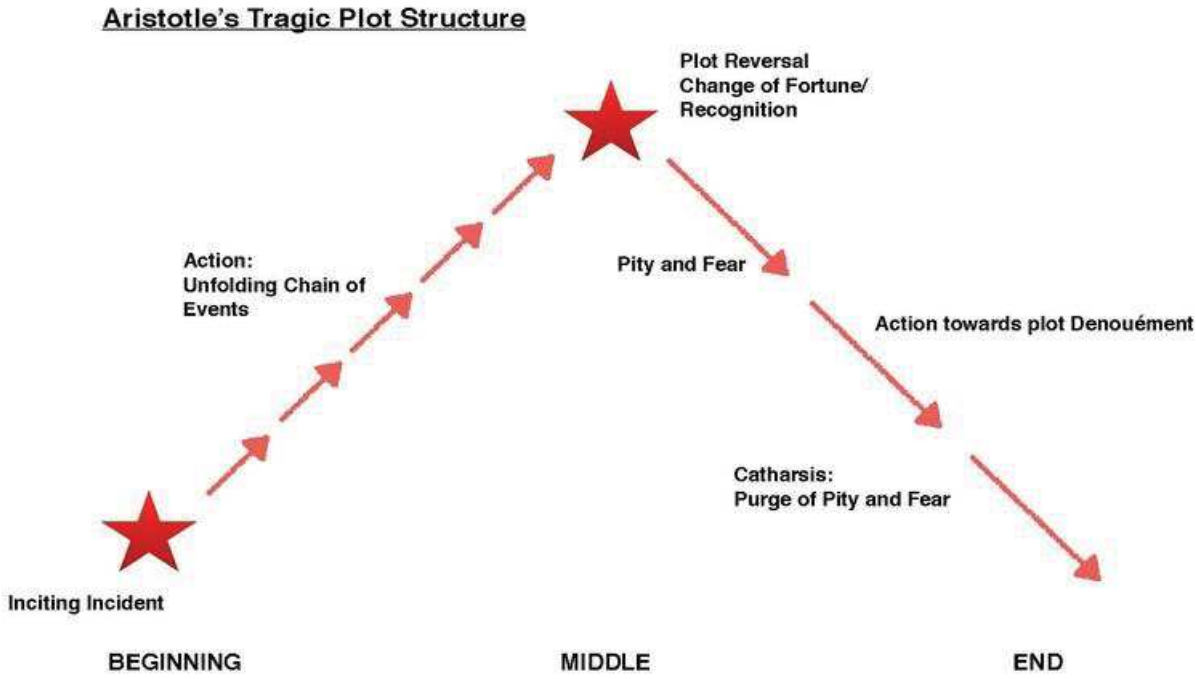
Drama has some elements that create its exclusive property and they are the building blocks of any performance. According to Cash (2008) drama elements are divided into two types, literary and technical elements.

1.2.1.1 Literary Elements

Act is the main component in drama. Act divisions is probably inspired from Roman theory and derived ultimately from the Greek practice of separating episodes in a play. Frequently, an act division in the modern play (commonly indicated by lowering the curtains and turning up the houselights) denotes change in local and lapse of time. A scene is a smaller unit, a division

with no change of local or sudden shift of time. The departure or entrance of an actor changes the composition of the group and thus introduces a new scene.

Plot in drama is the sequence of interrelated actions and events that make up a story. By means of arrangement and emphasis, the action creates emotional power and promotes thematic significance. Dramatic plots have a variety of structures. Most Greek tragedies (like Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*) have a simple, tightly knit plot and relatively few major characters.

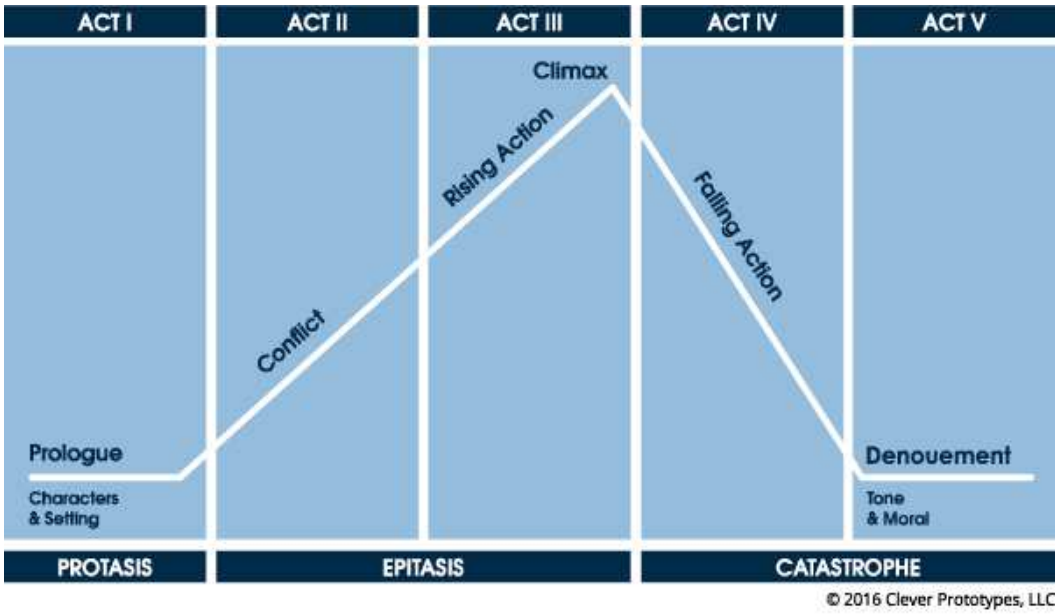


1-1 Greek Tragic Plot Structure[2]

- **The figure above illustrates Aristotle's tragic plot structure of Greek drama.**

[2] Adapted from *World of Greek Art*, available at : artsedge.kennedycenter.org/interactives/greece/index.html

At the opposite extreme, Elizabethan plays (such as William Shakespeare's *Othello*) have several set of characters who are energetically involved in an excess of situations and complicated actions.



1-2 The Shakespearean Five-Act Play[3]

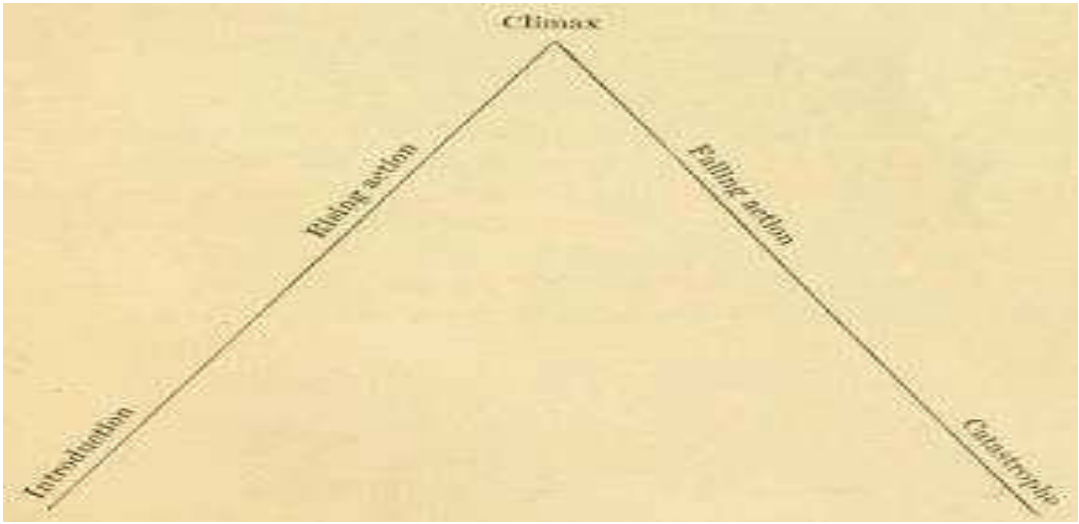
- **The figure above shows the Shakespearean five-act play.**

The *exposition* contains necessary background information; *the rising action* consists of the introduction and the heightening of the conflict; the *turning point* (also called *crisis*) refers to a high point in the action involving a decisive clash between opposing forces. At this point there is a change in the direction of the action, the main character or the antagonist is shown as having the upper hand. The *falling action* continues to advance the action with increased intensity; the *climax* refers to the point of highest emotional intensity.

Modern drama however, fits no single formula. Its plot may be simple or complex. The *introduction* or *(exposition)* sets the stage for the action that will follow. The *point of attack* initiates the action, showing the main character in conflict with nature's forces, social forces,

[3] Adapted from *Story Board That*, available at: http://www.storyboardthat.com/articles/e/five-act-structure

others, or the self. The *complications* make the problem more difficult to solve. The *climax* presents the opening forces at the apex of their struggle. The *resolution* or (*dénouement*) settles the outcome of the conflict; and the *conclusion* or (*ending*) terminates the action.



1-3 The Three-Act Modern Play Structure[4]

- **This picture indicates the plot of a modern play**

Plays are traditionally constructed with scene divisions within acts. For the most part, the dramatist divides the action into these segments to indicate a passage of time or to show a change in setting or character. Each act or scene contains a segment of the action; each has its own emphasis, direction, and crisis; and each contributes to the overall unity of the action.

Exposition

The playwright may achieve the most direct kind of exposition by making a direct statement to the audience. The vehicle of communication can be a *prologue,* a *chorus,* or a *narrator*. Each of these methods ordinarily sets the tone and atmosphere of the drama, provides background information about one or two main characters, and gives some notion of the nature of the

[4] Adapted from *Story Board That*, available at: http://www.storyboardthat.com/articles/e/five-act-structure

conflict. The *soliloquy* and the *aside* may also be used to present exposition effectively. Soliloquy means the act of speaking to oneself in solitude, or as if one were alone. The speaker, alone on the stage, gives the appearance of talking to himself or herself, although he or she really addresses the audience with a speech that commonly reflects thoughts about that speaker's character. Similarly, the aside, which merely pretends to be a stage whisper, is really spoken directly to the audience or occasionally to some of the characters. Usually a single word or sentence, it usually comments on an action or a character.

Anyone of these methods (prologue, chorus, narrator, soliloquy, aside) often accomplishes the dramatist's purpose of conveying preliminary information, although they are considered as old-fashioned in the modern play and infrequently used. Modern playwrights, instead, favor the use of setting, an incident, or a conversation between two characters. They sensibly select, revealing only those specific details absolutely vital to our understanding of the play, and at precisely the right moment. Consequently, only the significant details are likely to be incorporated into the play.

Setting furnishes a great deal of the play's material; it indicates the times in which that action takes place, establishes tone and atmosphere, points to the conflict, mirrors the dispositions of characters, and presents innumerable other significant details.

At the beginning of a play, there is always a kind of tranquility, before the action starts, and toward the end, after a solution is found (if one is found) for the main problem. It is only the conflict, which disturbs this tranquility as the essence element in a play.

Conflict is the struggle of forces in opposition to each other-for example, human beings against human beings, human beings against society, environment, or fate, or human beings against some aspect of the self. It may also be defined as the action and reaction of characters.

In the phase of conflict a character has one several choices to make, he or she must decide to act in one way or another. A major character whose decisions and actions generally force and control the main action is the *protagonist.* We may or may not sympathize, but we do identify with the protagonist or the problem, and we are eager to know what will happen. In most plays, major characters respond with actions, struggling to overcome difficulties, or striving to achieve something. What the protagonist seeks to achieve is the *prize* or goal. The opposition (*antagonist*) is someone, or something (forces of nature, fate, society, or fighting internal passions). Opposing the protagonist in the pursuit of the goal, indeed, is called the *obstacle.* No conflict exists without this opposition, which persists until the outcome at the end of the play. Once this situation becomes known to us, the dramatic story has really begun (point of attack).

Plot is constructed of the building blocks of *complications.* They are unexpected problems, difficulties, or changes that usually come up temporarily to hinder the protagonist's progress toward the goal. Through complications, the action moves upward and forward toward the most crucial scene in the paly, which we know as the *climax.* It is the point of highest emotional intensity. For the forces in opposition, at the apex of their struggle, it is the moment of truth.

What follows is the *resolution* or dénouement, which announces the outcome of the entire sequence of events. At this point, something has been decided for or against the protagonist. The struggle is whether won or lost.

Characters in drama are divided into two broad categories. According to Dubé & Franson (1983), they are three-dimensional or one- dimensional.

Three-dimensional characters are developed fully, that is, as fully as is necessary to let us know them intimately. We know about their physical attributes, background, drives, and frustrations. These round, or fully developed, characters are also known as **dynamic** or **developing** characters, which means that through the course of the action they grow and change.

Something in the conflict has touched them deeply, so that at the final curtain they are different people from the ones we met at the opening.

Unlike three-dimensional characters, whose complex nature demands full treatment, **one-dimensional characters** are sketched simply, to give them one or two easily recognizable personality traits. They are *static* or *flat* characters who rarely change their essential nature or beliefs. Generally, we can identify their type quickly.

> *Characters in plays resemble people in real life, and like their living counterparts manifest their personalities chiefly in what they do and say. In plays as in life, we get to know people by observing the way they look and the gestures they make, and by listening to the tone of voice they use and the remarks others make about them. Thus, the playwright reveals the personality of characters by means of action, dialogue, appearance, and gesture. (Dubé & Franson, 1983: 839)*

Although these methods of characterization help us to understand characters, but still drama allows us little or no direct access to the minds of characters, viewers or readers of drama have to infer meaning. We presuppose that in those selected moments of existence through which the characters pass, we are hearing and seeing significant aspects of their inner natures. A character's words can generally tell us a lot about him or her. We form judgment about people based upon their opinions of others and their convictions about issues that concern them.

Everything that happens in a play is important. The way a character eats, laughs, opens doors, or hangs up a telephone may deliver a sign, a motive, and an attitude. In analyzing characters, we need to ask *how* characters are revealed. It is also important to determine *who* and *what* the characters are, *how* they act, and *why* they act as they do.

Theme or meaning of the play is chiefly revealed by the actions and speeches of the characters. It exists in the dramatic story itself, not outside it. Usually playwrights are professional readers and profound thinkers. Like most people, they possess attitudes that make up a philosophy of life. Intentionally or not, these attitudes invade the action and dialogue of the characters and from those dialogues, a reader or spectator derives meaning. Indeed, to get glimpses of meaning we can usually depend upon some elements of plot, characterization, or action, or on all the elements together (the complete story). From various plays, we do obtain some code of psychological, moral, or ethical beliefs, because "the heart of drama beats with actions and words that exhibit human life." (Barnet et al., 1997: 1224)

Characters' speeches sometimes reveal feelings, decisions, and conclusions that may enlighten us with a direct focus on thematic substance; in fact, occasionally they are explicit declarations of what the dramatist wishes to convey. However, in taking a statement by a character in a play as an expression of a chosen theme, we have to ascertain, first, that it is consistent with the entire action and verify that it represents a reasonable assessment of the total emphasis in the play. Hence, one may say that the literary elements of the dramatic production, as a whole, would never come true without the technical elements and stage directions.

1.2.1.2 Technical Elements

In addition to the literary elements, drama is built upon other technical elements, which are concerned with both stage and performance:

Scenery (set) the theatrical equipment, such as the curtains, flats, backdrops, or platforms used in a dramatic production to communicate environment.

Costumes clothing and accessories worn by actors to portray character and period.

Props (short of properties) any article, except costumes or scenery, used as part of a dramatic production, any moveable object that appears on stage during a performance.

Lights the placement, intensity, and color of lights to help communicate environment mood or feeling.

Sound the effects an audience hears during performance to communicate character, context, or environment.

Make Up costumes, wigs, and body paint used to transform an actor into a character.

Stage Directions

Although a play is all in its dialogue, but the dramatist often helps us to read this dialogue by giving us useful guidelines, generally written in italics: these are the stage directions. They help us to visualize the play. Through them we can imagine what the characters are doing upon the stage, what feelings they experience when they speak or, at times when they keep silent. Various issues are not expressed through words but through silent gestures (mime or dumb show).

Stage directions are of primary importance to the *producer* (whose job is to *produce* a play to arrange a performance with actors). In some plays they are barely indicated or totally absent where they must be derived or inferred from the dialogue. On the other hand, when a dramatist gives many stage directions, or even, like Bernard Shaw and Eugene O'Neill. Supplements the dialogue with elaborate descriptions of the characters and setting, he still leaves our imagination filled with different possibilities. In that case, the producer will know how to follow the instructions and, nonetheless, give full play to his own invention.

1.2.2 Dramatic Conventions

The conventions of drama are different from the conventions of fiction. When we read a novel we find action, too. But generally, we also have the clues to the interpretation of this action every time the narrator comments on the characters' motives and feelings. This is essential if we want to understand the general meaning of the novel. A dramatist cannot explain the

characters of his play in the same way. He respects their autonomy and leaves his audience to make sense of what they say and do. Dramatic illusion would be destroyed if he appeared on stage in order to speak in his own person. In order to manage such clues the dramatist makes usage of some dramatic conventions:

Dramatic irony means that characters do not simply address each other they also address the audience. Now, each character has his own limited point of view, his own way of understanding the action, whereas the audience is able to understand the overall meaning of the action. As defined in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms.*

> *dramatic irony, in which the audience knows more about a character's situation than the character does, foreseeing an outcome contrary to the character's expectations, and thus ascribing a sharply different sense to some of the character's own statements; in tragedies, this is called tragic irony. (Baldick, 200: 130)*

The expression *dramatic irony* describes a situation where there is a clear gap between what a character anticipates and what the audience knows. In this case, he may say words, which have one meaning to him, but another possible meaning to the audience.

Time in drama, a performance usually takes two hours or so. This does not mean that the action represented on the stage is very short. In fact, dramatic time is different from real time because it is stylized. A play is divided into *acts,* which are divided in turn into scenes. An act represents a larger time unit, a scene, a smaller one. Usually, there is a continuum between the scenes of an act. Between the larger units, there may be gaps, which the audience is expected to bridge.

Rhythm in drama is essential in a play. The basic rhythm pattern of a play always combines tension and release. Tension (or suspense) gradually goes up and then it is loosened. The

opening scenes of a play (its introduction) are essential because they define the situation from which the whole action will develop. There we meet the chief characters and learn what their problems are.

After the introduction, there is a gradual rise to a sort of peak, called climax, followed by a fall, or *resolution.* This can happen in different ways. Generally, an unexpected development causes a crisis, introducing new problems for the characters. By trying to solve these problems, they may bring about a new crisis. In addition, the play may thus proceed from crisis to crisis until an unexpected complication creates a kind of knot. The action is brought to an end with the "dénouement" (when the knot is untied). This is caused by a final action or decision and in some cases by a discovery. Sometimes we may even find two parallel plots or multiple-plot in one play.

1.2.3 Language in Drama is also stylized. It is quite different from what we say in daily discourse. On the stage, there are no hesitations, no incoherent phrasings, though sometimes it is acted to look like a real incoherence. Even when very simple characters speak, the standard of speech is undoubtedly higher than in real life.

Specialized in the field of drama usually declare that a good dramatist is the one who is able to suggest some differences of speech between those characters who belong to different social classes. These differences first depend on pronunciation, but also on other characteristics such as the choice of words (simple or elaborate) and the way of communication (direct or indirect).

The language of drama tells us a great deal about the characters. It has a broader function as well. It points out beyond the characters toward the whole significance of the play and the way we respond to the action.

Additionally, it is impossible to deal with drama and its conventions without considering the theatre itself, that is to say, that magical space in which actors and audience are brought into

relation with one another. The playhouse itself has changed since ancient times. Therefore, it can prove useful to describe it as it once used to be, and to explain how it has changed.

1.3 Greek Origin of Drama

The history of drama is closely related to the history of humanity. When the first hunters recounted their adventures using mime, when the first storytellers told their tales in rhythmic chants, and when the first organized groups of people found expression in the acting out of hunting, war, and love dances, the dramatic impulse was showing itself. These performances then became part of ritualistic ceremonies, which were probably the core of the prehistoric society.

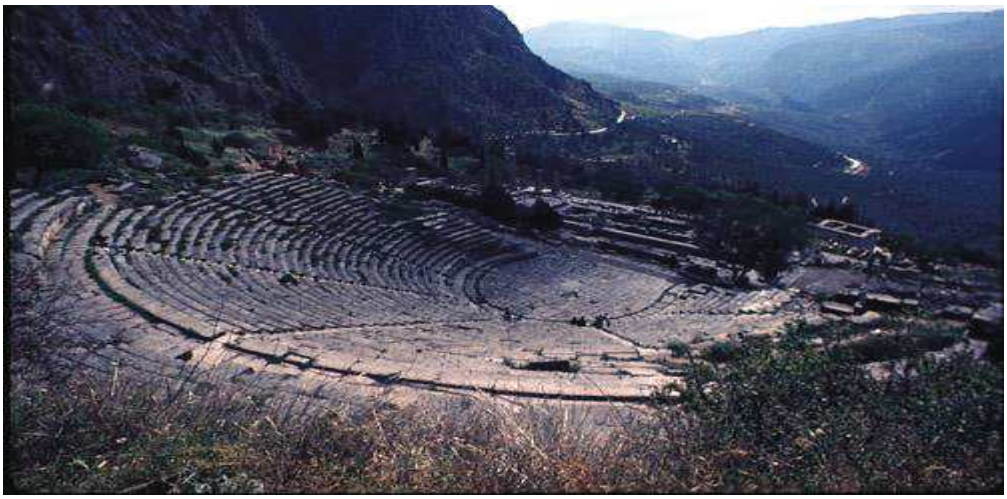
Leading those ritualistic ceremonies was the tribal *Shaman*, the wise religious leader presumed to have extraordinary, even, supernatural, powers. It is said that *Thespis* is the first actor and the earlier shaman who deserves that honor. Through the use of masks, gesture and other devices he would create a God, an animal or any other kind of roles through impersonation.

Then as civilizations developed, drama took a more definite and recorded form in the worship of heavenly gods and the glorification of earthly rulers. Tales were told of noble characters engaged in mighty conflicts and humorous types in comic styles. At last, the tales produced dramatic presentations, ultimately to be written and acted in a concrete form.

The Western dramatic tradition has its origins in ancient Greece. Greek Drama as we know it began in Greece in the sixth century BC, as part of the worship of Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility. To recall the god's death, a group of chanters, called the *chorus*, danced around an altar upon which a *goat* was sacrificed. This chorus was called the *goat-singers*, and their ritualistic chant was called the *tragos*, or *goat-song*. From this term the word tragedy came. As

time passes, these ceremonies evolved into dramatic contests, when *Thespis* stepped from the chorus and engaged in a dialogue between the chorus and himself, thus becoming the first actor. The term thespian has been given to actors ever since. This actor-playwright is also credited with introducing masks into the Greek plays.

Production in the Greek theater was a highly complex art form that used many clever mechanical devices. The performances were at first held in the open hillsides surrounding a circular area called the *orchestra*, in translation it is known as the dancing place. The audience watched the proceedings from a hillside known as the *theatron*, in translation known as the seeing place. Wooden and then stone seats were eventually for more comfort.



1-4 Parnassus Theater[5]

- **The figure above shows the famous temple of Apollo at Delphi**

Basically, the theater was only for men, both as performers and spectators, women did not attend the theater. It is believed that some theaters seated over 17,000 spectators. Originally, at the back of the acting area, was a small hut called the *skene*, where the actors changed masks

[5] Adapted from *"Transactions of the American Philological Association"*, (1991: 133-47).

and costumes. In front of the skene was a raised stage, or *proskenion*, and this area was also used by the actors as a playing space. After a time, the skene was enlarged into a stone building. Later, the off stage areas (*wings)* were added, and scenery was painted on the front. On the roof was the god-walk, from which the gods delivered their monologues.

Greek tragic actors wore masks, padded costumes, and boots with thick soles called *cothurni*, or *buskins*, in Latin. Comic actors wore rather grotesque masks, exaggerated costumes, and a type of sandal called a *sock*. The chorus, however, was an integral part of the early Greek theater. It served to explain the situation, to bring the audience up-to-date, to make a commentary on the action from the point of view of established ideas.

Mainly, drama is divided into two major types, which are tragedy and comedy. The latter includes various sub-genres such as romantic comedy, comedy of humors, comedy of manners, sentimental comedy and tragicomedy. Although, the main purpose of comedy is to entertain the audience, tragedy remains the most appealing for the audience emotions, often leaving them in purification.

1.3.1 Greek Comedy

Comedy is a literary genre and a type of dramatic work that is amusing and satirical in its tone, mostly having cheerful ending. The motif of this dramatic work is triumph over unpleasant circumstance by which to create comic effects, resulting in happy or successful conclusion. Comedies and tragedies were two alternative types of Greek drama usually practiced in order to give a double-vision to the human life, thus the purpose of comedy is to entertain the audience. Comedy has multiple sub-genres depending upon source of humor, context in which an author delivers dialogues, which include farce and satire.

Like tragedy, comedy is associated with the cult of Dionysus. It is probably connected with merry aspect of this cult, celebrating life, youth, joy and fertility. The word is derived from a Greek word (komos), which means joy. Thus, a comedy was first a song meant to accompany a merry procession, with bold jokes and great fun.

> *"Comedies and tragedies alternated during Greek festivals, giving the audience a double vision of life: a serious and sad one in tragedies dealing with suffering and death, and a happy one in comedies dealing with the more amusing aspects* of man's experience". *(Flickinger, 1918:8)*

The famous author of Greek comedy was Aristophanes (450-380 BC), who contributed forty plays, eleven of which still remain. Aristophanes was a skilled satirist and a keen observer of humanity. His comic tone mocked the leaders of Athens and the gods themselves. Aristophanes was the chief writer of "Old Comedy." The best- known author of the "New Comedy" was Menander (342-291 BC). His comedies seem gentle compared to those of Aristophanes. By this time, the chorus had disappeared and stock characters had made their appearance upon the stage.

One important characteristic, which comedies of all ages have in common, is the happy ending. This comes as a pleasant relief after a series of crises. It seems to be quite in keeping with an optimistic vision of life.

Yet another characteristic seems to be more important still, comedy is meant to amuse and entertain. It may deal with very serious questions, it may even teach a lesson, but even then, it does so with a light touch, with a good deal of wit and humor where amusement is so essential.

1.3.2 Greek Tragedy

Greek tragedy developed as an outgrowth of what was happening at that time in Athens. On the one hand, Greek religion had dictated how people should behave and think for centuries (see

below “Greek Mythology”). On the other hand, there was a birth of free thought and intellectual inquiry. Athens in the fourth and fifth centuries B.C experienced a time of radical ideas like democracy, philosophy, mathematics, science and art. It boasted philosophers like Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Democritus. There were the first known historians Thucydides and Herodotus. The scientists and mathematicians like Thales, Hippocrates, Archimedes, and later Euclid, Pythagoras, Eratosthenes, Hero, Hipparchus and Ptolemy. In these respects -- a blossoming of free thought after years of religious grievances -- ancient Athens resembled Renaissance England at that time.

In essence, the ancient Athenians had begun to question how nature worked, how society should work, and what man's role was in the scheme of things as opposed to God. Tragedy was the poets' answer to some of these questions -- How should one behave? How can one accept the injustices of life? What is the price of hubris? “The main conflicts of the Greek tragedies evolved from the clash between the will of the gods and the ambitions and desires of humanity. The plays showed how useless human efforts were to change the predestined fate.” (Flickinger, 1918:5)

The greatest writers of Greek tragedy were Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), Sophocles (497-405 BC), and Euripedes (485-406 BC). Aeschylus was a warrior-playwright who held firmly to the Greek religion of his day. He added the second actor and reduced the chorus to twelve. He is noted for the elevation and majesty of his language. Many critics refer to him as the “father of tragedy.” Of his seventy to ninety plays, only seven remain.

The greatest of the Greek tragedians was Sophocles who added the third actor and introduced dramatic action leading to a definite plot structure of unity and beauty. “He achieved balance between the power of the gods and the importance of humanity, believing that human beings

have a little of the divinity in them that elevates their struggles against fate." (Castex & Jumeau, 1992: 76)

Sophocles allowed his characters to ask "Why?" within the framework of their acceptance of the will of the gods and fate. As a result, his characters are among the strongest ever to walk upon the stage. He wrote at least 110 plays, of which only seven have survived. Sophocles' "Oedipus" stands as one of the world's first powerful plays of dramatic irony. Aristotle described it as the ideal tragedy. It is the story of a man in search of Truth. His fate, to kill his own father and marry his mother, has been already predestined by the gods.

The playwright Euripides seriously questioned life. He became more interested in human lives than in the religious views of his day. He emphasized human relationships and became a master of pathos, human sorrow and compassion. One of his plays is "Medea", the tragedy of a woman who seeks revenge on her husband, even by killing her own sons.

1.3.2.1 Toward a Sound Definition of the Tragic Genre of Drama

Tragedy is one of the oldest forms of drama. It comes from ancient Greece. The word meant the sacrifice of a goat (tragos) accompanied by a song. Tragedy was thus originally associated with the notion of sacrifice. It may have been connected by the cult of the dead. It was certainly connected by the cult of the death of Dionysus, with the God's own experience of death and rebirth. It arose from a choral song in honor of the god. This became an alternation between a chorus and a single actor. The chorus and the actors insisted on man's subjection to the gods, on the consequences of evil action, and on the possibility of growth through suffering.

A tragedy commonly begins with a *prologos* (prologue), during which the exposition is given. Next comes the *parodos,* the chorus's ode of entrance sung while the chorus marches into the theater through the side aisles and onto the orchestra. The *epeisodion* (episode) is the ensuring

scene; it is followed by a *stasimon* (choral song). Each of these choral odes has a *strophe* (lines presumably sung while chorus danced in one direction) and an *antistrophe* (lines presumably sung while chorus retraces its steps). After the last part of the last ode comes the *exodus* or final scene.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle defined tragedy as a dramatization of a serious happening not necessarily one ending with the death of the protagonist and his definition remains among the best. However, many plays have been written since Aristotle defined tragedy. When we think of Shakespeare's tragedies, for instance, we cannot deny that something has been added to Aristotle's definition. Focusing on the protagonist' struggles. In addition, when we think of the last hundred years plays, we see the serious treatment of sociological problems as alcoholism and race prejudice that adds to the definition something about the need for universal appeals.

Barnet *et al.* (1997) quote Aristotle's *Poetic* saying that *hamartia* sometimes is literally translated as "missing the target", or "vice" or "flaw" or "weakness" but perhaps best translated as "mistake". Aristotle seems to imply that the hero is undone because of some mistake he or she commits, but this mistake need not be a result of moral fault; it may be simply a miscalculation.

In Greek tragedies, the hero's *hamartia* is *hubris*, usually translated as he or she having the power and wisdom of the gods, and later they are humbled for this arrogance. In tragedies, the audience often senses a kind of human greatness; that the hero despite profound suffering, has lived according to his or her ideals. Human greatness, however, can be seen from a different angle. For example, in reading *Julius Caesar* or *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* we see that people, whatever their nobility, have within them the seeds of their own destruction. Indeed, in much tragedies, after all, the destruction comes from within, not from without.

What we are talking about, in fact is *tragic irony,* the contrast between what is believed to be so and what is so, or between expectations and accomplishments. Tragic irony is sometimes called *dramatic irony* or *Sophoclean irony*. The terms are often applied to speeches or actions that the audience understands in a sense fuller than or different from the sense in which the dramatic characters understand them. In *Macbeth*, for instance, the most pervasive irony of all is that the protagonist aims at happiness when he kills Duncan and takes the throne, but in fact, he wins only sorrow.

Man's deeds often oppose him; we can aim at our good and produce our ruin. Of course, this is not a discovery of the tragic dramatist; the archetype is the story of Adam and Eve: these two aimed at becoming like God, and consequently, they brought upon themselves corruption, death, and the loss of their earthly paradise.

In his *Poetics*, the Greek philosopher Aristotle (4th century BC) gives us this description of tragedy:

> *A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of work; in a dramatic, in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions. (Cited in Barnet et al. 1997: 1223)*

Pity and fear are two emotions that Aristotle often described as peculiarly tragic. He nearly always uses them in conjunction with each other, as a pair. According to Aristotle, "both pity and fear are derived from the self-regarding instinct, and pity springs from the feeling that a similar suffering might happen to ourselves. The objects of pity, therefore, should be like ourselves. (Cited in House, 1956: 102)

Presumably, Aristotle uses these two tragic emotional components to enhance the possibility of *sympathy* or sharing the same feeling of sadness with somebody else. When the good prosper, we feel happy and satisfied, but when they suffer or expect to suffer, we share their pains and fears. In a tragedy, the feeling of pity usually goes to the good or the sufferer. "Aristotle's pity and fear are sympathy for the good part of mankind in the bad part of their experiences: this the emotional side of justice." (Ibid: 103) Yet, there is another emotional aspect, which is involved in such a process, *Catharsis*.

1.3.2.2 Catharsis

The notion of Catharsis (or purification) is essential in Aristotle's description. It explains the paradox of tragedy: how is it that we can enjoy the representation of suffering? How this purification is brought about? Are the emotions of pity and fear completely eliminated, or are they moved out of what is excessive and dangerous about them? This has long been a matter of controversy. Nonetheless, Aristotle wanted to state that the suffering in tragedy was a kind of therapy for audience, as it brought relief. "Catharsis is a relief to overcharged feeling." (Ibid: 106) Whatever the complexities of plot, in a tragedy, crises create a tension, and lead to a dilemma that becomes insoluble. No happy ending is possible, and death is often in the background. "Aristotle then says that those who are influenced by pity and fear have a like experience … they all undergo a catharsis of some kind and a lightening, with pleasure." (Ibid: 108)

Tragedy involves a complete change of fortune, from happiness to misery, or from greatness to humiliation. This change of fortune may be sudden and cause a great shock. The tragic hero comes to realize that he cannot change his flaw. Yet this moment of truth, when he blames himself for what he has done, this final recognition (anagnorisis) comes too late. What has been done cannot be undone. This pattern, derived from the Greek tradition, can be found in Shakespeare's tragedies and in many other plays of the Elizabethan age.

The suffering witnessed in a tragedy is usually presented in such a way as to praise the feelings, not to disgust them. The sufferings of a completely cruel character would be disgusting, and those of a completely virtuous character would seem unjust. In this essence, Aristotle describes the tragic hero as:

> *... There remains, then, the intermediate kind of person, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgment, he being one of those who enjoy great reputation and prosperity. (Castex & Jumeau, 1992:72)*

Therefore, the tragic hero is neither completely good, nor completely bad. He suffers from some weakness (*hamartia* or *tragic flaw*) without being corrupted. Modern tragedy, on the other hand, deals with a lesser race of heroes, less exalted than kings, princes and noble generals, they are closer to the common man. They perceive life through a darkly glass and their moment of recognition is often clouded with deep confusions. Another important element in upbringing the uniqueness of the Greek tragedy is the actors' use of masks. For many decades, the image of the theater masks had, universally, become like a symbol of theater or acting.

1-5 Comedy & Tragedy Masks[6]

- **This figure indicates Melpomene (Tragedy Mask) and Thalia (Comedy Mask).**

[6] Adapted from *World of Greek Art*, available at : artsedge.kennedycenter.org/interactives/greece/index.html

Generally, known as "the Comedy and Tragedy Masks" or "the theater masks", there is much mystery as to where these two masks, stated in the picture above, really originate from. It is said in Greek Mythology that these masks real names were Thalia, being the muse of comedy and pastoral poetry; and Melpomene, the muse of tragedy.

1.3.2.3 Greek Mythology

From the Greek term *mythos*, myth means story or word. Mythology is the study of myths. As stories (or narratives), myths articulate how characters undergo or enact an ordered sequence of events. The term myth has come to refer to a certain genre (or category) of stories that share characteristics that make this genre distinctly different from other genres of oral narratives, such as legends and folktales. Many definitions of myth repeat similar general aspects of the genre.

> *Myths are symbolic tales of the distant past (often primordial times) that concern cosmogony and cosmology (the origin and nature of the universe), may be connected to belief systems or rituals, and may serve to direct social action and values. (Berens, 1880: 36)*

As in other ancient cultures, a myth was used as a means to explain the environment in which humankind lived, the natural phenomena they witnessed and the passing of time through the days, months, and seasons. Myths were also connected to religion in the Greek world and explained the origin and lives of the gods, where humanity had come from and where it was going after death, and gave advice on the best way to lead a happy life. Myths were used to re-tell historical events so that people could maintain contact with their ancestors, the wars they fought, and the places they explored.

Myths were mostly used for religious and educational purposes but also may well have had a simple aesthetic function of entertainment. Myths were both familiar and popular with a wide section of Greek society through their common representation in art, whether through sculpture

on public buildings or scenes painted on pottery. A myriad of mythical scenes decorate ceramics of all shapes, function, and must surely have spread the myths to a wider audience. The Greeks created myths to explain just about every element of the human condition.

> *"Myths exist in every society, as they are basic elements of human culture. The main function of myths is to teach moral lessons and explain historical records. Authors of great literary works have taken their stories and themes from myths. Myths and their mythical symbols lead to creativity in literary works... a traditional or legendary story, usually concerning some being or hero or event, with or without a determinable basis of fact or a natural explanation, especially one that is concerned with deities or demigods and explains some practice, rite, or phenomenon of nature."* *(Berens, 1880:26)*

Over centuries though, and with increasing contact between city-states, the myths continued to be popular. In the 5th century BC, the myths were presented in the new format of theatre, especially in the works of the three tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. At the turn of the century, the first documented skepticism and even rejection of the myths began with the pre-Socratic philosophers who searched for a more scientific explanation for phenomena and events. The first historians Herodotus and Thucydides sought to document as accurately as possible and record for the coming generations a less subjective view of events and so the modern subject of history was born.

Eugene O' Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* also is a continuation of the Greek tradition. It is rare to find two principal complexes "Electra" and "Oedipus" as parallel themes in one work of art, where the tragic implications lie in the mixture between emotions of grief and emotional relief. However, it is set in a modern (20th century) milieu. The characterization, the story line, the plot all reflect the ancient traditions even the names and sequence have been modified to serve the playwright's tendency. The cultural historian Jacques Barzun said: "What links myth

with Literature is ... the Imagination" (cited in Berens, 1880: 38). Therefore, Myths and mythic symbols in modern context are elementary devices of imagination and creativity.

1.4 Modern American Drama: Social and Political Background

America toward the end of the nineteenth century was an exciting country to live in. It was still growing, still prospering, the most powerful nation in the Western hemisphere and about to become a major power among the nations of the world. While the United States was still predominantly an agricultural nation, industry was becoming a more and more important part of the country. With the new technological inventions that were changing the lives of the Americans, the United States was still the land of opportunity to hundreds of thousands of immigrants, who fled from poverty and persecution in their native lands.

Yet, the dreams of Americans did not always match the reality of their lives. Industrial worker in cities worked long hours at backbreaking jobs and lived in poverty and squalor. Farmers were afraid that the market prices set on their crops would be too low to meet their expenses and that it would be necessary for them to go heavily into debt. Many men were *uncertain* of their place in society, *fearful* that they were caught up in large, impersonal forces beyond their control.

In addition, America's involvement in the First World War that had started as a crusade to save Europe, ended up with two years of America's bloodshed and human waste. Such a failure only led to disillusionment and a sense of betrayal and absurdity. The war left deep scars on the American psyche; yet the following decade was marked by an unprecedented business boom reflected in a pleasure-seeking generation.

Huge technological and manufacturing advancements brought America the radio, the telephone, the movies, the automobile, all of which radically changed people's lives by giving them mobility and independence. In spite of many social problems (the poor living conditions of many black people and new immigrants in the cities), it was a decade of huge material

consumption (encouraged by the possibility of buying on credit), the whole country was sunk on big business.

The arts flourished as well, the Jazz music became a trend and it was paralleled by deep changes in manners and morals of the Americans. For many, the Jazz Age was an age of liberation and the lavish life. Women obtained the right to vote in 1920, and became "flapper" girls, bobbing their hair, shortening their skirts, smoking, drinking, refusing restraints and propriety.

The "Roaring Twenties" partly reflected the aimlessness and disenchantment of a post-war generation, which was devoid of faith or values. Thus, many writers of the "Lost Generation"[7] doomed conformity, the lack of faith and ideals, the meaninglessness and alienation described in much of their works such as T.S. Eliot in *The Waste Land* and Theodore Dreiser *An American Tragedy*.

The struggle between ideals and realities shaped the intellectual life and the literature of the nation. Realism, one of the major literary and intellectual movements that emerged at that time, which has often been contrasted with Romanticism, led poets and novelists, not to imagine life as it could be, but to examine life as it was actually lived and to record what they saw around them as honestly as they could. Realism can be defined as the depiction of life as most people live and know it.

> *The realistic writer is concerned with recording the details of ordinary life, which showing the reader not generally but precisely how ordinary life is lived. Ordinary is a key word in any discussion of realism. Many realistic writers, in their search for subject matter, tend to avoid the unusual or out-of-the-way and deliberately concentrate on the typical and the average. (Early, 1968: 382)*

[7] The Lost Generation, in general, the post-World War I generation, but specifically a group of U.S. writers who came of age during the war and established their literary reputations in the 1920s. The generation was "lost" in the sense that its inherited values were no longer relevant in the postwar world and because of its spiritual alienation, seemed to its members to be hopelessly provincial, materialistic, and emotionally infertile.

Some realistic writers regard their work as being similar to the job of the scientist; to observe, to record, and then to analyze. The realistic writer usually takes a slice of the real world and examines it almost the same way as a scientist examines. They cannot regard any aspect of life as being unworthy of notice.

The concern with life as it is really lived brought into literature new kinds of subject matter, scenes and characters that Romantic writers had generally avoided. The realistic writers dealt with all types of men without any kind of discrimination, workmen, bosses, corrupt politicians, and even criminals. The realists offered stark descriptions of the hardships and poverty that were often a major part of various lives. It was impossible to write about life in America at the end of the nineteenth century without dealing with all of these new subjects and mainly in drama.

1.4.1 Historical Context

The need to tell a story, to imitate, to play, and to perform repeated acts that ensure the continuation of a community is a human enactment. These activities predate recorded history and leave no tangible trace; therefore, one may say that the precise origins of theatre are locked in mystery. Theater most likely evolved over centuries as a form of cultural expression and has no specific moment of creation. Just like rituals, theatrical performances use music, dance, costumes, props, and masks. Many theorists, indeed, have speculated that various forms of theatre evolved from rituals. The earliest rituals were performed to please or prize the gods, who were the intended audience. To some extent, traditions today remind us that ritual and theatre can coexist in the same form.

1.4.2 Early Beginnings

History of the American theater dates back to the Puritanical plays of early American colonies in the second half of the 17th century. American theatrical tradition flourished mainly in the two

liberal cities of Philadelphia and New York. While elsewhere, the continuing Puritan influence was still restricting theatrical development.

After the American War of Independence (1775-1783), the new American Government led by George Washington brought a new unity to the colonies and a considerable relaxing of the laws and restrictions against theatre. In addition to that, the renewed peace resulted in many talented British actors coming over who tried to make a living in the New World. Consequently, those new comers formed an experienced foundation for the rapidly expanding growth of the American players.

By the 18th century, as the population continued to expand, many more cities had grown large enough supporting theatre both in terms of the standard of acting and the quality of costumes and scenery. Even in terms of the building of better and luxurious playhouses. Nevertheless, as a new nation, American theatre had not yet developed its own identity and was heavily influenced by its European counterparts, especially English literature. For many years, the most popular plays in American theatres were Shakespearean tragedies, Restoration Comedies, and farces (particularly those involving political satire).

As the century progressed, American theater became influenced by American literary trends. The Realism movement was one of the major factors, which stimulated a rise in American drama, which began towards the end of the nineteenth century and marked a major shift in theater leading into the twentieth century. Throughout the twentieth century, several other aesthetic and social movements have emerged which were larger reactions to cultural and social changes that were influencing all of the arts. Oscar Wilde once said "I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being". (cited in Grellet, 1978)

As a powerful medium in a technological world, theater has consistently challenged social and cultural norms. Theater played an important role in the spread of these movements; most playwrights did not limit themselves to one style of writing or participating in only one movement. Their ambitions were beyond the limits of what the theater was capable of being at that time.

Contributing to the rage for theatrical realism was Thomas Edison's invention of the light bulb in 1879. By 1881, the world's first electric power plant was up and running in New York City, and four years later the New Lyceum on Fourth Avenue in Broadway was the first theatre in the world to be lit with electric lights. For the first time in the history of the theatre, every kind of lighting effect—from an eerie, stormy night to a warm summer day—could be realistically presented and controlled. Because of electric lights, the audience could now sit in total darkness for the first time.

1.4.3 Theater Leading into the 20th Century

As the 19th Century began to end and the 20th century took root, an authentic "American" voice began to emerge in the theater. Typically, this was represented in the style of realism or sometimes known as psychological realism.

> *Realism called for sets to be more "genuine," acting to be more "honest," and dialogue to be modeled after everyday speech. But this call for reality quickly became more than a desire to mirror the world; it became a hunger to uncover the basic forces of human nature and to show people as they really are. This was the birth of Realism. (Early, 1968: 386)*

During the 20th century, especially after World War I, Western drama became more internationally unified and less the product of separate national literary traditions. Throughout the century realism, naturalism, and symbolism (and various combinations of these) continued

to inform important plays. Among the many 20th century playwrights who have written what can be broadly termed naturalist dramas are Gerhart Hauptmann and Bertolt Brecht (German), John Galsworthy (English), John Millington Synge and Sean O'Casey (Irish), Luigi Pirandello(Italian) and Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets, and Lillian Hellman (American). "Because of these writers close observation of life and their ability to record precisely what they have observed, they are able to reveal much to the average reader that he has not gleaned from his own experience." (Ibid: 387)

An important movement in early 20th century drama was expressionism. Expressionist playwrights tried to convey the dehumanizing aspects of 20th century technological society. O'Neill's body of plays in many forms—naturalistic, expressionist, symbolic, psychological, won him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936 and indicated an increase in the American drama. Brecht wrote dramas of ideas, usually undertaking socialist or Marxist theory[8]. In order to make his audience more intellectually receptive to his works, he endeavored by using expressionist techniques to make them continually aware that they are watching a play, not only experiencing reality.

World War II and its attendant horrors produced a widespread sense of meaninglessness of human existence. This sense is brilliantly expressed in the body of plays that have come to be known collectively as the theater of the absurd. By abandoning traditional devices of the drama, including logical plot development, meaningful dialogue, and intelligible characters, absurdist playwrights sought to convey modern humanity's feelings of bewilderment, alienation, and despair, the sense that reality is itself unreal. "Alienation is characterized by attitudes of refusal: refusal of values and aims of a given community which can lead to resignation, withdrawal if

[8] For a more just and democratic society in which everyone can develop his/her distinctively human qualities. During 1930's, Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) concentrated on the social and economic relations in which people earn their livings, Marx saw behind capitalism's law and order appearance a struggle of two main classes: the capitalists, who own the productive resources, and the workers or proletariat, who must work in order to survive. "Marxism" is essentially Marx's analysis of the complex and developing relations between these two classes.

not *absenteeism* of the deserter or the skeptical who chooses to live on the fringes of society or showing indifference towards the norms of social codes" (Bedjaoui, 2005:40). Therefore, in their plays, modernist playwright often portrayed human beings as awkward persons who, although not without dignity, are at the mercy of forces that are mostly ambiguous.

Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) for instance, and other realist playwrights were inspired by a scientific revolution that increasingly looked at the human being not as the center of the universe, but as another subject for scientific study. One of these scientists, Charles Darwin (1809-1892), in his "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection" (1859), created a firestorm with his version of evolutionary theory. He described a wasteful and irrational world in which most species are failures.

Darwin's observations implied that from an evolutionary standpoint, humans are animals, not divine creations placed on earth to rule over animals. This theory had an enormous impact on the theatre. In order to write or portray a realistic character, the playwright or actor had to understand the character's environment and heredity.

Whereas romantic heroes had been like mystical forces, who were complete and knew right from wrong, realistic protagonists were a product of their environment. For Darwin and other thinkers such as Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), the first sociologist to apply evolutionary theory to social development in the 1850s, the importance of heredity and environment was considered critical to all human life.

Playwrights such as Ibsen began to use heredity and environment in their plays as strong determinants of human behavior along with the influences of psychologist Sigmund Freud

(1856—1939) who revolutionized ideas about how our animal minds worked. Freud said that the human unconscious plays a major role in shaping behavior.

> *Unconscious motivations might be memories from early childhood or traumatic events blocked out of their conscious awareness. Freud theorized that people spend vast amounts of energy forming defense mechanisms to cope with such memories and that these often end in 17 neuroses (hysteria, obsessional, traumatic…etc.) Basic instinct can only be controlled through socialization, yet socialization can cause to suppress the natural desires/urges and if they stay suppressed along enough they become part of our subconscious. (cited in McLeod, 2013)*

Nevertheless, this was not just a biological evolution that fascinated artists, but cultural, social and philosophical evolution as well. However, those radical changes in theatre's form and content often caused hot debates among both audiences and critics: frank discussions of prostitution, adultery, and divorce; and treatment of social problems in marriage, rights for women, and sufferings of the working class. In fact, with realism the theatre became a forum for current, rebellious social issues that could influence the audience and society as a whole.

1.4.4 Upheavals of the Modern Theater

American drama as we know it today was born in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 1916, when a group of Greenwich Village intellectuals staged a few one-act plays, one of which was *Bound East for Cardiff* by Eugene O'Neill. It was the start of the Little Theatre movement, which encouraged O'Neill, as a pioneer, and other dramatists to explore the full possibilities of the modern stage in depicting human experience. O'Neill's fame increased in the 20's with nearly a score of successful plays that included *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *The Hairy Ape* (1922) *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), and *Strange Interlude* (1928). In addition to some works in the

following decades including *The Iceman Cometh* (1946) and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956).

The growing maturity of American drama is also reflected in the plays of Lillian Hellman (1905 -1984), an American dramatist and screenwriter known for her success as a playwright on Broadway. Her work like O'Neill's, is noted for psychological depth and intensity. For example, *The Little Foxes* (1939) reveals the destruction of a Southern family consumed by its own materials and emotional selfishness.

Two new forces in American theatre emerged after World War II, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. Miller's *The Crucible* (1953) has become an enduring analysis of the demands of conscience. Whereas in *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) Williams used set and lighting innovative ways to add gloom and sadness to his account of a family that lives on illusion. William's other major plays *A Street Car Named Desire* (1947) and *Cat on Hot Tin Roof* (1955) dealt with emotionally crippled characters who cannot face reality. Like Williams, Robert Anderson explored family relationships that are doomed because of a failure to communicate. With the work of Hughes Langston and other noted playwrights, drama relating to black experience in America came of age in the 1930s. Since the 1950s, black dramatists such as James Baldwin and Loraine Hansberry have developed a vigorously experimental theatre. They transcended racial concerns to address the universal quest for human dignity, which became a popular success. The increase of the black drama characterizes an era in which later young American playwrights explored many of its new directions.

The leader of recent American experimentation in the theatre has been Edward Albee, whose plays often attack the replacement of genuine values with superficial ones in American society. How a person grows up in a family deeply invested in projecting the perfect image of itself into social situations. *The Sand Box* (1960), *The American Dream* (1961), *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? (1962) all employ rather grim humor to develop this theme.

1.4.6 The American Shakespeare: O'Neill's Influence on Theater

Frequently labeled as “the American Shakespeare,” Eugene O’Neill had an enormous impact on the development of American theater with his expansive and unparalleled body of work. A recipient of four Pulitzer Prizes and a Nobel Prize in Literature, an unprecedented fate for an American playwright, O’Neill is often credited with transforming the American drama into a respected, urgent art form. With his work, O’Neill persistently explored the darker aspects of the human condition, embodying his plays with wide-ranging themes such as alcoholism, depression, prostitution and race relations. In fact, nearly all of O’Neill’s plays are subjects to personal tragedy, each filled with the darkest shadings of melancholy and sorrow drawn heavily from his experiences in life.

O’Neill is almost universally acknowledged as the first great American playwright who embraced theater as an undervalued aspect of American tradition and turned it into a prominent cultural institution. With his use of realism, O’Neill wrote plays that diverged drastically from traditional productions of the early 20th century. Exhibiting the norms of Realism, he created dramatic and theatrical customs, which aimed at creating psychological productions derived from the social aspects of real-life situations. This was a significant evolution from the typical entertainment-based focus of earlier American theater. Realism would remain the principal movement in comedies and tragedies throughout the 20th century, when we find O’Neill’s early works, which treated themes with tremendous psychological depth, brought international acclaim to this “new” American drama.

Among these early works is 1920’s Pulitzer-winning “Beyond the Horizon”, largely regarded as O’Neill’s first successful full-length production with its bold vision of tragic realism. O’Neill tells the story of two brothers who separate and experience a role reversal when one marries the love of his brother’s life, only to find bitterness, disenchantment and disappointment. The play

is also derived from O'Neill's own experience in life, including his deadly doom with tuberculosis and his sea voyages. During one of these voyages, he meets a Norwegian sailor who criticizes his choice of going to sea instead of staying on his family's farm. Using this experience as a touchstone for the plot, O'Neill recounts missed opportunities and failed dreams between the two brothers. Robert, a poetic but sickly dreamer, ventures out to sea on a quest to explore the world and improve his well-being. His brother, Andrew, is a born farmer who wants to marry his sweetheart and work on the family farm and dreams of starting a family. However, because both brothers love the same woman, each chooses to go against his nature. Thus, Robert stays on the farm, while Andrew goes to sea.

Later in the 1920s, O'Neill would reject the notions of realism and begin to involve into expressionism, abandoning the life like qualities of previous successes in favor of twisting human consciousness. Exploring the depths of Freud's psychoanalysis theory, O'Neill would use his ideas to lay the foundation for much of his later work, including productions such as *The Hairy Ape* and *Emperor Jones*. Toward the end of his career, however, O'Neill returned to realism and delivered some of his most celebrated work, most notably 1956's masterpiece *Long Day's Journey into Night*, published right after his death from a rare neurodegenerative disorder in 1953. It would win the playwright his final Pulitzer Prize.

Rooted firmly in American history and his extraordinary personal life, Eugene O'Neill brought psychological depth, poetic symbolism and expressionistic technique to American drama, boosting it into the most transformative experience, changing its face forever.

1.5 Conclusion

One may say at the end of this chapter that seeing the world of theater form one angle is never sufficient to stimulate the art of drama. The art that had been founded through ages needs ages to be deployed and embodied conveniently. In fact, the origin of theater remains in secrecy until the archaeologists uncovered sparse information regarding its origin. The little information uncovered comes from ancient artifacts, wall paintings, decorations, and hieroglyphics. All of these ancient recordings tell about successful hunts, life cycles, seasonal changes, and myths about gods. These historical findings explain how ancient people passed along their experiences through the art of storytelling and dramatizing events.

Without a doubt, the Greek theater remains one of the most recognized and distinctive buildings in the world. While we associate many features of modern theaters with their Greek counterparts, the ancient theater is very different. The size, shape, and functions of the various pieces, though analogous to the modern theater, were quite different in ancient times. Yet various modern playwrights find that classical theatre inspiring both in form and in context.

O’Neill for example, according to his convictions about tragedy, believes that the Greeks used theater to cope with fear. The world for them is a dark abyss; man suffers because he cannot penetrate this darkness. The tragic hero, however, makes the attempt. Ultimately, he stumbles and falls, for in striving he dooms himself to failure. The attempt, however, ennobles him. O'Neill tried to adapt Greek tragedy into a twentieth-century model through the means of psychoanalysis. Man's struggle for understanding the outside world turns inwards, and becomes a search to penetrate the dark side of his soul. Hence, O'Neill's plays consistently circle around the theme of unmasking, where most of his characters hide behind an idealized self.

As it has been already mentioned, in order to reach the sublime of his works, O'Neill used various innovative theatrical and aesthetic devices in a very beautiful and mysterious way. This fact might need further study and close interpretation in the coming chapters. But before, one may ask what is aesthetics? If one's interest is to explore it in a dramatic context, then what is the difference between its philosophical and artistic meaning?

CHAPTER TWO

AESTHETICS AND BEAUTY BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THE ART OF DRAMA

CHAPTER TWO: AESTHETICS AND BEAUTY BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND THE ART OF DRAMA

2.1 Introduction

Aesthetics may be defined narrowly as the theory of beauty, or more broadly as the philosophy of art. The traditional interest in beauty in itself broadened since the eighteenth century when a number of pure aesthetic concepts (questioning the beauty of nature in relation to art) started to be discussed in literature and expanded even more. Since then, the main problematic of aesthetic changed, it ceased to wonder what is beautiful or what is beauty? But, how do we experience it? Modern philosophers and thinkers, mainly Kant, Hegel and Baumgartner emphasized beauty as the key component of art and of the aesthetic experience, and saw art as necessarily aiming at absolute beauty.

Of all other forms of arts, drama perhaps is the most interesting yet complicated area for aesthetic conventions. In a piece of drama, we can find acting, painting, dancing, singing, all at once contributing to form broader aesthetic values for the audience. Chief among the dramatic art of the modern era is the American drama, since its emergence coincides with the spread of new innovative aesthetic values in different arts all over the world. Thanks to Eugene O'Neill, Shakespeare of the twentieth century, who could with his genius, advance dramatic literature in the United States to a point of maturity and elegance.

2.2 Aesthetics Definition and Meaning

Derived from the Greek word for perception (aisthesis) and first used in the 18th century by the German philosopher Alexander Baumgartner[1], the term aesthetics refers to those

[1]Alexander Gottlieb Baumgartner (1714 – 1762) is a German philosopher. He developed aesthetics to mean the study of good and bad "taste", thus good and bad art, linking good taste with beauty. Previously, in its use by ancient writers, the word *aesthetics* had merely meant "sensibility" to stimulation of the senses.With the development of art along with the rise of the newly rich class across Europe, the purchasing of art inevitably lead to the question, "what is good art?" Baumgartner appropriated the word *aesthetics*, which had always meant

principles governing the nature and appreciation of the beautiful (beauty). Academically speaking, however, aesthetics refers to the branch of philosophy, which deals with issues of beauty and artistic taste.

Aesthetics, also spelled *esthetics* is the philosophical study of beauty and art (taste). It is closely related to the philosophy of art, which is concerned with the nature of art and the concepts in terms of which individual works of art are interpreted and evaluated[2].

Presumably, this may seem as a general definition of the subject matter, since defining aesthetics is an immensely difficult task. Indeed, it is worth mentioning that modern aesthetics with efforts of different philosophers brought more clear understanding. "Aesthetics is our acquaintance with interesting puzzling realm of experience: the realm of the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the elegant, taste, fine art, sensuous enjoyment, and charm" (Makarov sky, 1970:3)

Aesthetics is considered as broader in scope than the philosophy of art, which is one of its branches, since aesthetics deals not only with the nature but also with the value of the arts. Bowie (1990) states that "aesthetics deals with those responses to natural objects that find expression in the language of the beautiful."

2.2.1 Philosophy of the Beautiful

Beauty and ugliness are two important parts of our lives. It is not surprising that philosophers since antiquity have been interested in our experiences and judgments of beauty and ugliness. They have often tried to understand the nature of these experiences and judgments. However, this kind of projects, took sharpened form in the 20th century because of the different technological changes that marked the century. Moreover, terms such as beautiful and ugly

"sensation", to mean taste or "sense" of beauty. In so doing, he gave the word a different significance, thereby inventing its modern usage.
[2]Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc. 2016

seem too vague in their application and too subjective in their meaning to divide the objects to those things that do and those that do not exemplify them.

Various things might be seen as beautiful by someone or from some point of view; and different people may apply the word for different objects for reasons that have nothing in common or may be there is a certain underlying belief that may motivate their judgments. Sometimes the word beautiful has no sense except as the expression of an attitude, which is attached by various people to quite different states and affairs.

In this context, Puffer(1905) notes that "the philosophical emphasize on the terms beautiful and ugly shows how much these words are far from evidence and how they are important and useful in the discussion and criticism of both art and the description of what appeals to us in nature". For instance, to convey the significant side in a poem, we may describe it as ironic, expressive, moving, balanced, or harmonious. Likewise, in characterizing a favorite view of sunset in countryside, we may prefer to describe it as peaceful, soft, harsh, evocative, rather than beautiful. The least that should be said here is that beautiful and even ugly belong to a class of terms from which it has been chosen as far as its convenience to the sense that captures what is distinctive of the class.

2.2.2 Principles of the Aesthetic Judgment

In common parlance we use the word "beautiful" when we talk of skill, charm, women, approval of objects like, weather, dance, clothes, nature, poem, painting, etc. However, we make the aesthetic use of the term while referring to noble actions, lovely posture, aesthetic judgment, brilliant color, graceful gesture, etc. just to make a material description of feelings.

In this context, Rastogi (2012) declares that "beauty is an idea, whose property is spatial not material, though reflected or represented in material forms, yet it may only be conceptualized

or imagined but never gained as a form similarly as taste of anything can be enjoyed and described but not captured as a form".

Every artist discovers beauty, which exists everywhere, therefore it can be discovered anywhere but not in the distinctive affirmative forms of ugly and beautiful. Beauty is not related to or bound with any forms or objects, but it lies in the beholder's eye, it is a common man's truth. "It can be discovered in the recreation of the artist's mind for beauty does not exist apart from the artist." (Bowie, 1990)

> *Art implies that wherever there is pure form, i.e. without associations, as love is to lover, truth to philosopher, beauty to artist, it is the same experience of reality with the artist. The artist does not aim to create beauty, nor can he succeed in doing so but he creates beauty when his mind attaches itself to an object of choice and devotion. Neither effort nor renunciation helps him to achieve this aim. (Puffer, 1905: 6)*

The features that lead to determine the beauty of an object can be its perfectness, harmonized effect or its truly identified nature. The fact of the beautiful looks for correspondence between theme and expression, content and form, space and time as two entities but identified as one. Art created by the poet, for instance, does not exist outside his self, but in the self itself, which he expresses as far as possible in external ways. Poetry, dance, drama, etc. are external signs of art; those are forms and constant reminders that they arouse aesthetic emotion but in themselves, they are neither art nor beauty. As they are only forms, "art is reflected in the content expressed through them. The significance of form lies in the sense that it exhibits the inner relationship of things; the rhythm of spirit in the gesture of living things."(Rastogi, 2012)

2.2.3 Understanding the Aesthetic Object

The word aesthetics can qualify many different kinds of things: judgments, experiences, concepts, properties or words. It is probably best to take aesthetic judgments as central. We can consider aesthetic experience, concepts, and properties as those that are deployed in aesthetic judgments; and aesthetic words as those that have the function of being used in the linguistic expression of aesthetic judgment. What kind of judgment is it that results in our saying, for example, "that is a beautiful sunset!" Judgments of aesthetic value rely on our ability to judge at a sensory level, but they usually go beyond that. Judgments of beauty are sensory, emotional, and intellectual all at once.

> *... The object's beauty resides in its stimulating of our imaginative feeling. This feeling then interacts with the impulse on the part of understanding to claim universal status for the object as beautiful. We experience the harmony or 'free play' of two faculties, imagination and understanding. (Mikics, 2007:4)*

The aesthetic object is ambiguous and its interpretation may suggest two separated philosophical programs. According to Puffer (1905) the expression may denote either *intentional* or *material* object of the aesthetic experience. It may be briefly characterized as follows: when someone responds to an object, his response depends upon a conception of both material and intention. For example, a person is frightened by a *white cloth* flapping in a darkened hall, *thinking that it is a ghost* (response). In this case, the material object is the white cloth, while the intention is the ghost. As a matter of fact, the intentional object is a state of mind, whereas the material object is independent in its existence.

Accordingly, saying that the aesthetic judgment depends mostly on the human's state of mind, may leads us to Kant's theory which denotes that "our sense of beauty is always dependent

upon a conception of the object in the way that our sense of beauty of the human is dependent upon the conception of the material objects that surround us"[3]. Immanuel Kant[4]locates the distinctive features of the aesthetic in the faculty of "judgment," whereby we separate objects from our scientific interests and our practical concerns.

Kant tries to express the notions of an "aesthetic attitude" and "aesthetic experience". However, in considering these theories, a crucial distinction must be borne in mind: between philosophy of mind and empirical psychology. Philosophy is not a science, because it does not investigate the causes of phenomena. It is a conceptual investigation; its concern is to identify rather than to explain. In effect, the aim of the philosopher is to give the broadest possible description of the things themselves, to show how we should understand them and how we ought to value them.

2.2.4 Aesthetics Subjectivity and Objectivity Distinction

According to Kant, beauty is *objective* and *universal* (i.e. certain things are beautiful to everyone). But there is a second concept involved in a viewer's interpretation of beauty, that of taste which is *subjective* and varies according to class, cultural background and education. (Bowie, 1990)

Objectivity and subjectivity, in philosophy or elsewhere, are put to a large variety of different uses. For example, we usually ascribe subjectivity to opinions we take to be valid. At other times, we apply the notion to all judgments that are of a certain generic kind, such as morals perhaps. Similarly, we often take "being objective" to refer to something we simply want to describe as impartial and unbiased (neutral) in terms of logical entailment. Perhaps the most common sense in which a judgment can be said to be objective is for it allows for truth or

[3]Thomas Munro, 2014. Britannica, Inc.
[4]Immanuel Kant (1724 –1804) is a German philosopher who is considered to be the central figure of modern philosophy. Kant argued that reason is the source of morality and that aesthetics arises from a faculty of disinterested judgment.

correctness. For instance, saying that, “flapping hair was considered as a fashion item in North America in the late twenties”. In contrast, to refer to a judgment as subjective when what is meant does not allow for truth or correctness. For example, saying that, “flapping hair was the best fashion item in North America in the late twenties”. Moreover, subjectivity is regularly ascribed to judgments that are considered as partial. Yet, trying to distinguish between subjectivity and objectivity of the aesthetic judgment may not be managed without understanding, first, the historical background of such a distinction.

2.3 Objectivity and Subjectivity in the History of Aesthetics

Originally, aesthetics was an objective theory of beauty, but since modern times it has become a subjective one. It is worth mentioning that both theories go hand in hand to complement each other in all ages, but the most that can be said here is that in ancient and medieval aesthetics the objective theory was predominant the same as the subjective theory in modern times. The dilemma and controversy of objectivistic and subjectivist aesthetics is also known as *the controversy of subjectivity,* which can be formulated in the following questions: when we call something *beautiful* or *aesthetic,* do we ascribe to it a quality it possesses by itself or one which does not possess but which we give to it because we like the object? Or is it simply because we find it pleasing?

2.3.1 The Controversy of Subjectivity during Antiquity

The problem of aesthetic subjectivity is chiefly a research domain of various philosophers since antiquity. They often regard beauty from the objectivistic point of view, taking the objective beauty for granted and accept no argument. They think that if we like certain things it is because they are beautiful and not because we make or see them so.

Early philosophical trends include two main groups, the *Pythagoreans* who sought proofs of objectivity, and the *Sophists* who endured the theory of subjectivity. The Pythagoreans

argument held that beauty is the prosperity of the universe; man does not invent it but discover it. The beauty of the universe is the measure of all man-made beauty.

Against this, the philosophy of the Sophists, which said that man is the measure of all things. Accordingly, the aesthetic subjectivism sees that since man is the measure of the true and good, than he is the measure of all beauty. The Sophist think that beauty is certainly subjective, as for different people, different things are beautiful. They maintained the idea that beauty is a subjective experience; it is the pleasure of the eyes and ears.

After, having argued by the Pythagoreans and rejected by the Sophists, aesthetic objectivity was later undertaken by other philosophers seeking for a solution to overcome this argument. Socrates[5] was the one who distinguished between two kinds of the beautiful: things that are beautiful by themselves and those which are so only for the persons who make use of them. This in fact was the first compromise solution; beauty is partly objective and partly subjective.

Socrates's argument for partial aesthetic subjectivity was based on a new definition of beauty, which he explained it as appropriative to a purpose. Different things have different purposes and therefore different beauty. For example, a gold ring is beautiful, while a gold shield, in spite of its value, may not be considered as beautiful. Later, no other philosopher had more influence on the historical development of the European theory of beauty than Plato[6], who in his turn joined the Pythagoreans.

Plato believes that there are things which are beautiful always and by themselves and it is not, as the Sophists claimed, a matter of eyes and ears but of reason.

[5]Socrates (470 BCE –399 BCE) is a Greek philosopher whose way of life, character, and thought exerted a profound influence on ancient and modern philosophy.
[6]Plato (427 BCE –347 BCE) is one of the world's best known and most widely read and studied philosophers. He was the student of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle, and he wrote in the middle of the fourth century B.C.E. in ancient Greece.

Plato's authority, in fact, gave the objectivistic theory a predominance in aesthetics not for centuries but for thousands of years.

2.3.2 The Medieval Dilemma of Subjectivity

The Middle Ages on the whole continued the views of antiquity but the medieval theory was more unified, since there was hardly any opposition or discussion. The Middle Ages philosophers claimed that beauty is an objective property of things, but admitted at the same time that it is perceived by man in a subjective way. The second difference is that while ancient philosophers regarded that objectivistic view on the whole as self-evident, the Medieval Scholastics[7] were conscious that it is arguable.

Medieval philosophers and early even thinkers in the 4th century originated some conceptual distinctions, which helped to define the problem of aesthetic subjectivity. Indeed, the first, who exhibited the controversy of aesthetic subjectivity, was St. Augustine's which clearly contracted between the beautiful and the convenient. This opposition seemed to suggest that beauty is objective and convenience is subjective. This idea was, later reinforced in the 8th century by St. Isidor who stated that beauty and convenience differ, the one being absolute and the other relative. As opposed to the relativistic view, the relationistic view of St. Basil that appeared over the 13th century considered beauty as derived from relation of parts. They saw beauty as belonging to the object as well as to the subject.

2.3.3 Renaissance Aesthetics

Renaissance writers and artist on their parts, professed the opinion that beauty is objective and that the artist's duty is to reveal its objective unchanging laws. Battista Alberti the leading

[7]Scholasticism is a method of critical thought, which dominated teaching by the academics (schoolmen) of medieval universities in Europe from about 1100 to 1700. It originated as an outgrowth of and a departure from Christian monastic schools at the earliest European universities. The first institutions in the West to be considered universities were established in Italy, France, Spain, and England in the late 11th and the 12th centuries for the study of arts, law, medicine, and theology.

thinker of the Renaissance, like the ancient, defined beauty as a series of parts in harmony under the absolute and highest law of nature. He believed that beauty lies in the nature of things in their harmony—it is innate. What Alberti wanted to say is that, the artist's work is guided by objective necessity; there is little room in art for subjective additions.

Similarly, Facino, a Platonian philosopher, took Alberti's view but from a different standpoint. Beauty according to his definition is that which call the mind and the senses, which means that he had an objective idea of beauty, since it is related to things that are inborn in us.

2.3.4 Aesthetics and Modernity

Philosophical reflections on beauty and art have been part of the Western thoughts since Plato. Those Platonian ideas were highly influential among the new generation like Hegel and Schelling. It is only around the mid-18th century that the notion of a distinct area of philosophy called "aesthetics" develops in Europe. In fact, between the 18th and 19th century the relationship between art and philosophy undergoes a radical transformation.

Modern philosophy begins when the generally accepted basis emerged which is based upon the connection of ourselves to the order of the universe. This new philosophical task is, therefore, for human reason to establish its own legitimacy as a ground of truth. This transformation was first tackled in the 17th century by Descartes, but still relies on God in its understanding of the universe. What was argued at that time was the contrary; it was what Immanuel Kant undertook in the end of the 18th century. He tries to exhibit the individual's self-consciousness to describe the shared structures of our subjective consciousness. He attempts to do so without recourse to divinity who guarantees the order of the world.

The new focus of philosophy on subjectivity established by Kant was directly supplied by the complex and contradictory changes brought about by "modernity". The rapid expansion of

capitalism, that economic system which is based on private ownership of the means of production. In a capitalist market economy, decision-making and investment is determined by the owners of the factors of production in financial and capital markets, and prices and the distribution of goods are mainly determined by competition in the market. In addition to capitalism, the emergence of modern individualism, which is the moral stance and ideology, that emphasizes the moral worth of the individual. Individualists promote the exercise of one's goals and desires and so value independence and self-reliance. It has also been used as a term denoting "The quality of being an individual"; individuality is related to possessing an individual characteristic. Individualism is thus also associated with artistic interests and lifestyles where there is a tendency towards self-creation and experimentation as opposed to tradition or popular opinions and behaviors.

The growing success of scientific method in manipulating the nature of the human being, altogether with aesthetics as a new branch of philosophy contribute to liberate art from natural objects or human products.

The most important fact about the theory of subjectivity is that it regards the experience of natural and artistic beauty and the issue of aesthetic production as a vital factor to the understanding of self-consciousness. The ability to apprehend something as beautiful and the ability to make something beautiful, as well as the ability to create new meanings without following fixed rules. The aim behind this new experience of nature as beautiful rather than as a manifestation of deity is to create a new awareness of the fact that human beings can create aesthetic products whose interrelating parts are significant in way which natural science cannot explain.

2.4 Modern Aesthetics Theories

Philosophers of the next century took little interest in aesthetics because their views were quite different, especially those of Descartes[8], the most influential philosopher of this period. Even, artists and critics started thinking about the problem of defining beauty. They inherited the convictions of the Renaissance, which were based on the belief in universal rules. Those doctrines of universal, objective, numerical rules of art were stressed mostly in architecture and sculpture, and later transferred to poetry and painting. Such an artistic shift gave a chance of victory to the subjective view. Since then, the main problematic of aesthetic changed; it ceased to ask; what is beautiful or what is beauty? However, started asking; how do we experience it?

Actually, the famous philosophers of the modern era were Kant and Hegel. Their theories on aesthetic and beauty were most reliable, for their psychological approach to the situation. "At the end of the century, Kant pointed out that neither pure impression nor pure thinking afford an adequate aesthetic experience; only their combined action can do so. Their aesthetic action is as much subjective as necessary." (Rastogi, 2012: 36)

According to Kant, human minds are similar, and it can be expected that if an object impresses aesthetically one mind it will impress others. Therefore, the aesthetic experience implies both the objective properties of things and the subjective responses of the mind. Still the same question arises here; are we supposed to consider the aesthetic judgment and experience as subjective or objective?

[8]René Descartes (1596 –1650) is a French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist. Labelled as the father of modern western philosophy, much of subsequent Western philosophy is a response to his writings, which are studied closely to this day.

The Kantian solution, however, did not stop history for any appreciable length of time. The psychological development of aesthetics carried on over the following years, while the subjectivist evolution remained complex and controversy in itself.

2.4.1 Kant's Theory of Aesthetics

According to Kant, the judgment of the beautiful is based on subjective principles, but it has universal validity (or value). This subjective principle determines what pleases and what displeases us only through feeling not through concepts. Kant's contention is that this principle emerges from the free play of our cognitive faculties, and has to be common sense that everyone possesses since we all have the same cognitive capacities.

Kant in his philosophy of the beautiful thinks that the fact that some elements in nature produce pleasure in us and some do not, is not an arbitrary incidence. He, therefore, claims that this necessity, which is the pleasure that we take from the beautiful object, has to be a major characteristic in aesthetic judgment. In other words, the notion of necessity lies in the following relationship, "beautiful object gives universal pleasure" (Puffer, 1905: 28). But still there is no empirical claim to such a necessity. In this context, Kant says:

> *This necessity is of special kind; not a theoretical objective necessity, where it can be cognized a prior that everyone will this satisfaction in the object called beautiful by me, nor a practical necessity, where by means of concepts of pure will. (Cited in Atalay, 2007: 45)*

Kant wants to say that the aesthetic judgment is neither theoretical necessity (knowledge), nor a practical necessity (objectivity). The necessity that the aesthetic judgment contains is based on anything that is outside of aesthetic *pleasure*.

Coming to the notion of pleasure, we need to seek for the relationship that lies between the beautiful and this feeling of pleasure that we take from it. In order to do that, we should first

examine Kant's distinction between the beautiful and the agreeable in terms of their relation to pleasure.

What is obvious is that, in the aesthetic judgment, the pleasure that one takes from an object becomes a rule that everyone has to approve. It seems that the word "everyone" here reveals a sense of community which may lead us to another sense which is universality. According to Kant, in addition to its necessity, the aesthetic judgment also contains universality – the universal principle, which includes this necessity, is based on subjective principle (i.e. based on feelings). In this essence, Kant states, "they must thus have a subjective principle, which determines what pleases or displeases only through feeling and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity". (ibid: 46)

This subjective principle provides a prior character of taste, which may go beyond an empirical agreement. Such principle, as Kant claims, is a common sense – *sensuscommunis* – that everyone has since we all have the same cognitive capacities. This common sense emerges as free, the free play of our cognitive faculties. Indeed, it is a sense of internal harmony.

Moreover, Kant's use of the word "free" signifies that he does not consider this notion in its traditional meaning – he does not see it as an element of our social and moral being. The word free, instead, represents the feelings in relation to reason. Kant seems to view the notion of *senuscommunis* as the common root of our both external senses and our capacity for judgment which in its turn unites these external senses regarding a given object.

Presumably, what Kant wants to prove is that if we consider knowledge as universally communicable, this means that we also need to consider the mental state, in which our cognitive capacities establish a harmony in order to build a certain knowledge as universal.

Since it is a common sense in everyone. In addition, the processes of our cognitive faculties that accompany any aesthetic judgment are supposed to be the same in all human beings; consequently, they are probably based on the same subjective principles. Kant denotes that

> *In all judgments by which we declare something to be beautiful, we accept no one to be of a different opinion, without, however, grounding our judgment on concepts, but only on our feeling ... as a common sense. (Cited in Atalay, 2007: 48)*

Therefore, Kant thinks that the aesthetic feeling, whose roots is the free harmony of our cognitive, must be communicable too because in our judgment we rely on the sense that everyone possesses and we usually expect that everyone should agree with our judgment.

2.4.2 Hegel's Theory of Beauty and Freedom

Previously mentioned we said that Kant maintained that our experience of beauty is an experience of freedom. He argued, however, that beauty is not itself an objective property of things. When we judge that a natural object or a work of art is beautiful, on Kant's view, we are indeed making a judgment about an object, but we are asserting that the object has a certain *effect* on us (and that it should have the same effect on all who view it)."The effect produced by the "beautiful" object is to set our understanding and imagination in "free play" with one another, and it is the pleasure generated by this free play that leads us to judge the object to be beautiful" (Bowie, 1998, 102–3).

Hegel[9] also agrees that beauty is an objective property of things. In his view, however, beauty is the direct sensuous *manifestation* of freedom, not merely the appearance or imitation of freedom. It shows us what freedom actually looks like and sounds like when it gives itself sensuous expression. Since true beauty is the direct sensuous expression of the *freedom* of

[9]Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) is a German philosopher who belongs to the period of German idealism in the decades following Kant. The most systematic of the post-Kantian idealists, Hegel attempted, throughout his published writings as well as in his lectures, to elaborate a comprehensive and systematic philosophy.

spirit, it must be produced *by* free spirit *for* free spirit, and so cannot be a mere product of nature. Nature is capable of a formal beauty, and life is capable of what Hegel calls "sensuous" beauty. According to Hegel Beauty is found only in works of *art* that are freely created by human beings to bring before our minds what is to be free spirit. The freedom and richness of spirit is, therefore genuine art that Hegel claims as central and indispensable to genuine beauty. This is one of Hegel's most controversial ideas, and is one that sets him at odds with those modern artists and art-theorists who insist that art can embrace any content we like and, indeed, can dispense with content altogether. (Knox, 1975: 23)

Hegel recognizes that art can portray animals, plants and nature, but he thinks that art's principal task is to present the divine and human freedom. The content of truly beautiful art, according to Hegel is in one respect the *divine*. Yet, he argues that the Ideal (or "God") comes to consciousness of itself only in and through finite human beings (Houlgate, 2016). What Hegel wants to prove is that the content of beautiful art must thus be the divine in human form or the divine within *humanity* itself. "Truly beautiful art thus shows us sculpted, painted or poetic images of Greek gods or of Jesus Christ—that is, the divine in human form—or it shows us images of free human life itself".(Harries, 2009)

In this case, the focus of attention is on the *human figure* in particular. This is because, in Hegel's view, the most appropriate sensuous form of reason and the clearest visible expression of spirit is the human form. Colors and sounds by themselves can certainly communicate a mood, but only the human form actually embodies spirit and reason.

2.4.3 Stimulating the Idea of the Beautiful

The idea of the beautiful has been a matter of dispute since the age of Plato. Modern virtues, however, have caught a much profounder sense of beauty, which is the beauty of meanings. Aesthetic matters started to be judged not over its shape and form (ugly, strange, small…) but rather through its power of suggestion "the realm of the aesthetically valuable". (Knox, 1975:91) The meaning of beauty has been extended to include the name of Romantic, Symbolic, Expressive, Emotional, or Ideal; beauty is all the elements of the aesthetic experience. For example, what makes the liberty moment in a piece of fiction so expressive and symbolic, (form or meaning)? The secret is not in the form of the action, but the meaning of *relief* that is grasped from the situation. This is what we call "Art for Art's Sake"[10] or art in the light of its moral meanings. In contrast to the romanticists or lovers of ideas in art, there were then Greeks, lovers of formal beauty. They were extremely overwhelmed by the view of moral effects considering it as a real danger on art. Apparently, the issues of form and expression were two diverging tendencies. "We care for the image or appearance of the object, for the way its form affects us, and not for the actual existence of the object itself." (Puffer, 1905: 267)

For example, if we enjoy aesthetically watching a basket full of delight fruits, we may not want to eat them as much to enjoy their image and our feeling of pleasure as aesthetic, would not be changed if it were only a hallucination or even a picture. It is just the pleasure of perception that appeals to us. It is concerned with the mechanism of perception itself, or it may come from the idea in the contemplation of which we delight.

[10]"Art for art's sake" is the usual English rendering of a French slogan from the early 19th century, "*l'art pour l'art*". The phrase 'art for art's sake' condenses the notion that art has its own value and should be judged apart from any themes which it might touch on, such as morality, religion, history, or politics. It teaches that judgments of aesthetic value should not be confused with those proper to other spheres of life.

Hence, this point ended up with different controverted views. Nevertheless, some schools assert that the real pleasure in perception comes only from form. If a given object is beautiful, it is because of its original qualities; color or sound, which strike the special senses in a way that is pleasing to them and through the combination of these qualities, which affect the whole human organism in a pleasurable way. Sometimes what is acknowledged as ugly for some people is considered as an exciting cause of great thought and delightful associations for others. “The meanings of a work of art are all that it exists for… the presentation of an idea, by whatever sensuous means, even if it is transparent, the joy of the soul in contemplating this idea must be the object and the end of art”. (Puffer, 1905)

Up to this point, however, various questions can be raised to solve this problematic. Is the aesthetic experience related to the recognition of truth plus the feeling of beauty of form, or is it a fusion of these into a third undivided pulse of aesthetic emotions? Is there no other way to overcome this dualism of form and content in understanding the theory of the beautiful?

Finally, the idea that we may accept or reject, for it bears a direct relation to our personality, lies in the real world where we ourselves have to live and struggle. The fact that rules such a struggle is our psychological equilibrium in which the flow of ideas and impulses is a circle rounding upon itself. All associations, emotions, expectations are linked with the central thought and leading back only to it proceeding a final order adapted to the possibilities of the human experience. Thus, the fusion of these orders of mental life gives the perfect moment of unity and self-completeness.

2.4.4 Beauty in Literature

One may ask what is the beauty of literature or where does the beauty of literature lie? How can we notice the characteristics of its excellence? Normally, the excellences of literature lie within the general formula of beauty. Literature has always been called “Les Belle Letters”,

yet they have to be conditioned by the possibilities of the special medium of literature, through which beauty may reach the human being.

Beauty is a constant function of the varying medium. The end of beauty is always the same, the perfect moment of unity, completeness, and of repose in excitement. But this end is attained by different means furnished by different media: through vision and its accompanying activities, through hearing and its accompanying activities, and for literature; through hearing in the special sense of communicating words. This latter, is the basis of this medium that we may further discover in the coming chapters.

Perhaps the word is nothing in itself; it is not primarily a sound or a thought. The word is a sing of human intercourse indicating ideas and emotions. “What we really experience in the sound of a sentence, in the sight of a printed page, is a complex sequence of visual and other images, ideas, emotions, feelings, logical relations, swept along in the stream of consciousness. They may be different in certain ways from daily experience, but yet primarily of the web of life itself”. (Puffer, 1905:207- 8)

Words are first of all meanings, and meanings are supposed to be understood and lived through. The meaning of the word is directly in the mental state that is called up by it. Therefore, since literature is the art of words, so the stream of thought itself is what we may consider as the material of this literature. “We understand by what we see, and we live by what we understand” (ibid: 208)

What is significant about all that, is that art is viewed as “the fixed quantity of imaginative thought supplemented by certain technical qualities – of color in painting, sound in music, of rhythmical words in poetry.”(ibid: 209)

Our sight and hearing, in fact, are perceived prior to our understanding or use of them, in moments we are passive and indifferent to them. Only those instances of sensation, caught up

in our shift from one action to another, serve as signals for the meaning that concerns us. Sometimes the sight or sound, which serves as a cue drops almost altogether out of consciousness. Nevertheless, as far as it is a vehicle of information, it is no longer a sight or a sound as such, but a language that was created by ourselves, to embody all active mental experience. A language that comes into a particular existence to meet a certain literally emergency. In short, it is constituted by meaning – its essential purpose is communication.

> *Beauty is the power to enchant the man through the eye and all that waits upon it into a moment of perfection. Literature has all thoughts, all passions, all delights – the treasury of life – to play with … Beauty in literature is the power to enchant him, through the mind and heart, across the dialect of life, into a moment of perfection. (ibid: 211)*

Yet, the evocation of life is the means and material of all arts, where the level of imaginative thought is related to the human's range of experience.

2.5 The Art of Drama

Of all other arts, drama is different, it is perhaps the simplest, the easiest, or the most complicated for its anatomy is composed of all other arts. It could be snatch of music, a bit of painting, a moment of dancing, a piece of sculpture, all dropped upon the huge skeleton of literature. "Drama, indeed, is dancing literature: a hybrid art. It is often purple and splendid; it is often profoundly beautiful and profoundly moving." (Nathan, 1922: 34-35)

Drama is a specific art that finds its trial in the aristocratic taste and judgment, seeking the sense of life in the living of kings and queens. Popular drama like the one of Shakespeare and Moliere triumphed over aristocracy of soul and emotion. "Great drama, like great men and great women, is always just a little sad. Only idiots may be completely happy. Reflection,

sympathy, wisdom, gallant gentleness, experience—the chords upon which great drama is played—these are wistful chords." (ibid: 31)

The purpose of great drama however, is not to make persons glad that they are alive, but to make them speculate why they are permitted to be alive in the first place. The aim of great drama is not to make men happy with themselves as they are, but with themselves as they might, yet cannot be. In this essence, Nathan (1922) quotes Gautier (1903) and say, "the aim of art is not exact reproduction of nature, but creation, by means of forms and colors, of a microcosm wherein may be produced dreams, sensations, and ideas inspired by the aspect of the world. (32)

Drama is an art usually with an ironic smile upon its lips passing over forbidden areas through closed paths getting into our hearts, using literature as a medium. It is a fairy tale realistically told, a true story and a romance at the same time. However, the first essential step to our understanding of such an art is that we should not believe it to be of actual life. The art of drama is the one that imposes upon the stage the obligation of depicting at once the inner-processes of life realistically and the external aspects of life delusively. One does not go to the theatre to see life and nature, but to see how life and nature meet to create an imaginative, yet entertaining story.

> *As to art, boundaries are pushed beyond the confines of understanding or imagination, at the crossroads of aesthetics and intuitive perception, to a place where the sublime and the authentic become a piece of art, thus incarnating a poetic transfiguration of the undepictable and the infinite. For any artist fascinated by his art, the transgressive pleasure of the limit becomes a ritual that spans from the ephemeral to posterity*
>
> *(Bedjaoui, 2014)*

The beating heart of drama lies in its aim to play the full richness of the artist's emotional tones on stage. Since Aristotle times, it has been argued that drama is drama, whether one reads it from a printed page or watches it enacted in a theatre. Drama is and remains always great whether it ever be acted or not, it speaks and interacts with the same voice in solitude as in crowds.

Undertaking this point of view, however, does not mean that we are eliminating the role of actors in drama and in the theatre itself as their space. We all know that theatre for drama is like gallery stands in relation to painting. Theatre's aim, indeed, is to set off drama in such surroundings in such light to bring it with its comfortable vision for the public. Still to reach this point of audience/ performance harmony is not an easy task, since the language of drama is often considered as difficult and complicated, the fact that may need complete focus and concentration.

2.5.1 The Dramatic Text

Theater within all its components forms a paradoxical art. It is a literary production and concrete performance at the same time. It is a written text that is communicated physically, and emotionally. Theater is not only seen, but also understood. It is both an object of infinite poetic reading and all that is concerned with the term performance.

Theater is a fascinating art because of the participation it requires, and which is the major reason that makes it exist. It is the physical and psychological contribution of both actors and spectator. Ubersfeld (1999) notes "Theatre appears to be a privileged art of capital importance, because more than any other art, it shows how the individual psyche invests itself within a collective relationship." (3)

Nevertheless, this text-performance equivalence may become an illusion. Although the director's job is to translate a text into another language (physical and psychological), towards

which his or her primary duty is to remain faithful (to the text). Still some changes may occur in terms of the matter of expression. Mainly, the visual, auditory and musical signs created by the director, set designers, musicians, and actors all constitute a multiplicity of meanings that may go beyond the text in its totality. Indeed, even if the performance could speak of the whole text, the audience, probably, is not going to hear every single word in the text. Many parts of the poetic message of the literary text may disappear or lost by the actual system of the performance.

Above all, the text-performance confusion, particularly in the case of semiological analysis of theatre, arises in the notion of theatricality as defined by Barthes in his book "Critical Essay": "What is theatricality? It is theatre-plus-text; it is a density of signs and sensations built up on stage starting from a written argument." (Barthes 1972, Cited in Ubersfeld 1999: 7). Therefore, it is worth mentioning that the theatrical text has a twofold existence; it precedes the performance, and then it accompanies it. They are two angles of the same coin one complements the other. The theatrical text is always present within the performance, whereas the latter forms the voice of the text content.

2.5.2 Toward a Semiology of the Theatrical Space

Broadly, semiotics is a methodology for studying the production through analysis of signs that form the messages and texts that we understand as having meaning.

> *Semiotics can best be defined as a science dedicated to the study of the production of meaning in society. As such, it is equally concerned with processes of signification and with those of communication, i.e. the means whereby meanings are both generated and exchanged. Its objects are thus at once the different sign-systems and codes at work in society and the actual messages and texts produced thereby. (Elam, 1980: 1)*

What we usually see in a performance is a literary text, which is acted physically on stage. There is a set of an actual performance, there are lights, props, specific time and place, which all resonate with the world of the performance. Within all these elements, there are innumerable separate signs that combine in relation to each other to contribute to how we, as receivers, interpret and understand the meaning. In this context, Elam (1980) states that a sign is anything that has cultural meaning. It is made up of signifier (an object or sound) and signified (a mental concept) that is associated with that signifier. According to Saussure (1916), "the sign is a signifying element composed of two parts that are particularly in-dissociable, but which can legitimately be separated for methodological reasons. These two elements are the signifier and the signified. (Cited in Ubersfield, 1990: 12)

Thus, the signs of theatre correspond to this definition and can justifiably be treated according to linguistic procedures. Signs often combine to make up codes that we read and interpret. A code consists of particular signs from a paradigm (opposition) of possibilities of all signs that are combined together syntagmatically (in relation to other signs in performance succession) to form a pattern that is easily recognized and has a relatively stable meaning. In fact, the central relationship in semiotics is the relation between the sign and its object. Peirce's terminology (1931), classifies signs as icon, index, or symbol.

An icon is a sign that stands for an object by resembling it (resemblance according to certain relationships such as "a portrait"). Indexes refer to their objects not through similarity relation, but rather via an actual link between the sign and its object (smoke is an index of fire). In this case, the object really affects the sign. Finally, symbols involve a pre-existing relation between two objects (for example, red color may symbolize death and corruption, or love and passion. A lily also symbolizes whiteness and correctness or innocence). Yet, this relation is usually a subject to sociocultural conditions (for example, black color symbolizes

sorrow in Europe and America, whereas, in Asia the color of sorrow is white). This point of crucial importance, indeed, lays the foundation of the semiotic view of cognition[11] in human.

In theater, on the other hand, the notion of "symbol" holds an added factor of complexity. A chair on stage, for instance, is not just a chair, but a chair within a theatricalized event and as such has added meaning. If a curtain pulls back and reveals a single kitchen-chair, we as receivers will directly run through a variety of possible meanings for that chair, before the performance even begins. "What is interesting in and specific to theater is precisely the possibility to grant special status to a given sign system, to play various networks off against each other and thereby cause the same text-score to produce interplays of meanings with different resolutions." (Ubersfield, 1990: 16) The principal difficulty in analyzing a sign in theater lies in the fact that the same sign is present in sets belonging to different codes although they come together on stage.

2.5.3 Theatrical Communication

Theater is a polysemic text, that is, it includes many possible meanings. In theater, there are a number of source people transmitting signals and cues to the spectator. These signals, however, are encoded by the sender (actors, writers, directors, and designers), and then decoded by the receiver (audience). Hence, the text-performance relation as a whole is made up of a set of signs that obeys the laws of communication. *Sender* (author, director, others involved in mounting the play + actors). *Message* (text + performance). *Codes* (linguistic code + perceptual codes 'visual & auditory' + sociocultural codes 'social niceties, verisimilitude, psychology, etc.' + strictly theatrical codes 'blocking, acting, etc. that codify performance at any given moment in history'). *Receiver* (audience). (ibid: 20)

[11]Cognition is the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. It encompasses processes such as knowledge, attention, memory, judgment and evaluation, reasoning, problem solving and decision making, comprehension and production of language, etc. Cognitive processes use existing knowledge and generate new knowledge.

Moreover, the role of the spectator in the process of communication is always active, considering that the audience can be seen as a mirror, a counter-sender that sends back and evaluate the sings sent out to him or her. Apparently, the receiver-function of the audience is much more complex. Spectators usually seek for information, they may choose, reject or except in a form of feedback. In addition, the spectator not only react to the message decodes through the performance, but also react to each other, since no one goes to the theatre alone. Any message received by one spectator is going to be sent back by fellow spectator, echoed, taken up, and sent off again in a very complex exchange. Spectators indeed, have got a double functioning, they are supposed to follow the story *(horizontal axis),* and constantly reconstruct the whole figure of all sings engaged in the performance *(vertical axis).*

2.5.4 Beauty of the Dramatic Art: Tragedy

Over centuries, tragedy was always considered as the most emotional and interesting genre of drama. According to Puffer (1905) "of all the riddles of aesthetic experience, none has been so early propounded, so indefatigably attempted, so variously and unsatisfactorily solved, as this tragedy." But first, one may ask what constitute a tragedy? How can we take pleasure from a painful experience? In this context, Graham (1997) cites Hume (1963) and says; "In his famous essay entitled 'Of Tragedy', Hume declares that though the horribleness of the events would naturally repel us, it is overlaid with (or even turned into) pleasure by the artistry with which the events are depicted. He adds:

> *This extraordinary effect proceeds from that very eloquence with which the melancholy scene is depicted. The genius required to paint objects in a lively manner, the art employed in collecting all the pathetic circumstances, the judgment displayed in disposing them; the exercise, I say, together with the force of expression and beauty of oratorial numbers, diffuse the highest satisfaction on the audience and excite the most delightful moments. (Cited in Graham, 1997:3)*

Chief among the various psychologists and philosophers who wrote about the theory of Drama is Aristotle in his famous book Poetics[12] Where he defines tragedy as follows:

> *Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play: in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions. (Cited in: Puffer, 1905: 232)*

What is meant to be analyzed here is the notion of Purgation (Catharsis) through pity and fear, which are the evident functions of tragedy (see chapter one). "Tragedy is said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred by reading or seeing those passions well imitated". (ibid: 233)

According to Aristotle, tragedy's major function is to get the pleasurable from the oppressive in an intelligible way. He defines pleasure as an *ecstatic* (enthusiastic) condition of the soul. He thinks that, for every emotion, what is painful is pleasurable as a result. Hence, "pity and fear aroused to be allayed and to give pleasure in the arousing relief". In addition to Catharsis, what really concerns us is the problem of emotion that is aroused by the tragic drama. So, what is the nature of such emotion?

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[12]Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.) is a towering figure in ancient Greek philosophy, making contributions to logic, metaphysics, mathematics, physics, biology, ethics, politics, agriculture, medicine, dance and theatre. He was a student of Plato who in turn studied under Socrates. His famous book *Poetics* is the earliest surviving work of dramatic theory and the first philosophical treatise to focus on literary theory. In it, Aristotle offers an account of what he calls "poetry", a term which includes drama—comedy, tragedy, and the satyr play—as well as lyric poetry and epic poetry. They are similar in the fact that they are all imitations of the real world, still have some differences like in rhythm, character, and / or how the narrative is presented.

The immediate pleasurable aesthetic effect of tragedy require a certain kind of pity and fear operated in a special way through a peculiar character. But is our emotion, at this level, fits with what the tragic experience consists or is it different from it? What do we really feel?

In this context Puffer (1905) States "emotion is constituted by the instinctive response to a situation; it is the feeling accompanying very complicated physical reactions, which have their roots in actions once useful in the history of mankind". Moreover, the typical dramatic moment lies in the simultaneous realization of the two opposing forces, which is the full mutual relation of emotional impulses. It is all in this realization that drama differs from other forms of art.

Usually in a dramatic work when the two antagonistic purposes are actually presented, then what is felt is the vividness of the emotional realization. The feeling of tension and conflict raises the sense of catharsis.

> *Both pity and fear are derived from the self-regarding instinct, and pity springs from the feeling that a similar suffering might happen to ourselves…When the good suffer or expect to suffer, we share their pains and fears; and that is pity… Aristotle's pity and fear are sympathy for the good part of mankind in the bad part of their experiences: this is the emotional side of justice. (House, 1956: 102)*

Emotion, after all, is the very traditional test of our enjoyment of a play and the amount of feelings that arouse when heart beats, hands clench, and tears flow. Such mysterious catharsis, the emotion of tragedy, is then a special aesthetic emotion. Indeed, that mystery, which keeps growing since antiquity and never loses its glitter, has been revived to meet the suffering of the modern man in a world full of materialism and bitterness, in fact the price of modernity at that time was so high.

2.6 Modernism in America: the Call for Change

Modernism according to Chris Baldick in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (2001) is "a general term applied retrospectively to the wide range of experimental and Avant-Garde trends in the literature (and other arts) of the 20th century, including Symbolism, Futurism, Expressionism, Imagism, Vorticism, Dada and Surrealism, along with the innovations of unaffiliated writers" (159)

The modernist period in English literature occupied approximately the years from the beginning of the twentieth century to 1965. In a broader sense, the period was marked by sudden and unexpected breaks with traditional ways of viewing and interacting with the world. Modernist American writing reacts to several changes during the first part of the 20th century mainly to the rapid technological advances of industrialization and mechanization. In the post-war "Big Boom", business flourished, the middle-class prospered and Americans began to enjoy the highest national average income in this era. However, instead of progress and growth, the modernist see decay and a growing alienation of the individual. The machinery of the modern society was perceived as impersonal, capitalist, materialistic, and antagonistic to the artistic impulse.

The Great War most certainly also had a great deal of influence. Many historians have characterized the period between the two World Wars as the United States' traumatic age. Shocked and permanently changed, Americans returned from the war to their homeland but could never regain their innocence. A huge number of soldiers died as a result of wounds and diseases. It has been estimated that the number of civilian deaths attributed to the war was higher than the military casualties. The civilian deaths were largely caused by starvation, disease, military encounters and massacres.

The enormity of war had undermined human kind's faith in Western society and culture. A generation of young men lost creating a constant feeling of hopelessness. Post-war literature on its turn reflected the sense of uncertainty, disillusionment and fragmentation. All these factors, actually, helped the modernist writers and artists to insist on the elevation of art over anything else (morality, money, middle-class values).

Alienated from the social reality, modernists often approved on the idea of "Make it New", the battle cry that has been introduced by the most aggressively modern poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972) during the 1920's. He and his fellow expatriate T.S Eliot (1888-1965) who wrote one of the most famous poem of the twentieth century *The Waste Land* used revolutionary techniques of composition turning their back to traditional sources of inspiration.

Modernist playwrights also, such as Arthur Miller, Ibsen, J.M Singe, Eugene O'Neill, and Samuel Beckett agreed that the human character can only be noticed and understood through memories and thoughts versus external description. Their reaction, in fact, was against realism and Victorian morality. They tried hard to prove sexuality and sexual desire as an important subject in the human's life cycle and not as a taboo. They also use the stream of consciousness as a major literary and aesthetic device and reject the chronological and narrative continuity using fragmented and non-linear plot. Above all, Modernism was a movement that strongly called for change; it was a repudiation of the monopoly of capitalism's effects on the human being.

2.6.1 Reinventing the Tragedy in Modern Age

While classical tragedy generally involves heroic people in simple awful situation (often their own making), modern tragedy places everyday people in similar troubles in a more realistic contemporary setting.

The difference between traditional drama and modern drama actually lies in theme and style. As it has been previously mentioned, Greek drama is the basis of all tragedies and modern tragedy, as well, is based upon the classical tragedy in addition to some new elements. The classical tragedy is based on unities: one timespan, one setting, and one story with no breaks and no flashbacks as they originated in the Greek theatres. Most importantly, the action follows one inevitable course and the tragic hero must be royal or highborn. Indeed, this hero is losing, through his own pride and own choices, a mighty prize.

Modern tragedy, in contrast, redefines the genre in a more naturalistic manner, with ordinary protagonists, realistic timelines and settings, and multiple non-linear plots. The style of tragedy greatly changed after the two World Wars with less bloodshed and off stage deaths and much use of irony becomes trend. In classical tragedy, the plot used to be dominated by the role of the protagonist, whereas in modern tragedy each of the roles is important.

Arthur Miller, for instance, In his modern tragedy "Death of a Salesman," the main character is just a salesman, but his choices, when he comes to realize that he can no longer support his family, lead him to commit suicide just a matter of weeks from paying off the mortgage, leaving his family in ruins. O'Neill, on the other hand, was the most influential American playwright of his time. His bleak and tragic vision made him Shakespeare of his time. In various plays, he also relies on the use of myth and mythological themes as a repudiation against the rationalism of capitalism and industrialization at that time. Reading his drama, in fact, may enhance our speculation about what is a *myth* in the first place.

2.6.2 Mythology and Art

Mythology in different dictionary definitions means, a set of stories, tradition, or beliefs associated with a particular group of people or the history of an event. “Myth is a system of communication, it is a message…myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept or an idea, it is a mode of signification, a form.” (Counsell & Wolf, 2001: 12)

Greek mythology, as in other ancient cultures, was used as a means to explain the environment in which humankind lived, the natural phenomena they witnessed and the passing of time through the days, months, and seasons. “A myth is a large controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life; that is which has organizing value of experience.” (ibid: 15)

Myths were also connected to religion in the Greek world and explained the origin and lives of Gods, where humanity had come from and where it was going after death. It also gave advice on the best way to lead a happy life. Above all, myths were used to retell historical events so that people could maintain contact with their ancestors, the wars they fought, and the places they explored. “The Greeks created myths to explain just about every element of the human condition.” (Denault, 2003)

Etymologically speaking, the term mythology itself is Greek, having a specialized meaning within classical Greek culture. Specifically, the word *mythologia* is a compound of two smaller words: *mythos* which means classical Greek, “oral speech” or “words without action” and *Logos* which stands for the expression of “thought” or the ability of a person to express his thoughts.

Around the 5th century BCE, the myths were presented in a theater format, especially in the works of the three tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. When myths entered storytelling, it gave rise to issues beyond its original rites. As a result, the notion of myth

evolved towards entertainment and the aesthetic. Myths, in ancient time, were certainly used for religious and educational purposes but also it might well have had a simple aesthetic function of entertainment. “Myth is an aesthetic device for bringing the imaginary but powerful world of preternatural focus into a manageable collaboration with the experienced facts of life in such a way as to excite a sense of reality amenable to both the unconscious passions and the conscious mind.” (Bowie, 1990: 125)

What sounds logical about all that is that the myths were both familiar and popular with a wide section of Greek society, through their common representation of art. Whether it is sculpture in public buildings, or scenes painted in pottery. From the 8th century onwards, a myriad of mythical scenes decorate ceramics of all shapes and it must surely have spread the myths to a wider audience. In this context, Robinson (2011) states “Myth must be taken seriously as a cultural force but it must be taken seriously precisely in order that it may be gradually superseded in the interests of the advancement of truth and the growth of human intelligence.”

Therefore, a call for change started to emerge, more precisely, in the 6th century BCE, the first documented skepticism and even rejection of the myths began with the pre-Socratic philosophers who searched for a more scientific explanation for phenomena and events. As opposed to the earlier theologians, whose philosophical basis was supernatural, they sought to document as accurately as possible and record for the coming generation a less subjective view of events and so the modern subject of history was born.

2.6.2.1 Modern Mythology as an Aesthetic Device

Not all mythologies date back to ancient cultures. People around the world continue to create new myths or rework existing ones. Modern technologies such as publishing movies,

telecommunication, and Internet allow newly myths to travel faster and reach more people than ever before.

Like all myths and legends, modern mythology springs from a sense of life's wonder, excitement, mystery, and terror. Modern myths focus more to tear off images of the best and worst aspects of the human condition. Some modern legends suggest that good behavior is rewarded and evil or greedy behavior is punished. Others reflect people's appeal to their desire to find meaningful patterns beneath the confusing chaos of the ordinary life.

A number of modern myths explore what it means to be human. For example in 1912, the American writer Edgar Rice Burroughs created the character Tarzan, the son of an English nobleman raised by apes in African Jungle. Like earlier myths about people raised by animals, the Tarzan story features animals with the admirable human qualities and people with brutish animal qualities.

Like the heroes of ancient myths, modern superheroes have extraordinary powers such as the superhero "Superman" written in 1938 by Joseph Shuster. Overall, the aim of modern myths is to undertake or embroider ancient myths to evoke real-life images and meanings. They are signs, which denote or transmit various messages and meanings. However, one may wonder how the myth came to be considered as a sign?

2.6.2.2 Roland Barthes' Critical Theory of Myths

Chief among the modern theorists who tackled the subject of mythology is the French philosopher, linguist and semiotician "Roland Barthes". The main purpose of his work "Mythologies" (1957) is to study the functioning of certain myths. According to Barthes, the myth is a second-order semiotic system. It takes an already constituted sign and turns it into a signifier. Barthes frequently questioned specific cultural materials in order to expose how bourgeois society asserted its values through them. For example, the portrayal of wine in

French society as a robust and healthy habit is a bourgeois ideal that others may see it as unhealthy and devastating. Barthes' semiotics, the study of signs, was useful to solve this kind of interrogations.

Barthes explained that these bourgeois cultural myths were second-order signs or connotations. Normally, a picture of a full dark French wine is a signifier that relates to a specific signified which is an alcoholic beverage. However, the bourgeoisie relate it to a new signified which is, health, power, and the relaxing experience. "Myth is a meta-language; it turns language into a means to speak about itself within a construction of sings. Myths differ from other kinds of signifiers for they are never arbitrary. They always contain some kind of analogy which motivates them." (Barthes, 1957)

Moreover, myths reflects particular images or signs to carry a particular meaning. What Barthes wants to prove is the myth of the goodness of the black wine, or rather, the way wine is signified as an essence it does not really have.

In a sense, therefore, myths remove any role for the reader in constructing meanings. "Myths are received rather than read". A message that is received may be interpreted in various ways, the fact that requires a certain cultural knowledge or a specific form of life corresponding to the resonance of this knowledge. Similarly, hearing a passage from a given piece of music may be interpreted into two different ways. It may be a source of delight for one person because it recalls a part of a good experience. For another person it may be a source of sorrow for it is a reminder of something bad. Myths are nearly perceived in the same way.

Myths are not related to particular actors, they are outgrowth of nature. They are usually seen as providing natural reason rather than merely explaining a motivated statement. In this essence, Robinson (2011) states that "to consume a myth is not to receive signs, but to

consume images, goals and meanings." The meaning which torn between nature and culture, denotation and connotation.

2.7 O'Neill and the Search of Modern American Tragedy

Eugene Gladstone O'Neill (1888-1953) was the Noble and Pulitzer winning American playwright. Perhaps no other playwright is responsible for American drama becoming respected by the rest of theatre world than Eugene O'Neill. He was credited with having advanced dramatic literature in the United States to a point of maturity. Like any artist, O'Neill was the product of his time, taking full advantage of the opportunity that the theatre afforded him.

> *More than any other dramatist, O'Neill introduced the dramatic realism, pioneered by the European playwrights like Anton Chekhov, Henrik Ibsen, and August Strindberg, into American theatre. O'Neill was also famous for the bleak and tragic tone of his plays, which persistently examine the crushed hopes and dreams of the unprivileged. (Le Bastard, 2013)*

O'Neill's plays are tragic, but in a new modern sense of the term. Ancient tragedy depicted noble characters who suffered from a tragic flaw. However, in the realistic theatre of O'Neill and other modern dramatists, the characters possess little nobility, they are ordinary people not of the type of King Oedipus, but they are deeply flawed. With the equalization of society that takes place in modernity, each individual life becomes more important and less significance is ascribed to the grand hero who represents the whole society. In attempt to define the tragedy, O'Neill notes:

> *Tragedy has the meaning the Greeks gave it... It roused them to deeper spiritual understandings and released them from the petty greed of everyday existence. When they saw a tragedy on the stage they felt their own hopeless hopes ennobled in art.... The point is that life in itself is nothing. It is the dream that keeps us fighting, willing — living!. .. A man wills his own defeat when he pursues the unattainable. But his struggle is his success!... Such a figure is necessarily tragic. (Cited in Bogard & Bryer, 1988)*

Another aspect in O'Neill's plays is the sense of hopelessness and despair, rooted in the loss of meaning and the chaos life that existed during the World Wars. It was a period without any clear sense of meaning and purpose, a world without certainties of religion. O'Neill's characters, indeed, engage in the kind of self-destructive behavior that would eventually destroy their own lives.

In fact, O'Neill merged Greek and modern in a new fascinating manner. In most of his works, he undertakes two major characteristics of the Greek tragedy, the myth and the tragic mask. In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, he sets the Orestes myth in New England after the Civil War. The wife kills her husband, the daughter loves her father and despises her mother, and the son idolizes his mother and fears his father. This trilogy develops a chorus of towns' people who keeps gossiping on the great Mannons family and murmurs about something strange and unusual. Unlike the heroes of Greek tragedy, whose actions were painfully public, the aim of the Mannons is secrecy, (see chapter three).

Another strand in O'Neill's plays is that they consistently circle around the theme of unmasking; most of his characters hide behind an idealized self. This theme is most evident in *The Great God Brown* where actors wear masks onstage. When Margaret marries Dion Anthony, she loves his persona, his outer mask, which eventually contradicts with the inner

unmasked Dion. After his release from his spiritual prison, he runs to prostitute, becomes a drunkard and dies. This self-destruction at the end, frees him from his mask, (see chapter four). On the use of masks in modern theatre, Eugene O'Neill says:

> *... I hold more and more surely to the conviction that the use of masks will be discovered to be the means to express those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probing of psychology continue to disclose to us. The modern dramatist must find some method to present this inner drama in his work, or confess himself incapable of portraying one of the most characteristic preoccupations and uniquely significant, spiritual impulses of his time.*[13]

Eugene O'Neill's works often reveal the frequent failures of human life, the grim and intimate secrets that unfold in the harsh atmosphere of isolated fears within family living rooms.

2.7.1 O'Neill's Diversity of Form and Technique

O'Neill is almost universally acknowledged as the first great American playwright, before his coming, most American theater consisted of melodrama[14]. He embraced theater as an underestimated aspect of American tradition and turned it into a prominent cultural institution. Based firmly on American history and his extraordinary personal life, Eugene O'Neill brought *psychological* depth, poetic *symbolism* and *expressionistic* technique to the American drama. Through his experimental and emotionally appealing dramas, he addressed the difficulties of human society with a deep psychological complexity. O'Neill did transform the American theater into the most original experience, changing its face forever.

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[13] The American spectator (1932) "Memoranda on Masks" By Courtesy of Yale University

[14] A dramatic or literary work in which the plot, which is typically sensational, is designed to appeal strongly to the emotions. Characters are often simply drawn, and may appear stereotyped. *Melodramas* are dramas of the 18th and 19th centuries in which orchestral music or song was used to accompany the action.

O'Neill's career as a playwright consisted of three periods. His early *realist* plays depicted from his own experiences as a seaman. In 1920s, however, he turned his back to realism thinking of greater effort to capture, on stage, the forces behind the mystery of the human life. Later, his *expressionistic* tone came into existence as a result to his influence by the ideas of philosopher Fredrick Nietzsche and psychologists, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Soon after, however, and during his final period, O'Neill returned to *realism,* his later works reflect his life experiences for their story lines and themes.

Almost all of O'Neill's plays are tragedies entailed with dark shadings of melancholy and sorrow drawn heavily from his experiences. Hence, this kind of psychological and moral pain usually creates spiritual and social dilemmas. The following two sections exemplify O'Neill's genuine shift from realistic drama to the norms of expressionism.

2.7.2 Realism in the Theatre of Eugene O'Neill

Broadly defined as "the faithful representation of reality" or "verisimilitude," realism is a literary technique practiced by many schools of writing. Although strictly speaking, realism is a technique, it also denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class life. A reaction against romanticism, an interest in scientific method and the influence of rational philosophy all affected the rise of realism.

Realism in literature and art has been considered as an attempt to treat things in a realistic way much closer to their real experience, the fact that may give the audience an impression as if they are in front of something authentic, real and not fictional, the mutual influence that has been named, at that time, *effet du reel.*[15]

In the field of theatre, realism started to emerge on both theatrical text and performance as early as the beginning of the 20th century. At first, the realist plays managed a kind of

[15]A textual device identified by Roland Barthes, the purpose of which was to establish literary texts as realistic.

succession to the Greek theatre in term of structure. In terms of content, however, it focused on experiencing real life situations, character's daily life details and their behavioral psychological intentions. For most of the 20th century theatre, realism has been the main stream. It originally began as an experiment to make theatre more useful to society, a reaction against melodrama and highly romanticized plays.

In 1920s, realism had become widespread in England, France and the United States. A new movement that had a great impact on theatre in the first place was initially associated with the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov, Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, and Swedish August Strindberg. It began as a late 19th century movement cultivated a set of dramatic and theatrical customs aimed to create productions in social and philosophical aspects of real-life situations. This was a significant evolution from the typical entertainment-based focus of earlier theatres.

One of the great groups that enhanced the theatrical presence in the United States was the theatre guild founded in 1919 with the intention of bringing important foreign works to improve the American theatre. By the mid-1920s, playwrights of the United States were also competing to have their works produced by the Theatre Guild.

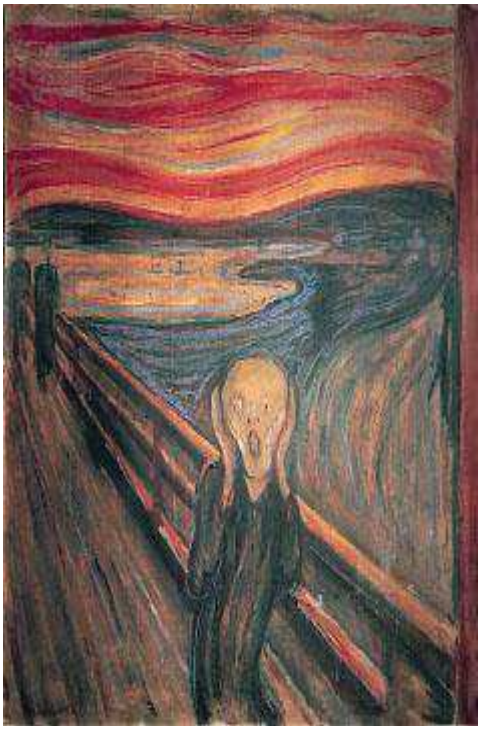
Perhaps the most significant American playwright to have plays produced by the Theatre Guild was Eugene O'Neill with five of his plays appearing at one season (1924-1925) in New York, including *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *Desire Under the Elms* as two of his great serious dramas, without forgetting his master piece *Beyond the Horizon*.

> *America found that it had its major playwright as well as free theatre movement similar to that of Europe. O'Neill's success in the realistic and expressionistic drama turned others from the traditions of romantic comedy and melodrama, which had for so long bound the American stage, and opened the way for new literary experiments. (Spiller, 1955: 243)*

With his use of realism, O'Neill wrote plays that diverged drastically from traditional productions of the early 20th century. His themes with the tremendous psychological depth brought international acclaim to his new American drama.

2.7.3 O'Neill's Technique of Expressionism

In a broader sense, expressionism is a style of painting, sculpture and literature that came into existence in the late 19th century and beginning of the 20th century in Berlin, Germany. It was one of the major currents of art at that time, an artistic style in which the artist attempts to depict the subjective emotions and responses rather than the objective reality. The roots of the German Expressionist School lay in the works of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and Edvard Munch (1863-1944), each of whom in the period (1885–1900) evolved a highly personal painting style.



2-1 *The Scream*, by Edvard Munch, 1893; in the National Gallery, Oslo. [16]

2-2 *Starry Night over the Rhône*, by Vincent Van Gogh, 1888; in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris.[17]

[16] http://totallyhistory.com/the-scream/
[17] http://www.vangogh.net/starry-night-over-the-rhone.jsp

These artists used the expressive possibilities of color and line to explore dramatic and emotional themes, to convey the qualities of fear and horror, or simply to celebrate nature with hallucinatory intensity. They broke away from the literal representation of nature in order to express more subjective attitudes or states of mind.

On the left side above, we observe Munch's most famous painting, where he depicts the battle between the individual and society. *The Scream* evokes the messy emotion of the encounter and exhibits a general anxiety toward the world. It is all about the representation of the artist's emotional response to a specific scene. The theme of individual alienation, as represented in this image would persist throughout the twentieth century, captivating Expressionist artists as a central feature of modern life. On the right side, however, Vincent’s painting shows no visual distinction between the earth and the sky, the light from the stars is reflected together with that of the city lights in the Rhone River. Inclusion of human forms in this painting, possibly a couple who are escaping a sinking boat ambiguously depicted in the water behind them, also has a lot of significance because they add a touch of natural quality. They also enable the painting to have a natural environmental setting that is pleasurable to look at.

Later on, the movement spread its branches and was adapted in literature. The absolute aim of this movement was to express subjective emotional experiences as opposed to the external objective realistic objects of the world. Expressionists tend to exaggerate natural appearances in order to create a reflection of a deep inner world. They wanted to challenge materialism and the industrialism that was growing across the world. Their characters are usually looking for their true identity because their materialism is keeping them from feeling fulfilled.

> *Expressionism is a dramatic technique, which enables a dramatist to depict the "inner-reality", the soul or psyche of his personages… There is a deeper and deeper probing of the subconscious, action get increasingly internalized and what goes on within the soul becomes more important than the external action … The conventions that came to be applied to expressionism are representation of powerful emotional states of mind, showing violent extremes of mood and feelings.*[18]

The movement of expressionism seems to have arisen from as a kind of revolt against the tendency of realism and naturalism, seeking to achieve a psychological or spiritual reality rather than record external events in logical sequence. In naturalistic and realistic plays, speech and actions are used to give an idea of the working of the mind, but this method may be inadequate since the speech does not necessarily reveal the inner thoughts of the mind. Expressionists on the other hand, depend for correct understanding of the human psyche, on informal moment of the characters such as dreams, obsessions, hallucinations, memories … etc. Indeed, in order to help the audience grasp such clues from the inside of the characters, the expressionistic artist uses symbols and metaphors.

In the novel, the term is closely allied to the writing of Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and James Joyce (1882-1941). In drama, August Strindberg (1849-1912) is considered the forefather of the expressionists, in addition to another group of early 20th-century German dramatists mainly George Kaiser (1878-1945) and Frank Wedekind (1864-1918).

O'Neill was a great artist who was primarily concerned with the task of exploring the self through the medium of humanity. He was a revolutionary dramatist who presented an imaginative reformulation of life where he usually presented what he saw and felt. O'Neill

[18] Expressionism and Expressionistic vision in O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones.* Vol. II Issue IV, Oct, 2013

was a highly conscientious artist who realized the importance and value of technique in his drama. He had been always careful to make things that contribute in the total understanding of the play, meaningful on stage.

O'Neill felt that the superficiality of realism keeps the same suffering of drama from the banality of surfaces that existed during romanticism, and the cure for him lay in adopting the non-realistic techniques of expressionism. Therefore, he did his best to transcend the realistic nature of his early plays, undertaking new innovative aesthetic devices to highlight the play of the unconscious duality of mind and bad faith (misfortune). He usually made use of masks, extended asides with frozen action, great length, soliloquies, taboo subject matters and serious dramatic treatment of the poor and the powerless. Thus, the reason behind using all these expressionistic techniques is to enhance his dramatic impact on the audience.

O'Neill's use of expressionism as a major ingredient in his drama is to reveal the hidden side of the most unpredictable emotions, which are products of the unconscious mind (see chapter three). He dramatizes the ideas and conflicts within the minds of his characters, celebrating the dark regions and somber mood of human mind, where the inner struggle is evident. In most of his expressionistic plays, such as, *Strange Interlude, Emperor Jones, The Great God Brown,* and *Mourning Becomes Electra,* he exhibits three main factors of expression, which are soliloquy, aside and interior monologue. He often uses soliloquies to unveil the characters self-conflicts in their most critical moments. The technique of thought-aside, on the other hand, is used to represent the character's sub-conscious mind. Similarly, the interior monologue holds the same function of revealing the psychological state of the characters.

2.8 Conclusion

Studying modern American drama from an aesthetic point of view, seeking its beauty and charm is not an easy task. Since the term beautiful is not only vague in its application but also too subjective in its meaning. How do some people feel pleasure while others feel displeasure as they are viewing the same piece of art or as they are watching the same dramatic work? At the end, one may say that it is hard to define "beauty" from an objective point of view because beauty is a subjective judgment and it changes from one person to another.

There has been a long debate about the criteria of beauty; but in a global and changing world it is hard to define the beautiful in strict limited borders for the reason that a piece of art can have aesthetic value without being beautiful since the emergence of modern art. Beauty is linked with pleasure and appreciation of the beautiful depends on perception. The perception and pleasure of people have changed from one century to another or from one culture to another. Thus, beauty and aesthetic judgment are not merely about individual's own background but they are also about socio-cultural values of the societies, which are the subject of the modern disciplines such as psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology and socio-psychology, which have been brilliantly tackled by different modern writers not only in theatre but even in poetry and prose.

Eugene O'Neill is one of the 20th century writers who emphasized the psychological and psychoanalysis themes in their works. His style has often been regarded as unique, simple and straightforward because of its frankness. The fact that led O'Neill to be considered the first American dramatist who regards the stage as a literary medium, instead of relying on the standard, monotonous devices of his time. Using new innovative aesthetic issues, relying

mostly on his influence by the Greek drama, he could set the American theater into unpredictable arc.

He intensively contempt the melodramatic plots, broad gestures, and boring long speeches of early American theater and respond instinctively to the realistic and experimental techniques to produce works of importance and integrity. O'Neill's dramas explore his alcoholism, his life at sea, his mother's drug addiction, his brother's suicide by alcohol, and his own shortcomings. His plays investigate the American Dream, race relations, class conflicts, sexuality, disappointment, alienation, psychoanalysis, and the American family with a thoroughness and intensity. He wrote about the wealthy and the underclass with equal perception. In particular, the way O'Neill uses aesthetics that is based on the ancient Greek theatre to depict modern subjects will be explored, to some extent, in the following chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

MYTHIC PLOT AND CHARACTER IN "MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA"

CHAPTER THREE: MYTHIC PLOT AND CHARACTER IN "MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA"

3.1 Introduction

Twentieth century American drama faced the challenge to produce dramatists who could assimilate European dramatic techniques in their writings and yet make them distinctively American. Eugene O'Neill was the pioneer to face such a challenge by refining the genre in its developments and maturity, as well as in form and content. O'Neill was conscious of the fact that American drama needed to reach equality with its European counterpart. He, therefore, had to take certain bold measures by infusing a great variety of aesthetic norms into the genre. It was because of his stature and genius that the genre received recognition not only at home but in Europe as well.

In his play *Mourning Becomes Electra*, O'Neill Undertakes the myth of Electra as a dramatic technique to depict modern American society. Using the Greek myths, however, in a modern context and to an audience who does not believe neither in the divinity of Gods nor in fate was an absolute challenge.

3.2 Positioning Mythic Themes in Modern Drama

Over the 1920's, O'Neill shifts from the straightforward realism of his early plays searching for new dramatic issues that enhance the extent of his themes and make them sound more logical and close to the audience daily life. O'Neill uses the tragedy as an attempt to find a modern analogue to an ancient mode of experience. Thus, his famous play *Mourning becomes Electra* aims to provide a "modern psychological approximation of the Greek sense of fate in a time in which the notion of a fundamentally determinism is incomprehensible and obscure." (Mitić,

2008) Accordingly, the setting of the trilogy[1], the American Civil War[2], springs from O'Neill's intention to negotiate the mediation between ancient and modern. For O'Neill, the Civil War provides a setting that would allow audiences to locate the tragic in their national history and mythology.

O'Neill's interest in the mythic plot may be purely Freudian, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud pointed at the significance of myths in terms of their peculiar language, which is the language of symbol. The language of myth was thus taken to be significantly related to the understanding of the human psyche. Freud's therapeutic aim of his psychoanalytic method was the control of the irrational, non-logical, dark side of man's life. The measures he, therefore, proposed were all aimed at the strengthening of the ego at the expense of the id[3]. His view on myths, based on his interpretation of dreams (which he took to be in the service of the pleasure principle as opposed to the reality principle) necessarily reflected the patterns prevailing in the culture he spoke from. (ibid, 74)

3.2.1 New England and the Myth of Oresteia

Mourning is a daring attempt to connect the origins of America and the origins of the Western civilization through dramatic art. This time, O'Neill's true dramatic ancestor is not Shakespeare; for all that he revered him, but Aeschylus. The fundamental debt this work owes is to Aeschylus, and to a lesser degree to Sophocles and Euripides[4] magnifies O'Neill's both Greek and American drama. He set the play in New England. The site of the first European settlements in America. New England according to O'Neill is a bloodstained land of lost grace

[1] O'Neill uses the Oresteia trilogy of Aeschylus as a basis to his drama, which depicts the post-Civil War period. The trilogy includes three plays (Homecoming, The Hunted, and The Haunted)
[2] A civil war in the United States fought from 1861 to 1865. The war had its origin in the factious extension of slavery into the western territories. Four years of intense combat left 620,000 to 750,000 soldiers dead, a higher number than the American casualties of World War I and World War II combined.
[3] According to Freud's psychoanalysis, the ego and the id are two opposing components of the human psyche. The ego's goal is to satisfy the demands of the id in a safe a socially acceptable way. In contrast to the id, the ego follows the reality principle as it operates in both the conscious and unconscious mind.
[4] Tragedians of classical Athens whose plays have survived, along with plays of Aeschylus. They wrote about the Oedipus/Electra complex and the legend of Oresteia.

and Puritan sin, a sin revivified in his plays by vigorous opposition to his parents' Catholic faith. Probably, New England may be as likely a place as any other in America, but for O'Neill, it seems the only place to turn when contemplating the meaning of origin.

O'Neill has reworked the myth of curse on House of Atreus by Aeschylus in a modern context. Although there are similarities in both the tragic narratives yet in O'Neill's play there are points of departure, which essentially construct O'Neill's tragic vision and provide parameters to differentiate between Greek and modern sensibilities.

Eugene O'Neill wrote his play in 1930's when most of the writers were striving with the social and economic realities of the times doing their best to raise peoples' attention toward the coming destruction. The New York stock market crashed in October 1929 destroying the hopes and aspirations of the Americans who had invested in the mythical idea of American dream. Consequently, much of the literature produced in the context of the 30's is a kind of diagnostic. It aims at finding out the social and economic causes, which led to "the Great Depression" and its implications on the lives of the common Americans. Hence, a spirit of pessimism prevailed both at individual and societal levels. However, O'Neill rejected the economic study of man's conditions and diverted his attention to explore the deep alienation of human soul. Intensely introvert, he was always interested in finding a harmonious relationship between the physical and metaphysical.

O'Neill's dramatic universe is peopled with characters who are disillusioned with the idea of Christian God but at the same time yearn for the presence of some spiritual reality that could give them a sense of release from an absurd mode of existence. In Greeks, the idea of such a duality did not exist. Gods represented both the divine and the physical universe. O'Neill does not see the individual to be blessed in the Greek sense. His tragic vision implies that the

chaos is the inherent principle of the universe and no amount of human wisdom can stop it and restore the moral order.

Examining Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* from the perspective of the classical tradition allows us to discover the reason by which the American playwright based his trilogy (Homecoming, The Hunted, and The Haunted) to reveal the deep-seated motives that give rise to a hostile and tormented relationship between family members. In effect, the Mannon family saga, New England and the Greek architecture of its great mansions, and the American Civil War form the contemporary framework of the mid-19th century setting of the tragedy presented in the form of a psychological drama with characters marked by a family heritage as inescapable as destiny itself.

The American Civil War is over, and in their New England home Christine and Lavinia Mannon await the homecoming of Ezra Mannon and his son, Orin. Lavinia, who adores her father, detests Christine because of Ezra's love for his wife. For her part, Christine is jealous of Orin's love and hates her husband and daughter. In this house of hidden hatred, Seth, the watchful gardener of the old mansion, sees that Lavinia also despises Captain Brant, a regular caller at the Mannon home.

In 1930, O'Neill undertakes a huge risky project to transform one of the most famous Greek tragic plays into a modern psychological drama. He chooses *The Oresteia*[5], a trilogy by the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus, who also follows the wealthy Atreus family in its journey

[5] Setting of the Oresteia resembles a lot America of the 30's. Aeschylus play is strongly anchored in the philosophical and political consciousness of his time. It was a time of transition when Greek civilization was moving towards a cultural cohesion after passing through a long period of wars and bloodshed. Athens was about to play a critical role in coming years. It had emerged successful in its struggle against tyrannical regimes of the past, and on the other hand, it had to consolidate the Greek city-states against the possible invasion of the Persian Empire. The rise of Democracy resulted in a man's attempt to apply rational order on his earthly existence.

toward destruction. The queen Clytemnestra murders her husband Agamemnon, and her children, Orestes and Electra, take revenge by plotting her murder.

At the beginning of the fifth century, it was customary for each of the Greek tragedians who were competing at the festival of Dionysus to present a trilogy of three plays on a related theme, followed by a satyr-play. *The Oresteia* is the only surviving example of a Greek tragic trilogy and thus has great importance in the history of drama. Each play of the trilogy is a self-contained dramatic unit. Any of the three plays can be presented alone without too much loss of understanding, but the meaning and dramatic effect of the works is enhanced by production or reading of them as a group.

Each play has its own chorus and a nearly separate cast of characters, but the trilogy is given unity by the basis of its plots in the same cycle of legends. In addition, there are certain underlying themes that continue from play to play and that reach their full resolution only at the conclusion.

The main idea of The Oresteia is a public morality. It uses the legend of the family of Atreus as a tool to examine different aspects of this theme: such as the nature of justice, methods of establishing and maintaining justice on earth, the relationship of justice to vengeance, mercy, the gods, fate, and the social order. It also deals with the doctrines that wisdom can be learned only through experience and suffering, that one crime invariably leads to another if the criminal is not punished, and that authority is the foundation of civilization.

3.2.2 Tragedy of the Subconscious

O'Neill's trilogy of short, interconnected plays called *Homecoming*, *The Hunted*, and *The Haunted, Mourning Becomes Electra* gives us a personal look at the complete destruction of the Mannon Family, a group of American aristocrats who have more dirty secrets than they have money. What brings down the Mannon family, despite their wealth and social status, is deceit. They spend their lives lying to each other and lying to themselves in an effort to protect the family. They all think that the best way to deal with the past is to bury it. Their secrets and lies do the opposite of protecting; they destroy the characters until all those hidden secrets finally boil over and take the family down.

Eugene O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra is a play of revenge, sacrifice, and murder conveyed through visible references to Aeschylus' House of Atreus, a creepy old mansion high on top of a hill in New England. "The house is placed back on a slight rise of ground about three hundred feet from the street. It is a large building of the Greek temple type that was the vogue in the first half of the nineteenth century". (General Scene of the Trilogy) O'Neill resembles the setting to The House of Atreus, which is much like a tomb, a tomb for the poisoned Ezra Mannon who found his fate at the hand of his own wife.

O'Neill refers to the House of Atreus with the intention of expressing revenge, hatred and murder that threads itself throughout the play. He also mimics the characters' names as close as possible to that of Aeschylus' original work. Mr. Mannon to Agamemnon, Christine to Clytemnestra, Orin to Orestes, and Lavinia to Electra. O'Neill explores the story of The House of Atreus with similar names for his characters, modernizing and adapting it to a modern context. One concept that remains unmasked is that of the Oedipal[6] and Electra complexes. The

[6] Myth of King Oedipus, Oedipus married Jocaste, unaware that she was his mother. At the end of the legend Jocasta hangs herself, and Oedipus stabs out his own eyes. The blind king then goes into exile with only his daughter, Antigone, to guide him, and eventually dies in the town of Colonus.

Oedipus complex concerns a male child's love for his mother, while the Electra complex is the exact sexual opposite. Throughout the play, Lavinia exhibits a strange attraction to her father; more emotionally involved then most father-daughter relationships.

LAVINIA--Yes, Father. (*She comes and kisses him--excitedly*) Oh, I'm so happy you're here! Don't let Mother make you believe I--You're the only man I'll ever love! I'm going to stay with you! (Homecoming, Act 3)

A connection between the two is found in the scene concerning Ezra's death where Lavinia blurts out, "Father! Don't leave me alone! Come back to me! Tell me what to do!" (Ibid, Act 4) These words express Lavinia's need for guidance from the "only man she could ever truly love". Quite possibly this connection between Lavinia and Ezra was so strong that it continued from beyond the grave.

Orin, on the other hand is tightly related to his mother rejecting to love any other woman in earth if his mother is still alive. After being abandoned for so many years by her husband, Christine felt the absolute male support in her only son Orin.

CHRISTINE--(*rallying herself and forcing a smile*) There, I'm all right. I mustn't appear too old and haggard when Orin comes, must I? He always liked me to be pretty. (The Hunted, Act1)

CHRISTINE--(*patting Orin's cheek*) Fiddlesticks! Having you again is just the medicine I need to give me strength--to bear things. (Ibid, Act 2)

Accused of her husband's murder, Christine confronts the fate of being tortured by both of her children. In spite of Orin's obsessed love to his mother, Lavinia with her wicked soul could convince him to avenge their father's murder even if the price will be their own mother's defeat. They plan to kill her lover Adam as a way to punish her for what she did, but it seems that

blood, once shed, can never be atoned for. Christine couldn’t bear the fact of losing her man, so she committed suicide.

Lavinia and Orin fell subject to this curse, and in attempt to rid themselves of it, left for an extended vacation to the South East Islands. However, their sin keeps on chasing them whenever they go. Upon their return, Lavinia has transformed into a different person, that person being her mother. Orin immediately remarks this change and mentions, "I mean the change in your soul, too. I have watched it ever since we sailed for the East. Little by little it grew like Mother's soul-as if you were stealing hers-as if her death had set you free-to become her!" Orin underwent the same change; "Can't you see I'm now in Father's place and you're Mother? That's the evil destiny out of the past I haven't dared predict! I'm the Mannon you're chained to!" (The Haunted, Act 1, Scene 2) Here, the Mannons dead, manifest themselves in Orin and Lavinia, slowly drawing them to complete mental collapse. Orin takes his own life in order to escape his destiny, while Lavinia is left alone within the walls on the Mannon estate, devoid of any human contact.

O'Neill conveys a unique message of serenity that can only serve to add to his work. The use of the Oedipal and Electra complexes provides the reader with the basis of Freudian psychology, while at the same time making the reader think back to his or her childhood years. Overall, this play analyses a slice of the human nature. Amongst all the confusion, the hate, the contempt, O'Neill adds a touch of his own creativity to modernize this Ancient Greek tragedy, and make it enjoyable for a new crowd of readers.

3.2.3 Seeing the Mannons through Freud's Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud explored the human mind more thoroughly than any other one in his time. His contributions to psychology are vast. Freud was one of the most influential people of the twentieth century and his enduring legacy has influenced not only psychology, but art, literature and even the way people lived. Freud was the founding father of psychoanalysis, a method for treating mental illness and also a theory which explains human behavior.

Certainly, during the late twenties and thirties, incorporating Freud's theory of psychoanalysis into literature was a kind of "fashionable" in the Western world. American writers such as William Faulkner (1897-1962), in prose, and Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), in theater, are probably the most important. The best examples are, perhaps, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), and O'Neill's *Dynamo* (1924-28), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924)[7], *Strange Interlude* (1928), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1929-30), and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1941-43).

Even though O'Neill was heavily influenced by Nietzsche and Jung, in philosophy, and Ibsen, Shaw, Strindberg, Aeschylus and Sophocles, in drama, O'Neill's major influence especially in *Mourning Becomes Electra* was Freud.

Freud borrowed the *Oedipal* legend to point out that all children, normal and neurotic, have an affective fixation toward their parent of the opposite sex. In the myth of King Oedipus, Oedipus married Jocaste, unaware that she was his mother. For Freud, however, this is what he calls unconscious motivation—actions which, though not intended (consciously), they come out as a result of the inner wishes.

[7] It is another exemplary of his desire to unite the modern and the ancient Greek. It is based on Euripides' Greek tragedy, *Hippolytus*. A handsome but angry and grim young man, Eben desires nothing else than the farmland that his beloved Maw worked so hard and died upon. He pays off his half brothers but is threatened by his father's new wife Abbie. They fall in love and have a son, but he comes to think she tricked him and wants the land for himself. After she kills their son as an act of love, Eben cannot deny his passion for her anymore and proclaims he will go to prison with her or for her.

According to Freud, the mind could be considered to consist of three systems—the Conscious, the Preconscious and the Unconscious. If we focus on the unconscious system, Freud says, it is "something that could never fully be understood," but that it contains basic instincts and drives, which are "primarily sexual—he called the energy behind the drives the 'libido'." These drives "were constantly seeking discharge" and they "included infantile bisexual impulses, sexual longings and jealousies directed at and against parents (the Oedipal desires)." Those drives, though, are most of the time diverted—they are "prevented from reaching consciousness by repression or censorship." (McLeod, 2013)

In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Ezra married Christine because she resembles his first love, Marie Brantome. May be it was Christine's likeness to Marie that determined Ezra's falling in love with Christine. He loves his daughter because she resembles Marie, and Christine. Adam Brant un*consciously* loves Christine and Lavinia, because they resemble his mother Marie Brantome. "You're so like your mother," Brant says to Lavinia. "Your face is the dead image of hers. And look at your hair... I only know of one other woman who had... It was my mother." (Homecoming,Act1)

Lavinia as the key element in the story is un*consciously* in love with her father. When Peter asks indirectly Lavinia for marriage, she says, "I can't marry anyone, Peter... Father needs me." "He's got your mother," Peter says. "He needs me *more*", Lavinia answers. (Ibid) "You've tried to become the wife of your father and the *mother* of Orin!" Christine tells her. When Ezra comes home, Lavinia says to him, "You're the only man I'll ever love!". Lavinia is also un*consciously* in love with her brother Orin, because he resembles her father. "I love [Orin] better than you!" Lavinia tells Christine. She is also in love with Brant because he resembles her father and her brother. "You wanted Adam Brant for yourself!" Christine yells atLavinia.(Ibid,Act2)

Christine, on the other hand, un*consciously* obstinately loves her son Orin, while Ezra unconsciously hated him, Christine tells her son, "because he knew I loved you better than anything in the world!" She had loved Orin, she admits to Lavinia, "Until he let you and your father nag him into the war, in spite of my begging him not leave me alone". (Ibid, Act 2)

Christine falls in love with Brant, because he resembles her son Orin. "I never would have fallen in love with Adam," Christine says to Lavinia, "if I'd had Orin with me... When he had gone there was nothing left... [but] a longing for love!" (Ibid). When Brant sees the resemble between him and Ezra, he says to Christine, "It would be dammed queer if you fell in love with me because I recalled Ezra Mannon to you." "No, no, I tell you!" says Christine. "It was Orin you made me think of! It was Orin!" (Ibid)

Orin also un*consciously* hates his father. "We had a secret little world of our own in the old days, didn't we?" Christine asks Orin. "Which no one but we knew about". "I'll tell you the truth, Mother!" Orin says to Christine, "I won't pretend to you I'm sorry [Ezra] is dead!". "There was no one there but you and me," Orin says to her. (The Hunted, Act 2) At last, Orin kills Brant *because*, his mother loves him, and he resembles his father. When he kills Brant, he says "By God, he does look like Father." "I've killed him before [in my dream] —over and over". (Ibid, Act 5)

Finally, Orin falls un*consciously* in love with Lavinia because she resembles his mother. In the last part, Lavinia has "become" Christine. "She now bears a striking resemblance to her mother in *every* respect". "You don't know how like Mother you've become, Vinnie," Orin says to Lavinia. "I don't mean only *how pretty* you've gotten" (The Haunted, Act 1, Scene 2). Later, When Lavinia promises Orin she will do anything he wants her to, she discovers he has been wanting to *sleep* with her. "I love you now with all the guilt on me," he says. "Perhaps I love you too much, Vinnie!" (Ibid, Act3)

Probably, O'Neill, in a period of lost faith, dares to use the Oedipal complex to rebel against the religious norms of his society. Indeed, O'Neill intentionally dares to treat such a taboo subject matter in such a situation. "It is true the taboos are necessary to maintain stability in a given society, since any culture confines its people on the basis of its norms and rules. Yet freedom remains a cultural tenet which urges people to look closely at their existence" (Bedjaoui, 2005:38).

The same idea is explored when O'Neill describes the Sea Islands as the heavenly land where everything is allowed and nothing is forbidden. The land of the absolute freedom, which all the characters longed to visit to escape from the Mannon's house curse, to be free and explore the life they have always dreamed of, but at end no one could, they all failed to make it. One wonders what is the reason behind their failure, then?

3.3 O'Neill's Psychological Approach of the Greek Sense of Fate

O' Neill's trilogy of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, is basically a recreation of Greek tragic play and legend "Oresteia". The play that gives rise to the serious psychological debates over human nature and sexual urges. It was written by the legend playwright Aeschylus. Following the lines of Freud's "Oedipus Complex", the play features murder, incest and revenge. *Mourning Becomes Electra* can be called a modern tragedy of "Oresteia" where O'Neill has not only changed the names of characters as well as the story but also changed the old Greek belief that human actions and destiny are modelled by fate.

The play opens with a chorus praising the character of General Ezra Mannon "this town's real proud of Ezra", while his wife is criticized as unworthy of him "which is more'n you kin say for his wife. Folks all hates her! She ain't the Mannon kind. French and Dutch descended, she is. Furrin lookin' and queer." (Homecoming, Act 1)

In an original manner of reviving the Greek theater, O'Neill has been always interested in the use of the chorus in his plays. In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, he uses the chorus (town's people) as a way of condensing some of his wordiness by relating events through the gossip of the town's citizens rather than the straight dramatic storytelling. Indeed, the chorus of O'Neill contributes in the plot more than the action. " *These people--the Bordens, Hills and his wife and Doctor Blake--are, types of townsfolk, a chorus representing the town as a human background for the drama of the Mannons."* (Ibid)

MRS. BORDEN--(*tartly*) I can't abide that woman!

MRS. HILLS--No. There's something queer about her.

HILLS--What a tragedy to be taken his first night home after passing unharmed through the whole war!

BORDEN--I couldn't believe the news. Who'd ever suspect--It's queer. It's like fate.

MRS. HILLS-- … Maybe it is fate. You remember, Everett, you've always said about the Mannons that pride goeth before a fall and that some day God would humble them in their sinful pride. (*Everyone stares at her, shocked and irritated.*)

BLAKE-- … I'd often told Ezra he was attempting more than one man could handle and if he didn't rest he'd break down. The minute they sent for me I knew what'd happened. And what she told me about waking up to find him groaning and doubled with pain confirmed it. She'd given him his medicine--it was what I would have prescribed myself--but it was too late. And as for dying his first night home--well, the war was over, he was worn out, he'd had a long, hard trip home--and angina is no respecter of time and place. It strikes when it has a mind to.

BORDEN-- Too bad. Too durned bad. The town won't find another as able as Ezra in a hurry. (The Hunted, Act1)

Soon after this townsfolk gossiping about the Mannons, we are well aware that the daughter, Lavinia, is not happy with her mother's deeds. She seems to hate her mother, Christine, and is in deep association with her father. Though every daughter loves her father, yet her affection for Mr. Mannon is a way too deep and lustful. She is subject to the Oedipus complex of loving her male parent; however, her father is completely unaware of her strange and unethical feelings.

This leaves Lavinia to a lonely situation where she is in deep psychological obsession. She loves Adam Brant and at the same time wants Peter to marry her and love her. But while Peter loves her deeply and passionately, she feels caught in the memory of the dead. The dead seem to *haunt* her mind and her feelings. She decides to remain alone in the house of the dead to pay for her sins: "And there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone!" (The Hunted, Act 4)

Lavinia's character in *Mourning Becomes Electra* represents a victim of Oedipus complex, Lavinia, is the protagonist in this play. She remains the center of attention as she is always relevant to the characters and the story as a whole. The author describes her and say, "*She is twenty-three but looks considerably older. Tall like her mother, her body is thin, flat-breasted and angular, and its unattractiveness is accentuated by her plain black dress. Her movements are stiff and she carries herself with a wooden, square-shouldered, military bearing. She has a flat dry voice and a habit of snapping out her words like an officer giving orders. But in spite of these dissimilarities, one is immediately struck by her facial resemblance to her mother. She has the same peculiar shade of copper-gold hair, the same pallor and dark violet-blue eyes, the black eyebrows meeting in a straight line above her nose, the same sensual mouth, the same*

heavy jaw". The chorus also says, "*Lavinia is cold and calm as an icicle"* (Homecoming, Act1). The tragedy of the family of the Mannons may well be related as the tragedy of Lavinia because she has been assigned such an overwhelming role in the play and her point of view is monopolizing the three parts of the trilogy.

Probably, what Lavinia has experienced is the result of the maltreatment and reluctance, on the part of her mother. Lavinia was born of her mother's *disgust* of her father, the man she hated.

LAVINIA--… So I was born of your disgust! I've always guessed that, Mother--ever since I was little--when I used to come to you--with love--but you would always push me away! I've felt it ever since I can remember--your disgust!... Oh, I hate you! It's only right I should hate you!

CHRISTINE--… 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! You were always my wedding night to me--and my honeymoon! (Homecoming, Act 2)

On the other hand, Lavinia is in strange love with her father,

LAVINIA--… Oh, I'm so happy you're here! Don't let Mother make you believe I--You're the only man I'll ever love! I'm going to stay with you! (Ibid, Act 3)

Although lavinia wants her mother to stop cheating on her father, she has been always jealous of her since in her presence she cannot enjoy the undivided love of her father and the one of Adam as well. *"For a moment, mother and daughter stare into each other's eyes. In their whole tense attitudes is clearly revealed the bitter antagonism between them"* (Ibid, Ac 2). Nevertheless, Lavinia's half-tolerant attitude converts to full hatred when Christine, her mother, has poisoned her father. Lavinia takes revenge and destroys her mother as well as her lover, Adam.

Later in the play, instead of recovering from the pains and mental stresses, she collapses into an abyss of mental torture and self-confinement from which even the love of Peter fails to bring her out.

LAVINIA--(*in a dead voice*) I can't marry you, Peter. You mustn't ever see me again… Love isn't permitted to me. The dead are too strong! (The Haunted, Act 4)

At the end, she decides to leave all and remain within the bounds of the hellish Mannon building, in a soliloquy she says, "… and there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone!" (Ibid)

Orin, another subject of the Oedipus complex, is the only male heir of the Mannon family. He is on the front fighting for the country. Before his return back home, his father has been poisoned and murdered by his mother Christine. Instead of showing deep concerns and gloom over the murder of his father, we find him quite relax and internally satisfied. He ignores Hazel, his cousin, and her love. Orin tells his mother that he likes and loves her. He has never been in love with Hazel or another woman.

After his mother has died, Lavinia is left with Orin. In a short while Orin has been taking the fullest interest in her. Why? Simply because she resembles her mother and this has directed attention of Orin from a brotherly love to something much more than that. He even proposes her to stay with him and ignore Peter. He demands incestuous love from his sister. She screams and shouts back on him. Orin, out of a feeling of defeat and jealousy from Peter, commits suicide.

Christine's character, on the other hand, represents the wife of General Ezra Mannon and the mother of Orin and Lavinia. She is the only responsible person for the Oedipus complex of her

children and the ruin of her family. She has a loathsome feeling for her husband. Therefore, she keeps a sexual relationship with Adam, a cousin of Ezra. Christine tells her husband clearly that:

CHRISTINE--… You want the truth? You've guessed it! You've used me, you've given me children, but I've never once been yours! I never could be! And whose fault is it? I loved you when I married you! I wanted to give myself! But you made me so I couldn't give! You filled me with disgust! (Homecoming, Act 4)

However, it may be admitted that she appears in opposition to her daughter Lavinia whereas she seems to like and over-care about Orin. Despite her feelings of antagonism for Lavinia, she wants Orin to settle down and marry his cousin Hazel. "I was selfish then. I was jealous, too, I'll confess. But all I want now is your happiness, dear. I know how much you used to like Hazel" (The Hunted, Act 2) Indeed, there are other arguments, may be Christine has said that to get free and marry Adam when there is no one to disturb the peace of her life. She is the extremely unfaithful and remains disloyal to her husband and even to herself as a mother.

She poisons her husband when he returns from war. When Lavinia doubts her and accuses her of the murder she even tries to prove that her daughter has gone out of her senses. But we may feel, during the course of the play that she is in deep love with Adam. She really wishes to settle down with him: "I am glad, too!--that he has left us alone! Oh, how happy we'll be together," (Ibid) But Lavinia is always there to spoil all her plans. Christine at the end has to commit suicide when Orin kills Brant.

3.3.1 At the Crossroad of Feminine Purity and Personal Fulfillment

When the selfish mother, Christine, fails to fulfil her motherly duties towards her children, they become subject to certain psychological fixations leading to Oedipus complex or even Electra complex. Lavinia is the prime victim of this fixation whereas Orin is also no exception to this complex. Both of them suffer under the influence of this complex. Consequently, hatred spread all over the house and brings a curse, which haunts all the family members into inescapable fate. The whole family is ruined just because of the hatred of Christine towards her husband and then on its turn to her own children. Under such a deep emotion of hatred, she drives her daughter away from her. Lavinia "was born of" her mother's *disgust* of her father, the man she hated. Christine admits that she is the wife of a man she badly hates. Christine, on the other hand, blames Lavinia of playing treachery on her own mother.

CHRISTINE--… I've watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you're doing now! You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always schemed to steal my place! (Homecoming, Act 2)

Although O'Neill was perceived early on as a master of stark, realistic tragedy. His understanding of the dark, labyrinthine side of human nature and of its limitations were, probably, unmatched by no other American dramatist at that time, the fact that assures him preeminence.

In *Mourning becomes Electra,* most of the action takes place in or outside the Mannons residence in New England, in either spring or summer of 1865 or after the Civil War, except for Act IV of The Haunted, which has its action in the seaport. The play when Orin is burdened with the feeling of guilt of killing his mother, he commits suicide blaming his mother’s death on himself. None of the Mannons but Lavinia is still alive. She has no one beside her except for heaps of her family falling apart. Then, in order to punish herself and purify her soul from the

sins she has made, she comes to separate herself from the outside world of the Mannons and lives in dark loneliness.

The play may be considered as a tragedy because of the doom challenging of its characters. Normally, a tragedy involves suffering, failure and death, and this is what O'Neill has put forth. A family affair with its complexities in which each member is facing some conflicts with others and his own self facing failure and death, their hate and revenge found to be ruling over their love lives. Lavinia and her mother Christine are two major feminine characters in the play, yet with two diverged roles. After avenging her father's murder, Lavinia would have been able to carry on her life with the man she loved but she preferred to punish herself by burying herself alive in the Mannon's Tomb. Christine on the other hand, who wants to fulfill her desire as a woman by planning her escape with Brant ends up by committing suicide to purify her soul from the sin of adultery.

In case of husband and wife relationship, we find that Christine never receives the love she desires from her husband. She is often left by Ezra who pursues his own prestige and power, consequently, she feels lonely, rejected and disgusted towards her husband.

In the case of parents and children, we find the Electra and Oedipus complex. A form of love expressed by intimate attachment of a daughter towards her father or a son towards his mother. This Electra and Oedipus complex develops within a variety of emotional angles, ending up to form a kind of two opposing forces – son-mother and daughter-father whenever the relationship between the parents becomes difficult. The fact that may result in and Oedipal Triangular: Ezra – Christine – Orin versus Ezra – Christine - Vinnie

Besides, the feelings of jealousy comes together with such attachment. The above phenomenon prompts hatred and revenge in the Mannons. Lavinia's problem with Christine makes her support her father against her mother. Such a complex makes a daughter love her father and

consider her mother a rival. She is jealous of everything her mother has, particularly Adam Brant, whom Lavinia loves as well. Lavinia does not realize her deeds will bring disturbances against others or herself. In the end, she has nothing but bitterness of a destroyed past and her own guilt.

In Orin's complex love, Christine is dominant. He feels he will lose his beloved mother if he cannot protect her and sacrifice himself for her. He is jealous of another person winning his mother's love including his father. The feelings, responsibility and jealousy turn to hate whenever he knows that his mother has Adam Brant with her. Though both Orin and Lavinia plan to murder Adam as a common goal, but their intentions where different. Lavinia's aim was to avenge her father's murder; whereas Orin's real intention was to free his mother from her lover to be able to regain her interest for him only.

The play exhibits raw reality, tragic in form, behind the façade of a great family. Hate and revenge mix with love and affection to lead to trouble and ruin in the Mannon family. O'Neill once gives a comment that "behind an inner turmoil inside a mask of human nature is a tragic reality which someday will come out to the surface**."** (Cited in Bogard & Bryer, 1988). The members of the Mannon family have their own turmoil, which later comes out to be destructive behavior against others or themselves. Not only the ruin of characters, which is interesting, but also the life they are emotionally experiencing.

3.3.2 The Paradigm of Matricide

Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Become Electra* is a trilogy of psychological tragedies capturing the mythical themes of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (originally performed in 458 BCE) in addition to the trials of Sophocles' *King Oedipus*. Perhaps O'Neill has used this mixture of myths to reinforce the darker side of a family history fraught with revenge, retribution and sadness.

Aeschylus' work begins with Agamemnon's return from the Trojan War[8], and his subsequent murder at the hands of his wife, Clytemnestra, and her lover, Aegisthus. The conflict between Aegisthus and Agamemnon reveals an aged hatred that, especially following the murder, locks the family into continuous oppositions. By the final play in the trilogy, this hatred develops into a power great enough to drive Orestes and Electra, the children of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, to commit the act of matricide. Once they kill Clytemnestra, and the pressure of the desire to kill her is replaced with the *miasma*, or pollution, of having killed her, Orestes and Electra recognize the immensity of their actions and immediately lose control and become hysterical. In fact, O'Neill's modern adaptation, which closely resembles to the Aeschylus' mythical framework, symbolizes purity, retribution, justice and fate.

Moreover, the relationship between Orin and Christine evokes elements of the ancient tale of Oedipus. In this ancient tragedy by Sophocles, Oedipus unknowingly kills his father, Laius, and marries his mother Jocasta. Eventually, Oedipus learns of his part crimes and upon learning that he murdered his own father, he tears out his eyes and leaves Thebes to wander Greece in sorrow.

By the evident use of the Freudian conception of the human psyche. Freud thought much of human behavior as dominated by the cognitive unconscious. In order to refine his theory, Freud invented a conceptual framework of the "self" comprising the id, ego and super-ego. Accordingly, he thinks that the instinctual trends are the 'id;' the organized realistic part of the psyche is the 'ego,' and the critical and moralizing function the 'super-ego.'" "The ego comprises our cognitive conscious, and acts to mediate the interactions of our cognitive unconscious, which contain the "id" and the "superego." The "id" is primitive, interchangeable

[8] The Bronze Age conflict between the kingdoms of Troy and Mycenaean Greece. The war existed in both history and mythology of ancient Greece and inspired the greatest writers of antiquity, like Homer, Herodotus and Sophocles.

and childlike, focusing on somatic pleasure and gratification. And when the super-ego is unable to suppress these desires, the id dominates our conscious selves." (McLeod, 2013)

This idea is echoed in O'Neill's work, where the main characters are driven by their primitive desires to pursue improper, familial relationships. Christine, for instance, engages in an adulterous affair with Adam Brant because he looks so much like her son, Orin. Her love for Orin arises out of motherly "instinct," "when he was born he seemed my child, only mine" (Homecoming, Act 2). Orin's romantic interests in his mother are rooted in his early psychosexual development. As a child, Orin also felt as if he had a stronger connection with his mother than his father, and although his mother deceives Orin by murdering his father, his love prevents him from committing matricide. When Christine commits suicide, however, Orin becomes hysterical and ruined with guilt. This eventually leads him to commit suicide. Hence, the play undertakes the same tragic atmosphere as the works of Sophocles and Aeschylus.

3.3.3 The Blessed Island as a Pre-Oedipal Realm

In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, it seems that the conflict between the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus (see chapter four) is characterized through the portrayal of the Mannon House and South Sea Island. As discussed earlier, the Mannon House symbolizes the puritanical demands of conformation and an obsession with the idea of sin and guilt. In contrast, the South Sea Island, as represented in the text is an antithesis of these demands. It is an ideal mode of existence, where the idea of sin does not exist. It offers to humanity whatever is denied in a structured society, the Dionysic life in which the human beings sing, dance, and find themselves in perfect harmony with nature.

The carefree islands of the South Sea are a most desirable locale for a vacation or honeymoon. The islands represents the only innocent object in the play, indeed, it is the last normal thing left in the mess of the Mannons. The Sea Islands are a place where sex is not seen as a sin and people live life freely, as nature intended people to do so.

This play was written in a setting where such actions were forbidden. It was also these islands where escaping to them with Christine Mannon, was a goal never achieved by two men, both who met a painful death. Orin Mannon and Captain Adam Brant who fell to the "femme fatale" that was Christine Mannon. In fact, Adam Brant wanted to take both Christine and Lavinia to "The Blessed Isles."

LAVINIA-- You said they had found the secret of happiness because they had never heard that love can be a sin.

BRANT-- so you remember that, do you? Aye! And they lived in as near the Garden of Paradise before sin was discovered as you'll fin on this earth! 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 mountaintops, 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 1)

O'Neill re-employs in various forms the conventional image of exotic islands in order to gain a balanced response from his audience, escape from unpleasant reality. Adam Brant speaks of these islands like a heaven that no one can go to and find joy. He tells Lavinia that he wants to take her there, the isles where innocence and hope can be found. However, these islands are the places where he promises Christine to go also, for he loves her. This messy love triangle only proves that getting to these islands of innocence is truly beyond the scope of morality.

Adam tells Lavinia of these islands only to drop any suspicion of adultery between himself and her mother. Christine Mannon and Adam Brant try to break out of the repressive world of the Mannons through seeking the sexual freedom. Sex in the Mannon household is associated with sin, and the only way that Christine and Adam can overcome this repressive attitude is to kill Ezra. But murder only brings murder. All of the characters' attempt to gain freedom and peace, and to find "the Blessed Isles," ends up in disaster. These Islands become a form of escapism for Christine and Adam after being caught by Lavinia.

CHRISTINE-- Don't talk like that! You have me, Adam! You have me! And we will be happy- once we're safe on your Blessed Islands! It's strange. Orin was telling me of an island- BRANT-- Aye-the Blessed Isles- Maybe we can still find happiness and forget! I can see them now- so close- and a million miles away! The warm earth in the moonlight, the trade winds rustling the coco palms, the surf on the barrier reef singing a croon in your ears like a lullaby! Aye! There's peace and forgetfulness for us there- if we can ever find those islands now!(Ibid,Act2)

Christine also realized that Orin had wanted to take her to the islands as well. What would be the outcome if she did leave with Adam and Orin found out? Christine loved Brant as well as her son but she decided to be with the captain in the end. She wanted to forget the crime she had committed and wished to escape her inevitable punishment. Above all, everyone in the play was looking for some form of escape through the South Sea Islands.

Lavinia, even though she seems to have the most dominant role in the play she too is looking for an escape, "Now Lavinia does not differ from the others in her attempt to escape into illusion; she tries harder than anyone else. She differs from the other characters in being herself the obstacle to her own happiness". (Sanchez, 2010)

In a household where the Oedipus and Electra Complexes prevail, only doom awaits them. In the scene Orin arrives home, his Oedipus Complex stands out vividly as he holds Christine's hand lovingly. He describes the island with the same dreaminess that Adam Brant had as he described the islands himself.

ORIN-- Someone loaned me the book. I read it and reread it until finally those islands came to mean everything that wasn't war, everything that was peace and warmth and security. I used to dream I was there. And later on all the time I was out of my head I seemed really to be there. There was no one there but you and me. And yet I never saw you, that's the funny part. I only felt you all around me. The breaking of the waves was your voice, the sky was the same color as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you. A strange notion wasn't it? But you needn't be provoked at being an island because this was the most beautiful island in the world- as beautiful as you mother! (The Hunted, Act 2)

Long after Ezra Mannon was cold-heartedly murdered, by his wife, and Christine committed suicide, Lavinia and Orin decided to go to the "Blessed Islands" themselves. It was there Lavinia changed into a beautiful woman.

LAVINIA-- I loved those islands. They finished setting me free. There was something there mysterious and beautiful- a good spirit- of love- coming out of the land and sea. It made me forget death. There was no hereafter. There was only this world- the warm earth in the moonlight- the trade wind in the coco palms- the surf on the reef- the fires at night and the drum throbbing in my heart- the natives dancing naked and innocent without the knowledge of sin! (The Haunted, Act1, Scene 2)

While Lavinia is describing the island to Peter, her soon-to-be fiancé, she describes the islands with the exact words Adam Brant once used to describe them to her. She wanted to go there with Adam Brant, but he was dead now. She had killed the man she loved the most. It was also the Islands, where she found peace and relaxation, where she could undergo a metamorphosis, from a block-like girl into a graceful woman, love on an island can change anyone.

3.3.4 O'Neill's Satire on Puritanism

Mourning Becomes Electra is a psychological dramatization of the evils of Puritanism. It is a play set in Puritanical surroundings of New England tough Puritanical people. The fact that creates an atmosphere of severity, inflexibility and firmness. It is not a careful historical approximation of New England, it is Puritanism, which O'Neill hated and understood through the eyes of his own generation. For him Puritanism represents the sum total of everything that was wrong with American Society. In the eyes of O'Neill, this Puritanism represents every kind of suppression, hypocrisy and shame behavior. O'Neill uses these hypocritical attitudes in the texture of the play. He represents the drama of love and lust with its tragic climax under the influence of hard geographical settings and strict people.

The members of the Mannon House represent a hard tradition bound family. Mannons are conservatives and class conscious except one member. O'Neill's satire, in fact, on Puritanism in the play is explored through the character of Christine. She is an outsider in their family; "she ain't the Mannon kind. French and Dutch descended, she is. Furrin lookin' and queer" (Homecoming, Act 1), to her their house appears like a sepulcher, full of puritanical ugliness, monstrosity and a temple of hatred.

For Christine, the Mannons have a complete Puritanical approach to life and relations at least on the surface level. Their Grandfather Abe established the business of shipping and made a wealth. The family became very rich and prosperous, and prominent in the community. But Christine is not as strict in the moral puritan code as the rest of Mannons. She did her best to bring emotion into the Mannon family but she failed.

David, Abe's brother, falls in love with a Canadian nurse Marie Brantome and marries her. For this crime, he is thrown out of the house. Even when Marie is dying of starvation, Ezra does not care for it. This hard heartedness and hatred expose their so-called puritan piety. Their theology has no sign of Salvation in it. The Mannon's way of living leads them to their catastrophe i.e. death. For example, Ezra says: "Life had only made me think of death…" And on another occasion he proclaims: "Life was a process of dying; being born was starting to die." (Homecoming, Act 3) They outwardly possess all the puritan virtues –industry, firmness, a clock-like regularity, social responsibility and careful avoidance of sensuality. There is no possible redemption for a sinner against this code of life. If one falls he is diminished forever.

In *Mourning Becomes Electra,* this puritanical belief is only in appearance. Otherwise, in actual life they are greedy and heartless. For instance, Puritanism believes in self-control and

sex restraint. But David has sex with a nursemaid; and Christine has adulterous relation with Brant. In actual life, they do not practice self-control. Sex is associated with the family curse. Abe Mannon throws out David for loving and marrying a nurse, a servant in the family. Abe Mannon's curse of hatred is inherited by his successors, Lavinia and Orin.

Orin, for example, shows the passionate attachment even towards his sister with sexual overtones. He proposes her that she should give up Peter and brother and sister live like Ezra and Christine. From a puritan point of view, such a relation would mean full damnation. Therefore, the curse begins with David and ends with Orin, both of them commit suicide out of a sense of guilt. Hence, the puritan approach to sex is hypocritical.

The appearance and reality of the puritan way of life become clear at the end of the play. The Mannons publicly represent a puritanical self-restrained behavior. But in practice they are dominated by hatred, passion and sex. Thus, O'Neill tears apart the puritan façade of responsibility to show their reality, what he wants to convey is that men are men and they are all led by passions and hatred. At the end, we can say that O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* is a result of his hate of puritan hypocrisy.

3.3.5 Symbolic Language between Myth and Reality

In spite of the play's classical derivation, O'Neill's basic conception for his main characters was established to reveal the emotional fabric of his family. O'Neill's emotional life during the late twenties was intermingled with such passion, frustration, guilt, mourning, and retribution that he felt himself ready to treat such themes in a drama on a large scale. In the formation of the trilogy, Lavinia would symbolize in many ways O'Neill himself as she lost in quick succession her father, mother, and brother in the same order that he had lost his own family.

lavinia says at the end of the play that she will lock herself away from the world and bind herself to the Mannon dead. So too O'Neill felt himself bound to and haunted by his own dead. Very shortly after Jamie, his brother's, death he was the last of the O'Neill's. He had, however, decided on a more formalized and stylized structure utilizing a ship – board scene at the center of the work where Christine and Adam agreed on leaving the town sailing to the Blessed Islands, to symbolize escape and release conveyed by the sea as he always sees it.

O'Neill 's making Lavinia the central character in the play is itself an interesting fact. What he wanted to create is a modern psychological drama rooted in Greek legend, exploring the advantages of up-dating the Electra tragedy. Yet, he creates a more interesting and expressive end to the fate of Lavinia if compared with the one of the original Electra. Although, Sophocles makes Electra as the central persona in his legend, but at the end, Electra's fate remains ambiguous in accordance with the great role she plays in the tragedy. Lavinia's mourning in the last play of the trilogy is the central theme in the whole story. Lavinia's gloom and sadness, her loneliness and retribution is exactly what O'Neill wants to convey. Therefore, he wonders if it were possible to achieve any modern approximation of the Greek sense of fate into such a play in a time when an audience did not believe in divine retribution or gods. He attempts to write a play that would be real and acceptable to a modern audience and at the same time permit him to combine reality with his dark symbolic tone in both his structuring of the play and in the creation of his characters.

There are several sets of symbols that O'Neill used in structuring his setting and which, support and fuse into one another brilliantly. The most striking and important symbol of the play is the Mannon house itself. The action of the scenes alternate within and without the house, beginning

on the exterior in Act I of "Homecoming" and moving inside in Act IV of "The Haunted". This is the house that was built by Abe Mannon, whose very name and whose actions come to symbolize Agamammon or materialism, when he forced his brother David and Marie Brantome to flee. Marie Brantome was a beautiful nurse who had come to the Mannon house to nurse a sick chiId. David Mannon fell in love with her and so did Abe. Abe in his jealousy and vengeance forces his brother and Marie to leave the house. As a result, it had become a house where no love could resist. "*It was a big white Puritan house with great white columns whose shadows cast black bars on the gray wall is behind them."* (Homecoming, Act 1) To Christine Mannon the house is a tomb to which she must return and can not even brighten with flowers from the greenhouse.

CHRISTINE-- I've been to the greenhouse to pick these. I felt our tomb needed a little brightening. Each time I come back after being away it appears more like a sepulchre! The "whited" one of the Bible--pagan temple front stuck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness! It was just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity--as a temple for his hatred. (Ibid)

In Act I of "The Hunted" it becomes a strange white mask in the moonlight, where the murdered body of Ezra Mannon now is lying inside. Decadence is over the walls, and in the late afternoon when the sun is setting, the windows take on a burning stare as of revengeful eyes.

To Lavinia it becomes the TempIe of Hate and Death where there can be no rest and in which she will shut herself ·away from the world of the outside and the living. The strict Puritan land where love is denied as an effective example of corruption. Even to Ezra Mannon it was a white temple of death, a charnel house reminding him of the early white-washed Puritan church that he had attended as a boy in which he was taught that life began with dying, that even the purpose of life was death.

MANNON--That's always been the Mannons' way of thinking. They went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying. Being born was starting to die. Death was being born. (Homecoming, Act 3)

Although, the Greek temple has been always a symbol of peace and life, but the Atreus house, in spite of its Greek-like architecture, the evil sinful spirit of its inhabitant corrupts it. Ezra's murder by Christine, Adam Brant's murder by Orin and Lavinia, Christine's suicide, and Lavinia's doom to live alone in the house without love. Such a house was, indeed, a Haunted temple that wore a white mask to hide its black interior.

What is ironic in the situation is that the Mannons in their own way are prisoners who must die because of certain truths that are forced upon them, or that they bring upon themselves. Ezra saw war as a symbol of glory, “all victory ends in the defeat of death” (Ibid) and by forcing Orin to share that view he destroyed his son.

O'Neill's masterful symbolic usage is also seen in his use of “the Chorus”, he has combined its function with the brilliant revelation of the character of Seth Beckwith. Seth has been the Mannon handy man for years, and as such he is really a part of the family; he is able to *see* what the family really *is*. He is highly respected by Lavinia and at the same time, he is the leader of his village. On the realistic IeveI Seth is the famiIy- gardner who is taking his friends on an interesting tour into the Mannon house wherein he gives the exposition concerning the Mannon background. However, on the symbolic level Seth is the leader of the group who together make up the counterpart of the Greek Chorus. Although Seth’s actions are so limited but he is a powerful contributor in revealing some of the hidden secrets of the Mannon family. O'Neill 's

New England Chorus stands calm, suspicious, and unmoved by the fates of the Mannons. Yet it is through this Chorus that the exposition is handled. For example, at the beginning of the play, it is Seth and his companions, from the village, who give us an image about how the House of the Mannons looks like, while they are in their tour around it. It is Seth also who warns Lavinia about the direction of Adam Brant's identity. He had seen in Adam's face the face (and perhaps the fate of a Mannon).

LAVINIA--(*abruptly*) Well? What is it about Captain Brant you want to warn me against?
SETH--I believe anything you tell me to believe. I ain't been with the Mannons for sixty years without learning that. (*A pause. Then he asks slowly*) Ain't you noticed this Brant reminds you of someone in looks? (Homecoming, Act 1)

Perhaps the Marie Brantome of the tragedy whose forbidden love and aggression brought down the curse upon the Mannons, especially to Lavinia who has been left alone to confront her fate in solitude. The curse is passed on to Ezra, a diligent lawyer-judge greatly respected by the people. Ezra Mannon is presented as a former judge made wealthy by the sea (shipbuilding) which will ultimately destroy him symbolically through Adam Brant, who seeks the Happy Isles.

Before going to the war Ezra was a man deeply rooted in the New England tradition of self-repression. He returns from the war trying to shake off the Puritan background in him only to find that his lustiness has changed Christine's romantic love for him into deep loathing. She has transformed her love for Ezra to her son Orin, and when he was taken from her, to Adam Brant.

Adam's name symbolizes the Adam of the biblical story, and his name means "Man". Then he runs away to the sea where he finds for a few years in the South Sea Islands the innocent garden of Eden. Adam After being learned of his mother's death which had been brought about by revenge, the curse passed on to him. He must now seek vengeance. This vengeance leads to an illicit love affair with his cousin's wife Christine Mannon. They try to find the happy isles together, but the murder of Ezra brings over their doom.

Orin and Lavinia murder Adam and the curse passes on to them as a result. Orin's perverted love for his mother and his inability to understand his father along with his experiences with death in the war lead him to want only peace and escape. The symbol of his escape is the enchanted isles with first his mother in dreams and with Lavinia after Christine's suicide. Orin cannot succeed in his attempt to follow his father's footsteps to become a Mannon. The love Christine could not give to her husband and daughter, gave it too strongly to Orin, a love with which Orin could not cope, and along with the Mannon curse, helped to destroy him. In a sense, Christine symbolizes a kind of female martyr who was crucified by her husband's Puritanism, who had become for her the symbol of death.

Lavinia was the last and strongest member of the Mannons, she was supposed to put an end to the crimes of all the Mannons and end the curse. Symbolically she is her father's son instead of Orin because she has his same bearing, walks with his military air. She seems to deliberately deny any natural characteristic that would be a clue to her as a real woman. Throughout the play, she becomes the avenging daughter too much in love with her father, and an evil avenging mask, when she threatens Christine with exposure. Her flaw and hubris is in full operation, when she persuades Orin to kill their mother's lover. The more intensely Lavinia hates her mother the more she symbolically becomes her mother's rival. After Christine's death she

returns from the islands appearing precisely as Christine did in the first scene of the play; a voluptuous woman. She has psychologically and symbolically adopted the character of her mother, perhaps subconsciously desiring to become her father's wife at last.

3.4 Conclusion

O'Neill believed that theater should be taken as serious art rather than pleasant diversion for the purpose of entertainment. He wanted to affect his audiences, make demands on them, and bring them to the experience. In *Mourning Becomes Electra,* he freely uses new experimental and innovative techniques such as internal monologues, soliloquies, the chorus, mythic plot and themes and taboo subject matter to enhance the beauty of his drama.

From the start, O'Neill's expressionistic tone is highly recognized, he is interested in the inner drama of his characters more than their physical or social world, and he evokes psychological states through powerful metaphorical settings. He often depicts the subjective emotions and responses rather than the objective reality. Breaking away from the literal representation of nature in order to express more subjective attitudes or states of mind, O'Neill tends to explore emotional themes, to convey the qualities of fear, horror and mental disorder of his characters.

O'Neill's experiments and his serious look at the ugly particles of truth were theatrical blows in a broader cultural revolution. He worked during a time of radical change and cross-fertilization in the arts, sciences, and social thought, breaking with ancient assumptions and conventions.
Finally, what O'Neill wants to reveal through his play, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, is the common troubles and crises that any family in this world may face. It is all about jealousy between husband and wife, and brothers and sisters over their parent's love to them.

Nevertheless, O'Neill's purpose behind his use of the Electra legend and the oedipal complex at the same time is nothing but an attempt to, aesthetically, treat the chaos life and uncertainty that the Americans witnessed in a period of war, loss and complete destruction, and still his own ruined life is the best evidence of all.

CHAPTER FOUR

WEARING MASKS TO UNVEIL REALITIES IN "*THE GREAT GOD BROWN*"

CHAPTER FOUR: WEARING MASKS TO UNVEIL REALITIES *IN "THE GREAT GOD BROWN"*

4.1 Introduction

The Great God Brown is a Greek masked play, it was first produced in New York City in January 23, 1926 where Eugene O'Neill presented the audience with a new kind of theatrical experience in a very innovative way. The key element in this play is the use of the mask. Masks appear in several of O'Neill's early plays, such as *The Hairy Apes, All God's Chillun Got Wings* and *The Fountain*, serving not as a mere technical and aesthetic element, but rather as a way to explore hidden conflicts of human nature.

O'Neill uses the mask as a tool to dramatize the duality of personality and the human subconscious. His objective is to reveal the inner dualism through the conflict between the conscious and the subconscious using the mask as a symbol to manifest this kind of psychological struggle.

4.2 Significance of the Mask in Greek Theater

Thespis was the first of the Greek drama writers to utilize a mask. It is thought that the tradition stemmed from the Dionysian cult. In ancient Greek theater, only men could perform as actors. This meant that when males played female roles, they needed some way in which to convey this. They also needed some way to convey emotion, so they used masks.

Many actors also played multiple roles in Greek plays, so the masks helped differentiate between the various characters they were playing; when they switched characters, they switched masks. It is also thought that the design of the masks helped project the voices of the actors when they performed, making it easier for everyone in the amphitheater to hear them. For those sitting far from the stage, the masks helped convey emotion through their intensely exaggerated

expressions. The chorus members also wore masks in Greek theater, though their masks were distinctly different from those of the main actors.

Nonetheless, the most significant role of the mask was that of transformation: an ordinary man could go beyond his real identity and become a mythological hero or a foolish old man or a beautiful young woman, a god or a slave. In this disguise he could say and do things that could not be said and done in everyday life, and could present to the audience events, actions and ideas that were horrifying or ridiculous, inspiring or fantastic.

Throughout the Greek world, performances of plays were usually connected with worship of the god Dionysus. It is the idea of transformation that lies at the root of this association. Although Dionysus is often thought of simply as the god of wine, it is the transformational power of wine that most characterizes him. Dionysus was fundamentally the god of changeability: his spirit let the grapes become wine, human becomes animal, and order becomes chaos. (Sater, 2006)

Probably, this changeability and fragmentation of the personae reflects a lot the modern man. Many playwright have been influenced by the Greek tragedy legacies for it hugely resembles the chaos life of the twentieth century that the western world witnessed. In particular, Eugene O'Neill is credited to be the first modern playwright in using the mask of Dionysus as a major aesthetic component of his drama to reflect American societal history.

4.2.1 Tradition of the Dramatic Mask

The mask has long been a symbol of theater; its tradition as a theatrical or physical convention is long and varied; it spans the entire history of the Classical Theater, its primary function has been to convey an objective image of character action to both the actor and the audience.

As a dramatic convention, the mask continued, for various ages, to be the principal means for projecting character action, though in a much more complex and subtle manner. Through its

manipulation of dramatic elements, in particular the element of thought, the dramatic mask projected character action from both an objective and subjective point of view, though the latter is the most important for it requires greater creative cooperation from the actor.

The tradition of the masked performer goes back far earlier than drama itself. As previously mentioned, the custom of mask-wearing began as part of the ritual associated with primitive dance. It was considered as a means for attracting the spirit of the gods, it was also used to represent an animal to be killed asking for desired events in return.

> *The mask was not originally used as a means of personification, but for the exaltation of the individual and to reveal the power of the god captured in its very essence. An analogous sense of mystery is the prime emotion of the animal mask, where the individual or group wearing the mask assumes certain qualities of the beast itself, qualities also inherent in man but suppressed under normal social conditions. In dance and in ritual, these submerged qualities are allowed to surface, as everyday life is forgotten and the marvelous takes over." (Walton, 1980: 171)*

The significance of the mask associated with primitive ritual was essentially its capacity to effect change. The change brought about by the wearing of the mask manifested itself not only within the wearer, but also outside in the world he lived in. The primitive mask allowed its wearer the power and freedom to perform unconventional acts. Indeed, the mask's dichotomous combination of elements existed since then, in spite of the fact that the mask itself was made from natural materials, yet it was granted as a supernatural power. As a device of transformation, it enabled its wearer to transcend reality and experience another one of his own creation. Actually, the acts associated with early mask-wearing were performed to effect change.

4.2.2 Tragic Mask in Greek Tragedy

Greek tragedy and comedy plays were performed in masks, it is believed that neither the actors nor the chorus ever performed barefaced. Greek theaters were much larger than their modern counterparts, and some theaters held over 14,000 spectators. On these grand scales, actors' tools for communication with the audience were entirely different from modern ones. Body language, facial gestures, and vocal tones, though very effective in a small, modern theater, would have been lost in the huge size of an ancient one. Instead, the actor wore a huge tragic mask to roughly depict his state of mind and relied on his speech to do the rest.

4-1 Tragic Mask of Dionysus[1]

- **The above picture shows the tragic theater mask, which is considered as one of the most famous and most important legacies of ancient Greek drama.**

Eventually, lengthy monologues were the only means available for character development. These passages contrast with modern drama, but in ancient times were entirely necessary. In addition, the theater provided no special effects, such as lighting, background changes, curtains, and sounds - the special effects in modern dramatic performance - were unavailable to the Greeks. Instead, all "special effects" had to be done through the script. Murder, natural disasters,

[1] Adapted from *World of Greek Art*, available at : artsedge.kennedycenter.org/interactives/greece/index.html

suicide, and battles all took place offstage; messengers then reported the results. Because of practical constraints, this was the only sensible way of doing the play. Modern readers, in contrast, often desire to "see" these important actions, as they are often the critical points in the tragedy. They take place off-stage not because of incompetence, but because of the limitations of the theater.

In ancient time, the sun provided lighting, whereas in evenings torches were used, more as properties in order to heighten the power of the appearance of certain passages or characters. Tiny movements and facial expression used by modern actors would have been invisible to the audience. Gestures had to be large and sweeping and costumes had to be large and flowing in order to allow free, athletic movement, and to make a strong visual impression upon the audience. As facial expression would have been lost beyond the first few rows, masks were used. They were broadly and simply designed to be visible a long way.

The principal traits of characters portrayed could be expressed in the mask, and a simple convention arose whereby types of character had their own types of mask. There was the protagonist, the noble man/woman; the messenger; the sightless seer, and the serious or careworn man, the figure of respect and responsibility. This convention of human types, a view of human psychology in a way, continued to shape theatrical presentation well into the modern time.

The use of the tragic mask did not seize as the Greek civilization vanishes, but remained highly used in different modern plays as part of aesthetic devices. In the 1920's, many plays featured the issues society faced at that time, with the most extreme criticizing society itself. For example, Eugene O'Neill who sensed it was materialism that underlay the issues of the time, burying the human soul in the sands of greed, analyzed the depth of the human mind in his work using the mask as a tool to achieve that. O'Neill used the mask in various plays, mainly in *The*

Great God Brown and he was deeply influenced by its use in Greek tragedy and Japanese Noh Theater[2].

4.2.3 The Cult of Dionysus

According to Greek mythology, the original rite of Dionysus is almost universally held to have been a "wine cult". It is concerned with the cultivation of the grapevine, and a practical, understanding of its life cycle -embodying the living god - the creation and fermentation of wine - the dead god in the underworld - and the intoxicating and disinhibiting effects of the drink itself, believed to be a possession by the god's spirit. (Naeema, 2008)

The Theater of Dionysus at Athens was situated in the open air of the southern side of the Acropolis; it was within the old temple of the god Dionysus, who thus gave the theater its name and whose image watched over the dramatic performances of the Great Dionysia. An altar of the god stood in the center of the dancing-floor (orchestra). Plays were performed outdoors, in daylight, before an audience of 10,000 or more at festivals in honor of Dionysus. The traditional "Comedy/ Tragedy" masks had been and are still used now as a universal symbol for drama. They symbolize theater in memory of its origins in ancient Greece. They represent the two sides of Dionysus, as well as the two effects of wine: joyous revelry, and dark sorrow.

The paired masks of Comedy and Tragedy, in fact, become symbols of theater since then. They reflect the extremes of the stage, and in their stylized simplification of emotions, the extremes of the human condition.

[2] Noh is derived from *nō*, meaning "talent" or "skill". It is unlike Western narrative drama. Rather than being actors in the Western sense, Noh performers are simply storytellers who use their visual appearances and their movements to suggest the essence of their tale rather than to enact it. Little "happens" in a Noh drama, and the total effect is less that of a present action than of a simile or metaphor made visual. The educated spectators know the story's plot very well, so that what they appreciate are the symbols and subtle allusions to Japanese cultural history contained in the words and movements.

Masks conveyed a kind of static emotion that must have created an atmosphere very different from modern theater. Ancient masks were made from clay, wood or linen with the attached wig covering the entire head and they had wide-open mouths for easier speaking. The masks and dress were usually highly stylized and exaggerated making the characters easily identified even from a great distance.

Dionysus was the god of the mask, and the ritual principles of his cult may have allowed for masked acting to develop (once masks were associated with dramas at the city Dionysia). Perhaps most importantly, when viewed in an open-air space, the mask was an effective way of instantly establishing a sense of theatricality. The wearer of the mask was immediately separated from the spectators, and just the simple act of putting on the mask indicated a performance. Lastly, in an open-air space allowed the external environment to reinforce the aesthetic experience of watching drama, the mask provided a visual focus for emotional communication, and was able to stimulate a deeply personal response from the spectators.

4.2.4 The Mask as an Aesthetic Convention

Scholarly opinion is generally divided along two lines of thought concerning the introduction of the mask as a theatrical convention. While one group of scholars argues that, the mask was created to meet the purely practical needs of the Greek theatre, another group views the mask as a convention ideally suited to the aesthetic demands of early Greek drama.

Those scholars who suggest that the origin and development of the mask was essentially an aesthetic phenomenon believed that Thespis invented the mask merely as a means of disguise; instead, they hold that the theatrical mask cannot be divorced from its ritualistic heritage of mysticism and magic. Above all, the overall function of the mask, from primitive ritual to contemporary theater is that the mask has been always considered to be a device for distinguishing between the character and the actor. Because the Greek dramatist was

"concerned not with the individual in his own right but with 'the realized type,' the mask was able to convey just as much as the dramatist wished to convey in depicting the persons in his play." (Cited in Walcott, 1976: 56)

> *How was the audience to distinguish the "real person" from the "character" portrayed, between the actor-as-himself and the actor-as-character? Especially when the playwright was himself an actor. The ancients had to resolve the problem of actor-character separation before the theatre could become a firmly established institution. The solution the ancient world found was that the mask is… basically the tool of impersonation, at once hiding the face of the performer and projecting that of the "character" demanded by the play. (Cohen, 1980: 13)*

As a tool of impersonation, the mask is considered to be a convention which enables the actor to separate himself from a particularized ordinary identity in order to become a symbolic image of a more universal condition. “There is no doubt that, in practical terms, the mask greatly facilitated the unique problems of the ancient theatre: it permitted several characters to be performed by a single actor; and it enabled the male actor to create female characters in an effective manner.”(Chinoy & Cole, 1970:4)

Moreover, the Greek dramatist was not concerned with presenting a present-time reality nor was he interested in representing life in all its diversity; his characters were mostly drawn from Greek myth. He "wanted to present a conception of the principles or forces that operate in life."(Kitto, 1960: 219)

Considering this idea may be the leading point to O’Neill’s drama. Like the Greek dramatists, O’Neill has been always interested in using the mask as a tool to reveal the hidden sequences of the human life.

4.3 Sociocultural Background of the Play

The Great God Brown contains a prologue, four acts, thirteen scenes, and an epilogue. The action takes place in an American city during the mid-twenties. The play was written in the midst of the chaotic period the world faced during the 1920's. It reflects the social restlessness of the coming devastation that will hit the American population hard in the Great Depression[3], a restlessness that evolved from the fear deep inside every individual, which highly influenced the emotional affections of the human psyche. Indeed, various terms have been applied to the twenties such as fabulous twenties, roaring twenties, the machine age, the age of big business and standardization.

Big-Business became main purpose of all the Americans so that America was like one great market. It was the machine age when things and people became standardized. Since there was so much money available, it became popular to give generously to charities, especially if it would bring to the public attention the big success of the giver. Education became popular also, a college education was considered as a necessity.

Science was having a heyday; Darwin's theory of evolution[4] and Freud's psychoanalysis were much discussed at that time. Newspapers merged and became big business too. They served to entertain the public as well as to inform them. Even practicing sport became trend such as automobiling, golfing, boxing and swimming. Women on the other hand gained new freedoms and became completely different. They shingled their hair, began to use cosmetics, go to the

[3] The Great Depression (1929-39) was the deepest and longest-lasting economic downturn in the history of the Western industrialized world. In the United States, the Great Depression began soon after the stock market crash of October 1929, which sent Wall Street into a panic and wiped out millions of investors. Over the next several years, consumer spending and investment dropped, causing steep declines in industrial output and rising levels of unemployment as failing companies laid off workers.

[4] Charles Darwin was an English naturalist who studied variation in plants and animals. He explained his ideas on evolution in a book called, 'On the Origin of Species', published in 1859. Darwin's ideas caused a lot of controversy, because they can be seen as conflicting with religious views about the creation of the world and the creatures in it. The basic idea behind the theory of evolution is that all the different species have evolved from simple life forms, inherited variations that increase the individual's ability to compete, survive, and reproduce.

beauty centers, smoke and drink. These were, probably, some of the things that influenced the general philosophy of the twenties audiences.

Religion, on the other hand, witnessed a general confusion during this period and there was a weakening of loyalty to the church. In addition, it was a time just after World War I when there was a general decay in moral energy. The country was prosperous; golf and automobiling were popular sports and probably kept some people away from church.

4.3.1 Religious Doctrines

O'Neill, in *The great God Brown*, continually refers to religion. He chooses Dion Anthony, compounded of Dionysus[5] and St. Anthony[6] (the Pagan-Christian struggle for mastery) to indicate the nature of the war within Dion's character. His search for a new God to give meaning and stability to life was his absolute aim.

Throughout the play, Dion goes through a constant struggle to find a god to fill his needs, and therefore, he studied many of the world's great religions and philosophies particularly the Bible. This is so obvious through the quotations he paradoxically makes in the play from the New Testament.

DION-- … "Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest." (*He stares before him in a sort of trance, his face lighted up from within but painfully confused--in an uncertain whisper*) I will come--but where are you, Savior? … (*He tosses the Testament aside*

[5]In Greek Mythology, Dionysus is the god of fertility and wine, later considered a patron of the arts. He created wine and spread the art all over the world. He had a dual nature; on one hand, he brought joy and divine ecstasy; or he would bring brutal and blinding rage, thus reflecting the dual nature of wine.

[6]St. Anthony is one of the Catholic Church's most popular saints. He symbolizes the steady courage to face the difficulties of life, the call to love and forgiveness, and the total trusting love and dependence on God.

contemptuously.) Blah! Fixation on old Mama Christianity! You infant blubbering in the dark, you! (Act 1, Scene 1)

DION--(*like a priest, offering up prayers for the dying*) "Quickly must thou be gone from hence, see then how matters stand with thee. Ah, fool--learn now to die to the world that thou mayst begin to live with Christ! Do now, beloved, do now all thou canst because thou knowst not when thou shalt die; nor dost thou know what shall befall thee after death. Keep thyself as a pilgrim, and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not--belong! Keep thy heart free and raised upwards to God because thou hast not here a lasting abode. 'Because at what hour you know not the Son of Man will come!'" Amen. (Act 2, Scene 2)

Hence, religious and spiritual beliefs along with the scientific norms of the twenties contributed to form the very confused character of Dion and O'Neill's character as well. Human relationship with God is a constant theme in O'Neill's plays and the biblical doctrines are indispensable in his drama.

Eugene O'Neill was born in a complete devout Catholic family. At the age of seven he was sent to Mount St. Vincent boarding school sponsored by the sisters, and received an orthodox education. When he was fifteen years old, he experienced a complete devotional life praying God to heal his ill mother, but her morphine addiction made her health worst until she committed suicide.

Thinking of him that God did not hear his prayer, O'Neill abandoned his Catholic faith and began to explore a new god for replacing the old one. At an early age, he started reading various books of different European writers and thinkers such as Freud, Jung, Nietzsche, Strindberg and others searching for an answer to his questions and speculations. In 1883, after Nietzsche's

declaration "God is dead"[7] along with Darwin's theory of evolution, the Bible as the core of the Western Civilization and traditional values collapsed. However, all the philosophies and psychological dramas he read could not bring him satisfaction and joy, he eventually returned to the biblical doctrines. Above all, through the drama he presents, O'Neill often symbolizes the faithful Catholic follower who had never turned his back on God.

4.4 Modern Version of the Ancient Greek Mask

O'Neill's primary dramatic interest always lay in his desire to present the tragedy of life. The basis for O'Neill's tragic vision, this time, is profoundly Nietzschean. "For Nietzsche, life remains strange and difficult to be understood, his dominant image to portray the world is an abyss into which one cannot see due to its immense size and depth."(Holman, 2007) In *The Great God Brown,* it is the inner structure of the human being that O'Neill was mostly interested in showing. He uses the mask to show the aesthetic element in the play which build up the characters personality.

> *A mask, normally, is a form of disguise. An object frequently worn over or in front of the face to hide the identity of a person and by its own features to establish another being. This essential characteristic of hiding and revealing personalities or moods is common to all masks. As cultural objects, masks have been used throughout the world in all periods since the Stone Age and have been as varied in appearance as in their use and symbolism.*[8]

[7] The meaning of the phrase is often misunderstood — many have interpreted that Nietzsche believed in a literal death or end of God. Nietzsche's works, instead, express a fear that the decline of religion, the rise of atheism, and the absence of a higher moral authority would plunge the world into chaos. The western world had depended on the rule of God for thousands of years — it gave order to society and meaning to life. Without it, Nietzsche writes, society will move into an age of *nihilism*. Although Nietzsche may have been considered a nihilist by definition, he criticized it and warned that accepting nihilism would be dangerous.

[8] (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2000)

In Greek theater, which O'Neill profoundly respects, the mask served, among other things, as a purely practical purpose. A kind of disguise that enabled the characters to say and do things that could not be said and done in everyday life.

It is generally accepted that tragedy in ancient Greece developed out of Dionysian cults and that it remained under their influence for a long period of time. "Real tragic theatre was born in Athens under the wings of Dionysus as the 'masked God'. Tragedy mainly appeared in communities that worshiped the underground Dionysus, an absent deity replaced and represented by its mask." (Naeema, 2008) May be this is the reason why tragedy always faces the world of the dead, death and nothingness. While Dionysus is in the underworld, people are left waiting for his return, helped by his mask, which serves as an instrument for transgression.

In essence, O'Neill aims at expressing the psychological problems and the nothingness he observed in the lives of his contemporaries by using the mask as a metaphor. O'Neill was a man tortured by his own life's history. The religious upbringing, the bitterness toward the father, and the great love for the mother conditioned his personality and motivated his desires and goals.

Perhaps the most important influence on O'Neill's sensitivity to the motif of masking is his mother's morphine addiction who suffered a lot from severe depressive moods, even before Eugene's birth. It is said that Ella never overcame the loss of her father, and she tried to deny it by marrying his friend, with whom she often behaved daughterly. Indeed, her incapacity to face that loss was the central feature of her personality and the foundation of her addiction.

Ella's weakness became more serious after her second son, Edmund, died at the age of two. After that, she aborted several pregnancies, and Eugene was born mainly because she could not resist her husband's wish to have a large family.

During the pregnancy, she was all the time waiting and hoping for a daughter, but the baby was Eugene. He himself overheard his mother admit that she had never wanted him. After Eugene's birth, Ella was prescribed morphine, which in those days was standard procedure in cases of serious pain. Soon she became addicted. Despite numerous treatments, she could not solve that problem for the next twenty-five years.

O'Neill's mother addiction was one of the most important secrets in his life. He started drinking after his brother revealed to him the reasons of their mother's unusual behavior and O'Neill's own connection to it. O'Neill thought himself responsible and believed, if he had not been born, his mother's addiction would never have happened. It is, therefore, likely that guilt was in the core of his self. He carried on his life believing that his birth had landed his mother in hell, the hell of guilt feelings he could never escape.

One of the most important roots of O'Neill's personal problems was in the mental absence of his mother during the formative months of his life; the morphine that reached him during breast-feeding may have influenced his personality. His mother's face and his mental representation of her consisted of a lifeless image that may never resemble to a human face.

Moreover, O'Neill's mother attempted suicide during her adolescence, and again while she was trying to give up morphine. Even Eugene, on his part, made several suicide attempts during his youth. Furthermore, he had serious problems with alcohol for so many years as he loosed a loved person. Presumably, these are the deepest issues that formed his personality, and at the same time, the most powerful reasons for his interest in masks.

4.4.1 Hiding Faces and Revealing Facts

Through his use of the mask in *The Great God Brown*, O'Neill's purpose is not to hide the reality of people but to show and reveal what is hidden and invisible behind people's real masks. He usually uses the mask as a tool to let his characters talk freely, break the rules, and reach what is forbidden. The mask is not only used as a cover to hide the inner human soul, but as a symbol to reveal the deep inner conflict, to represent the allusion of the inner human psychology deep inside the mind. For O'Neill, the fact of masking is nothing but unmasking, unveiling and treating reality as it is.

> *O'Neill said that masks were the modern dramatist's best solution to 'express those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probing of psychology continue to disclose to us.' Masks permit the expression of 'psychological insight', since human beings wear masks to hide secrets or truths about themselves; 'unmasking' allows such truths to be revealed to the audience. (Sater, 2006)*

O'Neill seems to be trying to tell several stories in this one play, but mainly it is a satire on materialism, which was "the god of the day". William Brown is the huge success of the play, the accumulator of wealth and position. To William Brown and his parents money and social prestige are the most desirable things in the world. Dion, in contrast, seems to take the attitude that wealth and position are of no value unless creative ability is also present.

The play focuses on the lives of three main characters: Dion Anthony, a failed artist; his wife, Margaret; and Billy Brown, a successful architect and friend to Dion and Margaret. Throughout the play, these characters wear masks that serve several purposes. They help the characters hide and thus protect their weak inner selves. Yet, ultimately, the tensions that result from not being able to reveal their true selves cause the characters to suffer and further isolate themselves from

each other. Indeed, the play presents an interesting study of the inner workings of the human psyche.

Problems in this drama are mainly concerned with the masks of the characters. The story particularly revolves around the main character of Dion Anthony. He is a man with closed character, struggling in his life. Dion has a mask with dark character, mostly cynical and mocking face that differs with his sensitive and hurt original face. His masked face is usually showed when he is with other characters, such as Margaret and Billy Brown. Cybel, Dion's mistress, is the only character with whom Dion is never wearing the mask. Dion unmasked self and masked one are conflicting with each other to create the dark characteristics of his character. Through masks, O'Neill tries to indicate the surface and the depth of emotion at the same time. When masks appear on stage, they function variously whether as symbols of inhumanity, as representative types of people, or as a protective skin.

In *The Great God Brown* the mask functions as a protective gear for Dion in dealing with the outside world, the real character of him is still the same. The mask creates the presence of another character while at the same time Dion is still Dion. He is conscious as the one who creates and wears the mask as well as conscious to all what is meant by the masked Dion Anthony.

Each character has valued Dion's mask in the story differently. The mask of Dion is treated as a protective possession for the owner. It is used to give protection from a shameful feeling and for not being looked down and humiliated anymore may be because of bad memories from childhood. For Margaret, Dion's mask is a sign for the person whom she loves. For that reason also her feeling toward the masked Dion is never changed even after the death of the real Dion. For Brown Dion's mask is a real disguise that he wants to destroy in order to obtain Margaret's love. Brown is Dion's rival in getting the love from Margaret. After receiving Dion's mask following his death, Brown sees a way to obtain her affection. As for Cybel, it is a hindrance

from the real or true character of Dion. She is the woman who knows what lies beneath the mask of Dion, she is a woman of reason though, she also wears a mask. Dion has always been fascinated by the way Cybel conducts her life. In spite the fact that she seems lost but she is always strong. The only place where Dion could be Dion is in front of her.

The character of the unmasked Dion is hidden by his mask and his masked character. Right from the beginning of the play, the value of the mask for Dion is to make him look strong and hide his true self. The reason behind hiding his true character is related to his past as in his present. For the part that is related to his past, it is because of the shameful feeling he suffered long ago. Since their childhood, Brown has seen Dion as his rival; doing anything, he can to hurt him. For the part that is related to his present, it is because of the feeling he has for Margaret. He loves Margaret but the feeling between these two is mutual. Dion loves Margaret truly as Margaret, while Margaret only loves his masked character or his mask. In other words, Margaret loves only one side of Dion. Margaret falls in love with Dion's mask, never even recognizing the real face beneath it. Therefore, when Billy steals Dion's mask, Margaret mistakenly loves Billy thinking he is Dion.

What makes the true character of Dion important to him is that the unmasked character of Dion holds his feeling of love and gentleness. It is unfortunate for Margaret whom could not receive this gentleness and there is only one reason of it, the mask. The one Margaret loves is Dion's mask. Since gentleness is not one of the characteristics of the masked Dion, Dion never shows this gentleness to his wife Margaret. He always tries to show her his true self, but it seems that she is always afraid of accepting the unmasked Dion and tortured like seeing something dreadful.

In Act two, Margaret appears with her mask in her hand, but when she sees Dion unmasked she screams and puts on her mask; she cannot bear to look on Dion's face. Probably, even Margaret is wearing the mask to hide her suffering, to prevent herself from seeing the truth, which is

loving a mask instead of a man. She repeatedly tries to convince herself that she is in love with a normal man, deceiving herself that she is leading a happy family life.

4.4.2 Dion's Tragedy of Love

The tragic part of this drama is closely related to the feeling of love, especially Dion's love. It is a love trilogy that is circulated around three characters: Dion Anthony, Billy Brown, and Margaret. At first, the drama talks about the love that Brown has for Margaret, but Margaret, in fact, loves Dion. The love Margaret has is the love for the other Dion, the masked one; still Dion accepts Margaret's blindness to his unmasked one. This strange kind of love is the topic and the main idea of the play. The characters keep on struggling upon this kind of feeling, while trying to reach their objectives.

Dion Anthony's objective, as the leading character, is to make people understand what he wants. Nevertheless, his efforts to achieve such an objective ended with a failure. He tries to make Margaret accepts his real face but the fact that Margaret loves the mask of his face remains unchanged until the end of the play. Even after his death when he gives his mask to Brown to make Brown looks like the masked Dion, Margaret's love is still for the mask of Dion. As a rival, Billy Brown is never in a good term with Dion. Brown has been always stealing Dion's work or drawings claiming it as his own. He has been even obsessed to steal his love and wife Margaret. The fact that keeps Dion suffering all the time.

As the story reaches the crisis and then the climax, Dion is still incapable to achieve his objective to be understood, so he chooses death. His lack of strength makes him unable to continue being Margaret's husband anymore whom he passionately loves. Therefore, he chooses to pass his mask to Brown to give Margaret the man she can love forever. Hence, the theme tragedy of love along with the death of the protagonist and the failure of his entire attempts to become a successful artist is the main idea of *The Great God Brown.*

4.4.3 Dion's Duality of the Mask

Dion's internal conflict lies in the duality of his character. First, Dion is a person who does not know what he really wants in the first place. He has two conflicting characters, the unmasked and the masked one, and each is trying to monopolize the other. As his unmasked one is trying to keep and enjoy the love between him and Margaret, his masked one acts as a bad boy who is all the time striving to defy this feeling and confuse him further more. Second, as a husband, Dion fails to be close to Margaret and the secret lies in the mask, which forms a barrier that keeps him far away. His unmasked character is more delicate than his masked one.

The unmasked Dion loves and adores Margaret, whereas the masked one is in grief for this kind of feeling, tortured by his love and from the woman he loves. Presumably, Brown's hatred and jealousy is the secret behind all this gloom and darkness. Brown's hatred toward what Dion has, including his talent in drawing is the result of his suffering. In spite of all what Dion has, talent and Margaret at the same time, but at the end, because of his lack of strength, he could not do anything to fight Brown so he prefers death. It is worth to mention, however, that O'Neill uses the mask both as a veil, which represents the superficial image, as well as an exposition of the deep special characteristics of the character's subconscious.

4.5. The Dionysian/Apollonian Dichotomy

Eugene O'Neill has always been working on reviving the Greek theatre, out of men's worship of Dionysus, in a modern context and through modern values and symbols. O'Neill thought that modern men are not less delicate than the Greeks are. Modern men also need, like every age and culture, some metaphysical, religious, or even scientific supply that provide life with meaning and value. He tries to prove that in a world where money and prosperity comes first and what comes next does not even worth thinking of.

In Greek mythology, Dionysus is born by two mothers (Semele and Hera) associated with "twice-born". The rebirth of Dionysus is the primary reason he was worshipped in mystery religions, as his death and rebirth were events of mystical reverence. Dionysus is viewed as the promoter of civilization, a lawgiver, as well as the patron deity of agriculture and the theater. He was also known as the liberator who frees an individual from his normal self, by madness, ecstasy, or wine.

The Great God Brown opens by a party at casino in which dancing is mingled with singing and dating; similar to the common rites of worshipping the god Dionysus. All over the party, Dion daringly moves around in a gray flannel shirt, sneakers over bare feet and flannel trousers, an attractive contradictory to the formal one worn by everyone in this party. Though shabbily dressed, he is admired and envied by his peers, especially girls, with whom he appears as a master of the art of life.

When speaking together, Mr. and Mrs. Brown invoke the imagery of Zeus along with his vengeful wicked wife Hera. They harmoniously speak, judge the others and make plans for the future as if they were gods disregarding the citizens. Their extension on earth is their son Billy whom they desire to be an engineer so as to enlarge their business and develop it into a sophisticated form where Billy Brown is depicted as an Apollo. He is in the prime of his adolescence and energy. O'Neill describes him as a handsome, blond and blue-eyed, with a disciplined restraint. Like Apollo, he enjoys sight, reason, form and beauty, who does not think in art for one second.

Beauty for him is the beauty of his arrogance, nevertheless, “any meaning or value man may give to life could be said to be an illusion made by his ego. Through this ego, man may reduce the world into terms of his own being, his own logical or psychological prejudices. This is the illusion that O’Neill usually creates as a world space for his characters”. (Johnston, 2006)

This illusion, however, or this dream-like world is often expressed in the hero's pursuit of his own self, whereas the destruction of such an illusion or dream is always related to the hero's destruction symbolized whether through his death or his withdrawal from the social life.

In his play *The Great God Brown,* O'Neill wants to convey that life in itself becomes an illusion that does not worth the hero's struggle anymore. Therefore, he uses the mask as a tool to dramatize the chaotic life that the American lived at that time.

The play opens with a Prologue in which the Brown and the Anthony families are contrasted. Their contrast at this level is so important, since it sheds light on the contradiction between Billy Brown an Dion Anthony' s characters.

Billy's future has already assigned by his parents, he is supposed to become a successful architect – An Apollonian Deity—. Dion, on the other hand, who is always at quarrels with his father, has no future planned for him except from being obliged to follow the same path of Billy Brown and forced to become an architect as well. Dion's "spiritual, poetic, passionate, supersensitive" features allow him to become nothing but an artist – A Dionysian Deity—this paradox creates an eternal conflict between two forces, the Great God Brown and the Dionysian Dion Anthony. The sensitive poet Dion versus the successful businessman Brown.

In this context, the German philosopher Freidrich Nietzsche defined the terms Apollonian and Dionysian as two interrelated, yet opposing tendencies in the human personality. He characterizes Apollo – God of the Sun—with (truth, light, order, reason, analysis, control, and moderation). In contrast, he characterizes Dionysus – God of Earth and Spring— with (passion, spontaneity, imagination, excess, feeling, faith, and ritual).

In terms of drama, however, Nietzsche believes that the conflict between emotion and reason, between Dionysus and Apollo takes us back to the great age of Greek Tragedy, "the tragedy of

life is created when the two come together" (Holman, 2007). He considered the ideal, or rather the stable person as the one who maintained a balance between the opposites, drawing the strong points from each. He believes both qualities were necessary to form a normal person.

In his book *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche notes that neither the Apollonian nor the Dionysian world is capable of existing by itself independently without its opposite, each relying on the existence of the other for self-realization. The Dionysian when left to itself becomes completely self-destructive, while the Apollonian, when left to its own devices, becomes nothing but an empty representation of life.

The Dionysian needs the Apollonian world of appearance in order to prevent its collapse into nothingness, while the Apollonian needs the Dionysian world of intoxication and drunkenness in order to supply itself with passion and prevent itself from becoming a rigid representation of static appearances. As Nietzsche says, "the difficult relation between the Apollonian and the Dionysian in tragedy should really be *symbolized* through a fraternal bond between both deities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo, and Apollo finally speaks the language of Dionysus, and so the highest goal of tragedy and of art itself is achieved." (Nietzsche, 1872. Cited in Holman, 2007)

For O'Neill, the theater means writing plays in the spirit of the ancient Greeks. This means restoring to the theater its original function as a place of ritual and religious experience. Accordingly, O'Neill's aesthetic outlook or idea is two fold. It is an idea of the theater as a temple of the god Dionysus and an idea of life as an inevitable tragedy. The play is an attempt to celebrate life by embodying it in ritual forms. It is also an attempt "to reveal man's struggle-with its paradox of triumph in failure, against the mysterious force that shapes his existence and limits it." (Ghani, 2006: 21)

4.5.1 Paganism versus Deity

Applying Nietzsche point of view is highly seen in *The Great God Brown.* O'Neill's characters are more symbols than individuals. Cybel, for example, or Mother Earth, as Dion always calls her symbolizes pure paganism. She embodies nature, instinct, naïve sex without consciousness of guilt. "*She is a strong, calm, sensual, blonde girl of twenty or so, her complexion fresh and healthy, her figure full-breasted and wide-hipped, her movements slow and solidly languorous like an animal's, her large eyes dreamy with the reflected stirring of profound instincts."* (Act 1, Scene 3)

Cybel's character seems close to Dion's in its paganism and far from Billy's Puritanism. Cybel's character in this play looks like the female partner of Dionysus; however, Billy Brown represents her direct antagonist. She usually views him as the successful wicked businessman, who gains his success by exploiting the Dionysian genius of his life-long friend, Dion Anthony.

One may see then that O'Neill is trying to set both Cybel and Billy as two opposing psyches. Billy as the respected man who symbolizes the common self who lives the materialistic illusions of chasing prosperity, whereas Cybel as the prostitute who symbolizes wisdom with her sex instinct the same as the instinct of life itself. Only through stealing Dion's mask that Billy, for once in his whole life, gains insight into the superiority of the pagan ideals. It is only through Dion's mask that he could feel Margaret's love and tenderness.

Between Cybel and Billy, as two opposing philosophies, stands Dion Anthony. Dion's soul is drowned in a constant conflict between pagan acceptance of life and the Christian Devotion.

DION--(with a suffering bewilderment) Why am I afraid to dance, I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter? Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love, I who love love? Why am I afraid, I who am not afraid? Why must I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why

must I hide myself in self-contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ashamed of my strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship? (clasping his hands above in supplication) Why was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch or to be touched? (Prologue)

Christianity and Dionysian elements, while contradictory, fuse into harmonious unity and this is highly reflected in the usage of the names in the play. For instance, *Dion Anthony,* Dion refers to Dionysus and Anthony is taken from St. Anthony. It is worth mentioning, however, that Dion's Duality of character is apparent starting from his name. Although O'Neill criticizes Christianity, he relies on religion at the end. He himself explained his choice of such name in The New York Evening Post, in 1926 and says "Dionysus and St. Anthony is the creative pagan acceptance of life, fighting eternal war with masochistic life-denying spirit of Christianity."

4.5.2 Fate and Determinism

Dion's internal conflict lies in his worship of the Dionysian life that is full of laughter and joy against the Christian masochism, which is full of doomed righteousness. His love to Margaret is an Apollonian temporary solution that he later realizes after their marriage. He is all the time striving to prove himself as a true lover, yet as a father he was always a failure. The psychological war he was experiencing makes him increasingly incapable to do anything except drinking and gambling, as all the Dionysus followers do. After selling his entire father's property, he travelled with his family to Europe. Now he is unable to paint neither to support his family in anyway. After seven years of failed marriage and lost dreams, he comes back to find himself under the mercy of Billy Brown again.

Dion's whole struggle to exist in a materialistic society results in his exhaustion and frustration. His love has vanished like a dream and his creative spirit has been destroyed. His conscious of

the psychological truth around him drives him to feel the absurdity of his existence. It even changes the quality of his mask into *"a diabolical Mephistophelean cruelty and irony ... an ascetic, a martyr, furrowed by pain and self-torture."* (Act 1, Scene 1)

It is only on Cybel laps that Dion feels comfortable enough to face the tragedy of life unmasked. Cybel is the prostitute who tries to inspire Dion with her trust in life for its own sake and not for any other reason.

CYBEL--*(tenderly, stroking his hair maternally)* You're not weak. You were born with ghosts in your eyes and you were brave enough to go looking into your own dark--and you got afraid. *(after a pause)* I don't blame your being jealous of Mr. Brown sometimes. I'm jealous of your wife, even though I know you do love her. (Act 2, Scene 1)

Cybel gives Dion the strength to live, she makes him realizes and understands the necessity of illusion for life. She forces him to turn his poetic talent into an Apollonian Art. Consequently, he takes a job at Brown's office and starts working on his masterpiece: a design of Cathedral for William Brown.

DION--… Ha! And this cathedral is my masterpiece! It will make Brown the most eminent architect in this state of God's Country. I put a lot into it--what was left of my life! It's one vivid blasphemy from sidewalk to the tips of its spires!--but so concealed that the fools will never know. They'll kneel and worship the ironic Silenus who tells them the best good is never to be born! *(He laughs triumphantly*.) (Act 2, Scene 3)

Brown constant intention to understand the creative talent in Dion makes him envy his life-long friend, and take advantage of his design to become a famous architect. He has always envied not only Dion's talent, but also his love for Margaret and his children as well. His jealousy over Dion blinds him from realizing that what is a sign of life in Dion is precisely what makes him suffer.

DION-- … He wanted what he thought was my love of the flesh! He feels I have no right to love. He'd like to steal it as he steals my ideas--complacently--righteously. Oh, the good Brown! (Act2, Scene 1)

Dion, in fact, has been always aware of his friend's envy; the following lines show the reason behind the duality of the mask he wears.

DION-- … One day when I was four years old, a boy sneaked up behind when I was drawing a picture in the sand he couldn't draw and hit me on the head with a stick and kicked out my picture and laughed when I cried. It wasn't what he'd done that made me cry, but him! I had loved and trusted him and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of Man was born! Everyone called me cry-baby, so I became silent for life and designed a mask of the Bad Boy Pan in which to live and rebel against that other boy's God and protect myself from His cruelty. And that other boy, secretly he felt ashamed but he couldn't acknowledge it; so from that day he instinctively developed into the good boy, the good friend, the good man, William Brown! (Act 2, Scene 3)

While Dion was drawing a picture in the sand, Brown beat him on the back with a wooden stick and stepped on his picture and destroyed it. Dion was four years and from that time onwards, he decided to wear the mask of Pan[9] the *Bad Boy Pan* to protect himself from shame and to take revenge upon the *Good God Brown.* His revengeful spirit was not only directed over Brown but also over society as a whole, which had *"forbidden the light and warmth of the sun"*.

The conflict between Dion and Brown, as mentioned earlier, represents the confrontation between Apollo and Dionysus. When Dion died the conflict remain settled. Brown is absorbed

[9] In Greek religion and mythology, Pan is the god of the wild, shepherds and flocks, nature of mountain wilds, and companion of the nymphs. He is also recognized as the god of fields, groves, and wooded glens; because of this, Pan is connected to fertility and the season of spring. The ancient Greeks also considered Pan to be the god of theatrical criticism.

into Dion as Dion Brown. All the pain and suffering that Dion experienced evolves in Dion Brown. This is evidenced in the following lines:

BROWN-- … Come with me and tell her again I love her! Come and hear her tell me how she loves you! … I love you because she loves you! My kisses on your lips are for her! … Out by the back way! I mustn't forget I'm a desperate criminal, pursued by God, and by myself! (He goes out right, laughing with amused satisfaction.)

BROWN-- … Only to me will that pompous façade reveal itself as the wearily ironic grin of Pan as, his ears drowsy with the crumbling hum of past and future civilizations, he half-listens to the laws passed by his fleas to enslave him! Ha-ha-ha! … Ugly! Hideous! Despicable! Why must the demon in me pander to cheapness--then punish me with self-loathing and life-hatred? Why am I not strong enough to perish--or blind enough to be content? (to heaven, bitterly but pleadingly) Give me the strength to destroy this!--and myself!--and him!--and I will believe in Thee!

4.5.3 Behind an Idealized Self

In *the Great God Brown*, we can see how O'Neill is interested in showing the inner structure of his characters. In order to achieve that, he chooses symbolism as literary style to extend the scope and meaning of the paly beyond the limited boundaries of the straightforward realism. According to Mikics (2007), the symbolist tone is often one of composed beauty, airy moodiness, and abstraction. It is based on the near magical potency of the words that the poet has discovered from their everyday, utilitarian purposes. Symbolism for Mikics defends the obscure and the resonant against the clear objective description.

The symbolic setting of the paly, indeed, gives greater flexibility to its imaginative quality. Although O'Neill hardly tries to remain close to the real world of his characters, yet at the same time, he suggests some strange, fantastic ideas that lie buried in the subconscious.

O'Neill supplies his characters with symbolic masks that fit with their personalities, which they take on and off in relation to their actions in the play. He sees the mask as a means to getting at the inner reality of the characters. *The Great God Brown* then is a movement of characters towards the discovery and revelation of the fundamental problems of their existence" (Brooks, 2011). He imaginatively creates four major characters: Dion Anthony and Billy Brown, Margaret and Cybel. They represent pure symbols and their symbolic actions illustrate the major themes involved in the play.

O'Neill seems to hold the view that using the myth of Dionysus provides the key for understanding the dilemma of modern man who engages in a desperate battle to search for the meaning of a universe that has been destroyed by the dominance of the materialistic spirit and the collapse of the religious and moral values.

Using his setting in a symbolic manner, O'Neill illustrates his major themes in four acts, eleven scenes, prologue and epilogue, exhibiting some eighteen years in the lives of his characters. In the prologue, Billy Brown and Dion Anthony appear with their parents celebrating their graduation from high school. They stand on both sides, as two opposing families, of a square stage with one side open to the audience, along with Margaret with whom both boys are in love. This scene looks like a judgment in a court.

Mr. Brown, a victim of materialistic ambition, symbolizes the modern American father caught up in a world of chasing fame and prosperity. To fulfill his ego, he assigns his son's future convincing him to go to study architecture so that he can return to rule his father's business owned also by his partner Mr. Anthony. The decision is finally made and Billy will go to college

and like all the Americans, a dutiful son molded in the image of his middle-class materialistic father who is going to spend the rest of his life trying to find his identity.

Billy Brown is a handsome, tall and athletic boy of nearly eighteen. He is blond and blue-eyed, with a likeable smile and a frank good-humored face, its expression already indicating a disciplined restraint. His manner has the easy self-assurance of a normal intelligence.

As his father wishes, he wants to have a college education in architecture, though he does not have the artistic ability to be really successful. He is of the Christian religion, an introvert with no special talent. His greatest frustration is that he is unable to create.

As the Browns move off stage, a completely balanced scene begins as Dion Anthony appears with his mother and father. The Anthony's differ in many respects from the Browns, yet they share the same materialistic ambitions. Establishing a sound business according to Mr. Anthony's point of view is different from Mr. Brown. For him studying in colleges is nothing but a waste of time.

FATHER--I won't. I don't believe in it. Colleges turn out lazy loafers to sponge on their poor old fathers! Let him slave like I had to! That'll teach him the value of a dollar! College'll only make him a bigger fool than he is already! I never got above grammar school but I've made money and established a sound business. Let him make a man out of himself like I made of myself!

Dion's movements look nervous, "*His face is masked. The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face--dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately supersensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life--into the expression of a mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing and sensual young Pan."*

Mr. Anthony symbolizes men who have made their own way up the hard road and insist that their children would, or rather must do the same thing.

DION--(*mockingly--to the air*) This Mr. Anthony is my father, but he only imagines he is God the Father. (*They both stare at him.*)

It is only when Mrs. Anthony tells him that Billy is going to college to study architecture, Mr. Anthony in his jealousy insists that Dion will go as well and become a better architect than Billy. At this moment, as Dion stands mockingly confronting his father fatal judgment, watching his future collapsing in front of his eyes without being able to do anything, he realizes that his desire to become a painter can never be fulfilled. The fact that symbolizes Dion's downfall right from the beginning. Accepting his father's judgment without any single reaction may be seen as a sign of his lack of self-confidence and a symbol of his fragmented identity.

Billy Brown unmasked and Margaret appear, Margaret is wearing a mask that an exact reproduction of her face. "*She is almost seventeen, pretty and vivacious, blonde, with big romantic eyes, her figure lithe and strong, her facial expression intelligent but youthfully dreamy, especially now in the moonlight. She is in a simple white dress. On her entrance, her face is masked with an exact, almost transparent reproduction of her own features, but giving her the abstract quality of a Girl instead of the individual, Margaret."* She takes off her mask looking up to the moon that symbolizes Dion for her. She speaks only about him, how he beautifully writes poetry and plays, rejecting Brown's love and neglecting his presence. She puts her mask on again and says, "… Dion is the moon and I'm the sea. I want to feel the moon kissing the sea. I want Dion to leave the sky to me. I want the tides of my blood to leave my heart and follow him!" Her dream is to become Dion's wife, still she sees him as her little baby.

MARGARET--(*more and more strongly and assertively, until at the end she is a wife and a mother*) And I'll be Mrs. Dion--Dion's wife--and he'll be my Dion--my own Dion--my little boy--my baby! The moon is drowned in the tides of my heart, and peace sinks deep through the sea!

As Billy leaves, Dion enters and throws himself on a bench and slowly takes off his mask "*His real face is revealed in the bright moonlight, shrinking, shy and gentle, full of a deep sadness.*" Having removed the mask, which symbolizes the external side of Dion, he is now able to speak out of his real self.

DION--(*with a suffering bewilderment*) Why am I afraid to dance, I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter? Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love, I who love love? Why am I afraid, I who am not afraid? Why must I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why must I hide myself in self-contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ashamed of my strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship? (*clasping his hands above in supplication*) Why was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch or to be touched?

Margaret appears with her mask in her hands, but when she sees Dion unmasked she screams and puts on her mask. It seems that Margaret screams because she cannot bear seeing the real face of her lover. When Margaret marries Dion Anthony, she loves his persona, his outer mask, which contradicts the inner, unmasked Dion. Searching release from this prison, he runs to a prostitute and at the end dies drunken. Self-destruction frees him from his mask. Margaret does not love Dion but his mask instead. Dion's mask, in fact, is a guild that protects Margaret from seeing the weak, desperate, incapable Dion and makes her always feel safe to be in love with the ideal Dion in the ideal image she usually draws in her own mind. The moment she puts on her mask as she confronts Dion's naked face means that her mask enables her to see only the side she likes in Dion. Her mask is a symbol of her escape from reality. Later, quietly and bitterly, Dion puts on his mask and promises Margaret that he will never let her see his real face again.

On the contrary, whenever Dion and Cybel are together, they never wear their masks; Cybel is the only person with whom Dion can feel the real meaning of life. With her mask on, Cybel "becomes the rouged and eye-blackened, hardened prostitute that is reflected in her surroundings." O'Neill uses the physical setting of her parlor to link symbolically both character and theme. "*Cybel's parlor. An automatic, nickel-in-the-slot player-piano is at center, rear. On its right is a dirty gilt second-hand sofa. At the left is a bald-spotted crimson plush chair. The backdrop for the rear wall is cheap wall-paper of a dull yellow-brown, resembling a blurred impression of a fallow field in early spring. There is a cheap alarm clock on top of the piano.*

Without her mask, however, Cybel symbolizes the "Mother of Gods" or the goddess of fertility. O'Neill frequently refers to her as "Mother Earth" [10]; she is a symbol of pure paganism, Dionysus' partner, she is also a symbol of nature and instincts, "Dion can talk only to her without his mask; and their conversation symbolizes the most profound level of understanding, the first step toward spiritual fulfillment." (Brooks, 2011)

Probably, O'Neill's choice of the name "Mother Earth" also reflects his passionate love to his own mother, the source of complete tenderness and security that any individual needs in this earth. This is what Dion usually experiences whenever he is with Cybel, she supplies him with the motherly love that helps him throw his burden and enjoy the moment.

Seven years later, married to Margaret with three children, Dion is sitting reading from the New Testament "*his mask hangs on his breast below his neck, giving the effect of two faces. His real face has aged greatly, grown more strained and tortured, but at the same time, in some queer way, more selfless and ascetic, more fixed in its resolute withdrawal from life. The mask, too,*

[10] In Greek Mythology, the first Greek god was actually a goddess. She is Gaia, or Mother Earth, who created herself out of primordial chaos. From her fertile womb, all life sprang, and unto Mother Earth all living things must return after life is over. Gaia, as Mother Nature is always working to achieve and maintain harmony, wholeness and balance within the environment. Mother Nature heals, nurtures and supports all life on this planet, and ultimately all life and health depend on Her.

has changed. It is older, more defiant and mocking, its sneer more forced and bitter, its Pan quality becoming Mephistophelean. It has already begun to show the ravages of dissipation. He reads: "Come unto me all ye who are heavy laden and I will give you rest."… I will come--but where are you, Savior?

This passage symbolizes his lost faith in God. Even religion has failed to help Dion overcome his suffering. During the last seven years, when his parents died, his business failed as he has sold everything he owns to Brown, he has become a drunkard and a gambler.

MARGARET--… I was afraid the children would disturb you, so I took them over to Mrs. Young's to play… I suppose they'll be all right over there, don't you? (*He doesn't answer. She is more hurt than offended.*) I wish you'd try to take more interest in the children, Dion.

DION--(*mockingly*) Become a father--before breakfast? I'm in too delicate a condition… All right. I'll try.

Margaret married Dion fully aware that forcing him to respect the convention of marriage and duty would spoil his talent. Nevertheless, she keeps on lying to herself and to others. Her mask indicates that Dion is a successful painter and adoring father, she even refuses to confess the existence of Cybel in her husband's life. Margaret's mask symbolizes her strong desire of possession. To achieve her aim to become Dion's wife and partner, she is ready to destroy anything that threatens her even Dion.

At the end, Having failed as a husband and an artist, Dion bitterly accepts to work at Mr. Brown's Architectural office. It sounds like Brown's victory over Dion, poor Dion who has spent the rest of his life watching his life-long friend stealing his talent. As Dion dies, he tells Brown:

DION--(*sinking in his chair, more and more weakly*) I'm done. My heart, not Brown--(*mockingly*) My last will and testament! I leave Dion Anthony to William Brown--for him to love and obey--for him to become me--then my Margaret will love me--my children will love me--Mr. and Mrs. Brown and sons, happily ever after!

In this tragic scene of death, Dion becomes St. Anthony more than Dionysus. It is obvious how, in his last moments, he has regained his faith in God to find salvation before leaving this tragedy of living. As he is dying, his mask falls; Brown now can see Dion's real face and despises it. One may see that the falling of the mask here symbolizes "the fall of the modern man whose psychological struggle results in his mutual exhaustion but still mocking himself in order to feel alive." (Dimitrijevic, 2005)

Because of his love to Margaret and hatred to Dion, Billy accepts to wear Dion's mask. For the first time Brown wears a mask in the play. Symbolically, as he removes the mask of Dion, his face becomes tortured and hanged by the demon spirit of Dion's mask.

Mr. Brown has succeeded at last and achieved revenge on Dion for an unconscious hatred that he had always unintentionally held. In this situation, we can say that Brown symbolizes the American materialists who believe that with their money they can buy anything even love. Brown, indeed, can never admit his guilt to destroy Dion's picture in the sand, symbolically, it is the destruction of man's artistic creativity.

Brown certainly had always envied the creative soul of his friend. By stealing Dion's mask, he thinks that he is stealing his creative power and invading Margaret's love to him. However, by doing that he is leading himself towards his destruction. Having been accused of the murder of Dion Anthony, Brown is suffering the agonies of the damned and the pain of Dion's subconscious. All he can do at the end is to cry praying the heaven's mercy. Finally, Brown is

a symbol of the emptiness of the myth of the American materialistic success that focuses on building the exterior and superficial norms of life, which ends up with inwardly empty, resourceless, uncreative creatures.

4.6 Conclusion

Greek tragedies are based on history and mythology at the same time, many of their stories centered on a character's search for the meaning of life and the quest to understand the nature of the gods. The Greeks held many festivals to honor their many gods, particularly Dionysus. These festivals usually involved drunken men dressed in goat skins to symbolize sexual potency. Undertaking the tradition of the ancient Greek tragic mask in his play *The Great God Brown*, O'Neill brings us close to such an atmosphere. Dion Anthony who is in constant struggle with himself symbolizes the intoxication of the god Dionysus. He is the dreamer, the artist, the drunkard, the lover; he is the instinctual self of the whole play

Following the expressionistic technique, O'Neill uses the mask as a natural item of the self in order to create a reflection of a deep inner world. His characters are usually looking for their identity because their materialism is keeping them from feeling fulfilled. For correct understanding of the human psyche, however, O'Neill depends on informal moment of the characters such as, memories, obsessions and hallucinations. Hence, in order to help the audience grasp such clues he uses symbols and metaphors.

One may say at the end that the play is not Dion's tragedy. Dion's life as a whole is melt into sadness and his failure is obvious right from the beginning. Indeed, Billy's tragedy brings the tragic flaw of the Apollonian hero who desires to live the life of his Dionysian friend. His assumption of Dion's mask on the expense of the latter's death creates the tragic arc of the play.

In the Great God Brown, O'Neill brings his theme full circle by explicitly depicting that the demands placed on both character types by society and by female have only negative consequences. Struggling for Margaret's love destroys both Dion and Billy, and, in the end, it becomes clear that she loves neither of them, only her own vision of the ideal man.

O'Neill dramatizes the process of self-realization through the conflict of the human soul. The conflict that lies in the unification of Dion and Brown as two opposing characters. Brown who represents the conscious businessman and Dion signifies the depth of the subconscious. At the end of the play, both personalities fuse in one character, Dion Brown who wears the mask of self- realization. This duality of the mask symbolizes the unity of conscious with the subconscious in the life cycle. O'Neill intelligently uses this dualism of the mask in a form of a play to reflect the pain and suffering of the people in the devastation of the 1920's while incorporating Nietzsche's philosophy to reveal the uncertainty felt by the society and the people's fear by deeply examining the human agony of life.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The term “aesthetics” in the post-Kantian time has had a net of complex complications around it, modern thinkers, however, emphasized beauty as the key component of art and of the aesthetic experience, and saw art as necessarily aiming at beauty. They see aesthetics as the science of the sense experiences. They view the aesthetic experience of beauty as a judgment of a subjective but universal truth, yet the aesthetic appreciation of beauty is still the most perfect harmony of the sensual and rational parts of human nature. Moreover, modern aesthetics’ context signifies that art’s absolute function manifests immediately from the sense perception, the beauty of meanings we grasp through our senses and the joy of the soul in contemplating this beauty.

The first necessary condition of a judgment of taste is that it is essentially *subjective*. What this means is that the judgment of taste is based on a feeling of pleasure or displeasure. It is this that distinguishes a judgment of taste from an empirical judgment. Judgments of taste are like empirical judgments in that they have universal validity, but they are unlike empirical judgment in that they are made on the basis of an inner subjective response or experience. Above all, the aesthetic experience is the recognition of truth plus the feeling of beauty of form, in addition to a third undivided part, which is the aesthetic emotion.

Divided into four chapters, the present research work attempted to examine the beauty of Eugene O’Neill’s dramatic works investigating the main aesthetic devices used to bind the classical with the modern in a very artistic and elegant way. The first chapter entitled *Stimulating Dramatic Context through Modern American Theater* formed an overview about the world of drama, which is deeply rooted in the ancient Greek theater. Greek tragedy and the Greek theater as a whole influenced each other in a way that the discussion of one necessarily involves the other. As Greek tragedy developed from hymns of praise to local gods to the complex works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the theater adapted accordingly. All

the while, the theater remained an essentially simple building and affected the way the tragic poets developed their works. In the end, the distinctive features of Greek tragedy and the Greek theater resulted from the interaction between the two.

Ancient theater emerged from myths, rituals, and ceremonies dedicated to the gods. Early societies perceived a direct connection between the actions of a group or its leaders and its impact on the whole society. In order to preserve the society, these same groups and leaders acted from habit to form a tradition that would cultivate unique ceremonies and rituals. The repetition of these ceremonies and rituals laid the groundwork for theater.

Nevertheless, O'Neill, as a modern playwright, sometimes breaks away from the conventions of this genre in order to create a genuine American tragedy. Through the interplay between memory and history, the dramatist sheds light on a distinctive American sense of the tragic, which is based on the idea of loss and celebration of this loss.

The second chapter *Aesthetics and Beauty between Philosophy and the Art of Drama,* on the other hand, tried to make a basic understanding of the word *aesthetics*. Referring to both philosophy and art the application of this word in a dramatic context was hard and amazing all at once. The aesthetic experience usually implies the appreciation of the beautiful. The sense of beauty we feel, however, bears a direct relation to our personality, it is a moral idea that we may accept or reject according to the real world we ourselves live and struggle in as a human experience. Thus, the fusion of all these orders of mental life gives the perfect moment of unity and self-completeness.

Reading or seeing the language of drama is in the overall inspiring. Perhaps the word we hear is nothing in itself but a sing of human intercourse indicating ideas and emotions. It is a complex sequence of images, ideas, emotions, feelings, we grasp in a specific stream of consciousness.

The third chapter labelled *Mythic Plot and Character in "Mourning Becomes Electra"* served as the first experimental phase to investigate O'Neill's use of the myth as an aesthetic item of his tragic drama. O'Neill wanted to create a modern psychological drama rooted in Greek legend, exploring the advantages of up-dating the Electra tragedy. In spite of the play's classical derivation, O'Neill's basic conception for his main characters was established to reveal the emotional fabric of his family. O'Neill's emotional life during the late twenties was intermingled with such passion, frustration, guilt, mourning, and retribution that he felt himself ready to treat such themes in a drama on a large scale. In the formation of the trilogy, O'Neill 's making Lavinia the central character in the play is itself an interesting fact. Lavinia symbolizes in many ways O'Neill himself as she lost in quick succession her father, mother, and brother in the same order that he had lost his own family.

The fourth chapter, which represented the second selected work, was entitled *Wearing Masks to Unveil Realities in "The Great God Brown".* This chapter shaded light on the most precious aesthetic tool O'Neill has ever used, which is the mask. Relying on the cult of Dionysus, O'Neill recreated the tradition of the classical tragic mask in a modern context to dramatize the duality of the modern American personality.

Perhaps this is what we usually find in O'Neill's drama. He is the kind of playwrights who is always interested in being in complete harmony with his audience. Probably, the beauty and greatness of his characters lie in this very fact: that they are too complex, too involved in the cross currents of life to be purely one thing or the other. Their successive conflicts give them a quality, which inspires confidence in their humanity and provides the reader's sympathy and understanding in a way that more stable and unified personalities never could.

Men and women that move through the world of O'Neill's dramas reveal some noteworthy characteristics of courage and fortitude with which they face the unfavorable circumstances of the world in which they live. They are determined to give life meaning and value, which contradict with a world that is impersonal and unconcerned about the ambitions of human beings. Still, beneath this life of gloom and hopelessness, there is a hidden romantic passion in the nature of O'Neill's plays. Buried deep in his inner being is a love for some quality that the materialistic interpretation of life does not seem to bring out in its proper perspective.

It always seems as though O'Neill began by conceiving a theme in which he would completely condemn the romantic ideal. He gives the impression that he would try to show how his characters are brought to a sad end because they are incapable of reconciling themselves to the reality of the world in which they actually live. But, in the end, his drama leaves the impression that the disaster which grows out of the dream is somehow a justification in itself, or if not wholly a justification, nevertheless an inevitable outcome of a particular type of human being.

His favorite character has always dreamy eyes and lives in two different worlds: one is the outward world of physical reality, the other, a world of unfulfilled and passionate desire. The latter world is the one, which the dreamer wishes and strives for with all the powers of his being. To this world, he will sacrifice all that life has given him, for there is nothing in life that for a moment is comparable to the genuine reality of his dream. Living in this divided world, the one of reality, the other of imagination, he is continually tortured by the passionate longing of his dreams and the grim reality of his immediate surroundings. Furthermore, this romantic dream is both the victory and the despair of O'Neill heroes who themselves present one of the strange anomalies of life. Their dream embodies all that is beautiful and good, and just because of that they are destroyed. Just like the great heroes of all tragedies, they are destroyed by their own virtues.

The struggle of modern man is in fact identical with the struggle of the tragic hero, who seeks for a happy life by his destruction, not by his victories, the fact that arouses tragic pity, and makes us understand more clearly than we ever understood before just what it means to be human. Throughout the whole of O'Neill's work, men and women characters are brought to a tragic end because they ask more from life than life can offer them. They are incapable of responding to the limitations of the world in which they live.

Throughout the suggested plays discussed previously in the case study of the present research work, we have seen how O'Neill emphasized the use of two major conventions of the ancient Greek theatre, which are the myth and the mask. In both plays *Mourning Becomes Electra* and *The Great God Brown,* these two classical Greek dramatic components are present. For instance, in the former play, O'Neill undertakes the myth of Electra, although the mask is not physically used, however, almost all the characters indirectly wear masks, which highly deploy a serious psychological disorder.

Perhaps the main reason behind O'Neill's constant interest in myths is the nature of his characters. They are unbelievable, fantastic, sometimes they are imaginary, yet they are concrete, felt and real. Hence, this is the world of paradox and self-contradictions, which leads O'Neill toward the gate of mythology. The world of myth in a modern context is neither a cult nor a god ritual, it is a world of fantasy, which has a twofold objective, the first is aesthetic and the second is thematic. The purpose of the former supplies the work with the beauty and the sensational aspect; whereas the second shows the close relationship between the cults of Dionysus and the cults of prosperity, which was the worshiped god of modern time.

In *Mourning Becomes Electra,* O'Neill creates a more interesting and expressive end to the fate of Lavinia if compared with the one of the original Electra. Although, Sophocles makes Electra as the central persona in his legend, but at the end, Electra's fate remains ambiguous in accordance with the great role she plays in the tragedy. Lavinia's mourning in the last play of the trilogy is the central theme in the whole story. Lavinia's gloom and sadness, her loneliness and retribution is exactly what O'Neill wants to convey. Therefore, he wonders if it were possible to achieve any modern approximation of the Greek sense of fate into such a play in a time when an audience did not believe in divine retribution or gods. O'Neill attempts to write a play that would be real and acceptable to a modern audience and at the same time permit him to combine reality with his dark symbolic tone in both his structuring of the play and in the creation of his characters.

On the other hand, in *The Great God Brown,* O'Neill exposes the mask as an external device and leaves the notion of the myth of Dionysus beneath the surface of the play's incidents. He uses the mask to reflect the dehumanization and materialism of his generation. Therefore, he often relies on the tragic hero as a raw material because he is mentally similar to the modern American individual who chasses wealth to draw his defeat by his own hands. This is highly viewed in Billy Brown's character, in *The Great God Brown,* because of his thirst to create his social status as a successful rich-man; he destroys his life and the lives of the people around him. Consequently, he loses his friend, his lover and even himself. Indeed, this is not the only reason behind O'Neill's successive gloom and sadness. His own experience in life is another strong supplier of doom and hopelessness not only as a playwright but also even as a man and as an artist.

The sense of having been betrayed by life runs through both plays. Whether the individual's struggle with life ends in Dion Anthony's self-destruction or Lavinia Mannon's triumphant acceptance, the inescapable limitations inherent in the human's existence provide the root of his tragedy. O'Neill has been always exploring and hoping to find a medium of communication that would satisfy his needs both as a dramatist and as a man. This search often leads him into strange ways and various ends, thanks to this diversity and violence of both of his techniques and subject matters that tend to hide some of the unifying trends, which bind together all his work.

According to O'Neill's characters, it is both the sense of disillusionment and betrayal that set up the tragedy of the individual. Characteristically, in his drama, the impulse toward the ideal, frustrated by life brings despair, the impulse toward faith, frustrated by life leads to skepticism, the impulse to love, frustrated by life leads to hate and possessiveness, and the impulse to create, frustrated by life, becomes destructive. The set of all these impulses, however, usually exist together, struggling with each other tearing the individual into pieces in their mortal eternal opposition. It is here where we can find beauty, sadness and the power of life. Consequently, this provides the central tensions of almost all of O'Neill's plays. The history of his development as a genius in dramatic techniques is the history of his efforts to objectify this conflict which is full of aesthetic and beautiful items that are bound together to form an enchanting piece of art.

Since the aesthetic quality is an aspect of all activity, perception, and intelligent artistic thought, aesthetics may be an interesting suggested topic in education. Teaching Aesthetics is a way of learning something new, of being introduced to a medium never known in a particular way before. It is the incorporation of the arts across the curriculum in a way that fosters a heightened awareness and appreciation for all that touches our lives.

Aesthetic education helps students discover new ways of looking at, listening to, moving in and speaking of their everyday experiences, it may open up areas of learning such as the partnership of student and teacher sharing insights. In addition to the opportunity to combine mind and emotion, cognition analysis and sensory experience, toward understanding something as a whole.

Applying innovative teaching methods in higher education becomes a necessity. Therefore, the suggested learning-teaching method is based on the aesthetical experience of the learners through the observation of artworks. The overall aim of this method is the development of the student's critical thinking.

According to this method, art is used as a tool for critical and creative thinking, as well as reflecting on teaching matters. The reason art is used is that artworks can facilitate reflection through the critical view needed for their interpretation. The vague limits of art help us transfer the reflecting characteristics that are developed in the framework of art, to the broader world where the work of art functions as a means to express the messages that are embodied within. These messages are broader and deeper compared to the usual everyday experiences, and for this reason we need to activate our imagination to interpret.

Now, the type of art used in such a method depends on the teacher's choice according to his student's interests, it could be visual arts, music, or drama. Presumably, of all other arts, drama is credited to increase creativity, originality, sensitivity, fluency, flexibility, emotional stability, cooperation, and examination of moral attitudes, while developing communication skills and appreciation of literature.

Nonetheless, experts have emphasized that using dramatic techniques as a teaching method is not the same thing as teaching theater. Theater is an art form, which focuses on a product, a play production for an audience. Drama in the classroom; often referred to as creative dramatics to distinguish it from theater arts. It emphasizes on the process of dramatic display for the sake of the learner, not an audience. Classroom drama is not learning about drama, but learning through drama.

Aesthetic dramatic activity is a way of exploring a certain subject matter and its relationships to self and society, a way of making personal meaning and sense of universal, abstract, social, and moral concepts through the concrete experience of the play. Drama encourages the learner to enact many different social roles and engages many levels, styles, and uses of language. Language is the central tool and concern of communication in society and communication is the center of the educational system.

The teacher encourages students to take the major responsibility for giving meaning to the curricular concepts and to communicate them through action, gesture, and dialogue. In this sense, the teacher and students make a journey into new territory together where drama is both grasped educationally and aesthetically when its construction is shared and its meanings negotiated. Thus, through practice, teachers of English will discover that the use of drama techniques in the classroom can become a vital part of their teaching repertoire.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Eugene O'Neill's "Biography"

EUGENE GLADSTONE O'NEILL, born in October. 16, 1888, New York, and died in November. 27, 1953, Boston, Massachusetts. He was the first American dramatist to regard the stage as a literary medium and the first U.S. playwright to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936. Eugene O'Neill was one of the greatest playwrights in American history. The first playwright to lend a serious and distinctive voice to contemporary themes and dramatize them against a background of twentieth Century America. Through his experimental and emotionally probing dramas, he addressed the difficulties of human society with a deep psychological complexity. Eugene O'Neill helped foster the maturation of American drama, as he incorporated the techniques of both European expressionism and realism in his work. Influenced by Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, brought to the American stage a tragic vision that influenced scores of American playwrights that followed.

Eugene O'Neill set out to create meaningful drama in America at a time when the barriers against it were significant. As a result, by the time of O'Neill's first production (1916), the American theater was a quarter century behind European theater. Twenty years later, when O'Neill received the Nobel Prize for literature, America had assumed a leadership position in world drama; O'Neill was preeminent in this rise.

(Plywright-Biography.com)

Appendix 2

Synopsis 1: Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra" (1931)

A trilogy of plays by Eugene O'Neill produced and published in 1931. The trilogy, consisting of *Homecoming* (four acts), *The Hunted* (five acts), and *The Haunted* (four acts), was modeled on the *Oresteia* trilogy of Aeschylus and represents O'Neill's most complete use of Greek forms, themes, and characters. O'Neill set his trilogy in the New England of the American Civil War period. Summarizing the plot of the trilogy is rather hard for it includes the content of three different, yet interrelated plays.

The Manons - parents Ezra and Christine, and their grown adult children Lavinia (Vinnie to most who know her) and Orin - are a wealthy and well respected New England family. Ezra is a war hero and former mayor of the town in which they live. Vinnie and Orin seem destined to marry their childhood friends, brother and sister Peter and Hazel Niles. But most in town realize that the Manon's public facade masks some hidden issues. Indeed, the Manons are a dysfunctional family. Vinnie has a special bond with Ezra, and Orin has a special bond with Christine, both relationships bordering on the romantic. For Ezra and Christine, that romantic love for their child replaces what is missing from their own marriage. Ezra states that he loves Christine, but feels she does not return that affection. He does not realize the true, deep seated hatred she has for him. The beginning of the end for the family starts while Ezra and Orin are away fighting in the Civil War, the hope for Orin being that the experience will turn him into a man. Vinnie, in love with a ship's captain named Adam Brant, learns that Adam is having an affair with her mother. Jealousy turns into hatred for both when Vinnie further learns of Adam's true parentage. As Adam and Christine plot for a life together, Vinnie tries to convince her brother, who has returned a war hero and therefore a man, of their mother's infidelity and the appropriate action to take. The resulting events ultimately place Orin and Vinnie at odds with each other, they who end up having different priorities in achieving love and happiness, or at least peace which seems to be missing from the Manon household.

(Huggo, IMDb.com, Inc)

Synopsis 2: Eugene O'Neill's "The Great God Brown" (1926)

The Great God Brown**,** drama in four acts and a prologue by Eugene O'Neill produced and published in 1926. An example of O'Neill's pioneering experiments with Expressionistic theatre; the play makes use of multiple masks to illustrate the private and public personas of the characters, as well as the changing tenor of their interior lives.

The plot involves two young men, friendly rivals from childhood, Dion Anthony and Billy Brown. Dion, an artist, should become a painter, but his father refuses to send him to college. Billy, the stereotypical ideal American boy, goes to college, becomes an architect, and joins his father's firm. The action juxtaposes its two central characters, William (Billy) Brown, a mediocre architect, and Dion Anthony, a talented but dissolute artist. Both characters are in love with Margaret, who chooses Dion because she is in love with the sensual, cynical mask he presents to the world. But when he removes his mask to reveal the spiritual, artistic side of his nature, she is repulsed. Frustrated at being unable to realize his artistic promise, Dion sinks deeper into his self-destructive habits and soon dies. Billy, who has always been jealous of Dion's talent, steals Dion's mask and takes on his persona. Billy eventually is accused of the murder of his "old" self and is shot by the police. Margaret continues to worship Dion's mask.

(Encyclopedia Britannica.com)

Appendix 3

Synopsis 1: Aeschylus "Oresteia" (458 B.C)

The Oresteia is set several years after the Trojan War, in which Agamemnon, the King of Mycenae and a general in the Greek army, fought alongside other Greek kings/generals to destroy the city of Troy. They were seeking revenge on Paris, a prince of Troy, for his having kidnapped Helen, the beautiful wife of Menelaus, another king/general. As they attempted to sail for Troy, the Greek armies found there was no wind. Agamemnon was then told by the goddess Artemis that the only way he could get a favorable wind was to sacrifice his daughter to her. Guilt ridden, Agamemnon nevertheless did as the goddess told him—and in doing so, triggered the wrath of his wife Clytemnestra, who, while he was at war, plotted revenge of her own.

The first play of the trilogy, titled Agamemnon, takes place several years after these events. Clytemnestra has been vengefully plotting Agamemnon's death the entire time he's been away and has begun an adulterous relationship with Aegisthus, a kinsman of Agamemnon's (who has his own reasons for taking revenge on the king). When Agamemnon finally returns, bringing a captured Trojan princess with him as a mistress, Clytemnestra puts her plans into action. She seduces Agamemnon into believing that he is welcome and that all at home is well, but as he's taking a bath she slaughters him with an ax. Shortly afterwards, she kills the Trojan princess. As Aegisthus attempts to take the credit for what they did, Clytemnestra urges him to speak calmly, saying now that their long-troubled kingdom can now live in peace.

The second play of the trilogy, The Libation Bearers, takes place several years after the events of the first play. Orestes returns home from exile with the intent of taking revenge for his father's murder. He encounters his embittered, grieving sister Electra, who encourages him to kill both Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. Orestes puts a plot in motion, lures Aegisthus to a humiliating

death and, after an intense confrontation with Clytemnestra, kills her as well. He declares the trials of his family to be at an end, but then discovers that he's being pursued by the Eumenides, ancient goddesses of natural justice who consider what he's done (a son killing his mother) to be the most heinous of all crimes. Orestes flees, and the Eumenides pursue him.

The third play of the trilogy, The Eumenides, also takes place several years later. The pursuit of Orestes has brought both him and the Eumenides to the point of desperate exhaustion. Orestes cries out to the god Apollo for guidance. The god appears and tells him to seek justice at the temple of Athena, the goddess of justice, in Athens. Orestes travels to Athens, still pursued by the Eumenides. Athena herself appears, listens to their respective stories and creates a panel of human judges (the Aeropagus) to hear and judge the case. When the vote of the Aeropagus turns out to be a tie, Athena casts the final vote—in favor of Orestes, who is freed from the torturous pursuit of the Eumenides. He proclaims his intention to live out his days peacefully and then leaves. Athena persuades the Eumenides to accept a less vicious and hostile place in the pantheon of the gods and in the process of seeking justice and then names the Aeropagus as her earthly representatives, the embodiment of ultimate human justice in the world.

(Ancient-Literature.com)

Synopsis 2: Sophocles “Electra” (410 BCE)

Orestes returns to his native land, Mycenae, from Crisa. He is the son of the late king of Mycenae, Agamemnon. His mother, Clytemnestra, had murdered Agamemnon years before with the help of her lover, Aegisthus. To see that no harm came to Orestes, Agamemnon's heir, Electra—one of Orestes' sisters—had sent him to Crisa to be reared by his uncle, King Strophius.

Now back in Mycenae as a young adult, only one thought occupies Orestes' mind: to kill his mother, Clytemnestra, as revenge for her murder of Agamemnon, his father. Accompanying Orestes are his faithful old attendant, a paedagogus (teacher), along with his boyhood friend from Crisa—Pylades, the son of King Strophius. To better plan his revenge, Orestes disguises himself as a Phocian (a Greek who resided in Phocis, north of the Gulf or Corinth). He tells his old attendant to carry word to the palace that he was killed in a spectacular chariot race and that men will arrive soon with an urn bearing the ashes of Orestes. Then he goes to the grave of his father to make an offering. Meanwhile, Electra continues to lament the death of her father, even after so many years. Her younger sister, Chrysothemis, comes out of the palace and urges Electra to forget the past and accept the status quo, noting that "our rulers must be obeyed in all things." Electra replies, "Strange indeed, that thou, the daughter of such a sire as thine, shouldst forget him, and think only of thy mother! All thy admonitions to me have been taught by her; no word is thine own."

The leader of the chorus urges them to be at peace with each other. Chrysothemis then says her advice to her sister was intended to preserve her for harm, explaining that Aegisthus and Clytemnestra plan to confine her in a dungeon far away—never again to see sunlight—unless she ceases her lamentations for her father. Electra, however, says she will not yield to the will of her mother and Aegisthus.

Later, Electra feuds with her mother, whom she loathes more than any other human being. Clytemnestra attempts to justify the murder of her husband, saying she killed Agamemnon because he killed their daughter, Iphigenia. Was it not right for a mother to exact justice for the murder of her innocent daughter? Was not Agamemnon guilty beyond redemption for sacrificing Iphigenia, his own flesh and blood? There is a measure of truth in Clytemnestra’s

words, and Electra well knows it. Nevertheless, after Electra's desire for justice yields to her desire for revenge after years of agonized rumination, she rejects her mother's defense and indicts her as a ruthless killer and a traitor to her husband's bed.

When Electra receives news of the death of Orestes, she breaks down, saying,
Ah, memorial of him whom I loved best on earth! Ah, Orestes, whose life hath no relic left save this,- how far from the hopes with which I sent thee forth is the manner in which I receive thee back! Now I carry thy poor dust in my hands; but thou wert radiant, my child, when I sped thee forth from home! Would that I had yielded up my breath, ere, with these hands, I stole thee away, and sent thee to a strange land, and rescued thee from death; that so thou mightest have been stricken down on that self-same day, and had thy portion in the tomb of thy sire! Life seems only to deal Electra tragedy upon tragedy; first her father, struck down ruthlessly by her mother and her lover; now Orestes, killed in a chariot accident. She was counting on Orestes to kill hated Clytemnestra and her lover and partner in murder, Aegisthus, who dared to ascend Agamemnon's throne. Orestes, still in disguise, questions her about her treatment in the palace. Then—seeing how distraught Electra is—Orestes decides to reveal himself to her, showing her the signet ring of Agamemnon. It is proof that he is Orestes. Electra, overcome with joy, says, "O blissful day!"

Then they plot and carry out double murder. When Orestes stabs Clytemnestra, Electra urges him on even as her mother begs for pity. "Stab her doubly, if you can!" she tells Orestes as he wields his knife. Moments later, after Aegisthus returns to the palace from business elsewhere, Orestes parades him to the very spot where Agamemnon was killed and—although the play does not explicitly describe what happens—kills him. The chorus then proclaims that the children of Agamemnon have achieved freedom. Justice has been done.

(Ancient-Literature.com)

Synopsis 3: Sophocles "Oedipus The King" (429 BCE)

At the start of the play, the city of Thebes is suffering terribly. Citizens are dying from plague, crops fail, women are dying in childbirth and their babies are stillborn. A group of priests comes to the royal palace to ask for help from Oedipus, their king who once saved them from the tyranny of the terrible Sphinx. Oedipus has already sent his brother-in-law, Creon, to the oracle of the god Apollo to find out what can be done. (A little background: before Oedipus arrived in Thebes, the previous king, Laius, was murdered under mysterious circumstances and the murderer was never found. When Oedipus arrived in Thebes and saved the city, he was made king and married the widowed queen, Jocasta, sister of Creon.) Now Creon returns with the oracle's news: for the plague to be lifted from the city, the murderer of Laius must be discovered and punished. The oracle claims that the murderer is still living in Thebes.

Oedipus curses the unknown murderer and swears he will find and punish him. He orders the people of Thebes, under punishment of exile, to give any information they have about the death of Laius. Oedipus sends for Tiresias, the blind prophet, to help with the investigation. Tiresias comes, but refuses to tell Oedipus what he has seen in his prophetic visions. Oedipus accuses Tiresias of playing a part in Laius's death. Tiresias grows angry and says that Oedipus is the cause of the plague—he is the murderer of Laius. As the argument escalates, Oedipus accuses Tiresias of plotting with Creon to overthrow him, while Tiresias hints at other terrible things that Oedipus has done.

Convinced that Creon is plotting to overthrow him, Oedipus declares his intention to banish or execute his brother-in-law. Jocasta and the chorus believe Creon is innocent and beg Oedipus to let Creon go. He relents, reluctantly, still convinced of Creon's guilt. Jocasta tells Oedipus not to put any stock in what prophets and seers say. As an example, she tells him the prophecy she once received—that Laius, her first husband, would be killed by their own son. And yet, Laius was killed by strangers, and her own infant son was left to die in the mountains. But her description of where Laius was killed—a triple-crossroad—worries Oedipus. It's the same place where Oedipus once fought with several people and killed them, one of whom fit the description of Laius. He asks that the surviving eyewitness to Laius's murder be brought to him. He tells Jocasta that oracles have played a big part in his life as well—he received a prophecy that he would kill his father and sleep with his mother, which is why he left Corinth, the city he was raised in, and never returned.

An old messenger arrives from Corinth with the news that Oedipus's father, King Polybus, has died of old age. This encourages Oedipus. It seems his prophecy might not come true, but he remains worried because his mother is still alive. The messenger tells him not to worry—the king and queen of Corinth were not his real parents. The messenger himself brought Oedipus as a baby to the royal family as a gift after a shepherd found the boy in the mountains and gave him to the messenger. The shepherd was the same man Oedipus has already sent for—the eyewitness to Laius's murder. Jocasta begs Oedipus to abandon his search for his origins, but Oedipus insists he must know the story of his birth. Jocasta cries out in agony and leaves the stage. The shepherd arrives but doesn't want to tell what he knows. Only under threat of death does he reveal that he disobeyed the order to kill the infant son of Laius and Jocasta, and instead gave that baby to the messenger. That baby was Oedipus, who in fact killed his father Laius and married his mother. Oedipus realizes that he has fulfilled his awful prophecy. Queen Jocasta kills herself and Oedipus, in a fit of grief, gouges out his own eyes. Blind and grief-stricken, Oedipus bemoans his fate. Creon, after consulting an oracle, grants Oedipus's request and banishes him from Thebes.

(Ancient-literature.com)

GLOSSARY

Act A major division in the action of a play, comprising one or more scenes. A break between acts often coincides with a point at which the plot jumps ahead in time.

Aesthetics Exploring in performance and responses to drama the role of human senses in making meaning and creating emotional or other experiences. Aesthetics relates to the principles and science of what engages our sensory attention and leads us to respond in particular ways.

Agon The contest or dispute between two characters, which forms a major part of the action in the Greek tragedy.

Antagonist The character that exists in the drama performance in opposition to the protagonist. It is the antagonist that presents often obstacles or complications for the protagonist.

Backstage The production area set aside from the main performance space where the performer may withdraw from the action or non-actors (backstage or production members) can prepare and support the action.

Beauty the quality present in a thing or person that gives intense pleasure or deep satisfaction to the mind, arising from sensory manifestations (as shape, color, sound, etc.)

Catharsis In literature and art, a purification of emotions. The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) used the term to describe the effect on the audience of a tragedy acted out on a theater stage. This effect consists in cleansing the audience of disturbing emotions, such as fear and pity, thereby releasing tension. This purgation occurs as a result of either of the following reactions: (1) Audience members resolve to avoid conflicts of the main character (2) audience members transfer their own pity and fear to the main character, thereby emptying themselves of these disquieting emotions. In either case, the audience members leave the theater as better persons intellectually, morally, or socially. They have either been cleansed of

fear of pity or have vowed to avoid situations that arouse fear and pity. In modern usage, catharsis may refer to any experience, real or imagined, that purges a person of negative emotions.

Chorus The chorus generally had the following roles in the plays of Sophocles and other Greek playwrights: *(1) to explain the action, (2) to interpret the action in relation to the law of the state and the law of the Olympian gods, (3) to foreshadow the future, (4) to serve as an actor in the play, (5) to sing and/or dance, and (6) to give the author's views*. In some ways, the chorus is like the narrator of a modern film or like the background music accompanying the action of the film. In addition, it is like text on the film screen that provides background information or identifies the time and place of the action, sometimes the chorus may even address the audience.

Cues A cue is a signal that something is about to happen. A stage direction may contain a cue for a character to enter or exit the stage.

Deity A god or a goddess in Greek/ Roman/ or Hindu

Drama The creation of imaginative worlds and human experiences using the elements of drama.

Dramatic Action When a situation is presented, explored and resolved. For example, an actor's action in a scene might be to impress, to please. An action change occurs when the character gets new information and has to decide if this is 'good for me or bad for me' and then undertake a new action in response. These actions may not be part of the script directions.

Epilogue a concluding section of any written work. At the end of some plays in the age of Shakespeare and Jonson, a single character would address the audience directly, begging indulgence and applause; both the speech and the speaker were known as the epilogue. Some novels have epilogues in which the characters' subsequent fates are briefly outlined.

Farce a kind of comedy that inspires great amusement mixed with panic and cruelty in its audience through an increasingly rapid series of ridiculous confusions, physical disasters, and sexual innuendos among its characters.

Flaw Missing the goal. A mistake that the actor does which weakened the status of his character. (See also Hamartia)

Hamartia Character flaw or judgment, error of the protagonist of a Greek tragedy. *Hamartia* is derived from the Greek word *hamartanein*, meaning *to err* or *to make a mistake*. The first writer to use the term was Aristotle, in *The Poetics*.

Hybris or Hubris Great pride. Hybris often is the character flaw (hamartia) of a protagonist in Greek drama. Pride was considered a grave sin because it placed too much emphasis on individual will, thereby downplaying the will of the state and endangering the community as a whole. Because pride makes people unwilling to accept wise advise, they act rashly and make bad decisions.

Hymn A song (or lyric poem set to music) in praise of a divine or a historical hero

Impersonation to pretend to be someone in order to deceive people or to entertain them.

Mask Face covering with exaggerated features and a mouth device to project the voice. Greek actors wore masks to reveal emotion or personality; to depict the trade, social class or age of a character; and to provide visual and audio aids for audience members in the rear of the theater.

Matricide The crime of killing one's own mother, or the person who is guilty of such a crime.

Mime or Dumb Show a short piece of silent action or mime included in a play, a nonliterary art. In the modern sense, a dramatic performance or scene played with bodily movement and gesture and without words.

Ode Poem sung in a play or a festival. An elaborately formal lyric poem, often in the form of a lengthy ceremonious address to a person or abstract entity, always serious and elevated in tone.

Off Stage, Space The space that is not part of the performance but may be inferred from the drama through dialogue or non-verbal communication. For example, characters talking about what is happening in another room of the house that is presented on stage in a realistic drama.

Paradigm In the general sense, a pattern or model in which some quality or relation is illustrated in its purest form. In terminology, it is a set of linguistic or other units that can be substituted for each other in the same position within a sequence or structure.

Pathos The emotionally moving quality or power of a literary work or of particular passages within it, appealing especially to our feelings of sorrow, pity, and compassionate sympathy. *Adjective:* pathetic.

Prologue An introductory section of a play, speech, or other literary work. The term is also sometimes applied to the performer who makes an introductory speech in a play.

Props This term is short for properties and refers to the objects that a character uses. Hard props such as chairs and tables and soft props such as table cloths, cushions are placed on the stage as part of the set or scenography while others such as a sword or a book are carried on by a character.

Protagonist The character that drives the action is the protagonist. Often they are the 'hero' of the drama.

Realm An area of interest or knowledge.

Rites, Rituals Ceremonies performed by a particular group of people for religious purposes.

Satire and Burlesque A mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies. Satire is often an incidental element in literary works that may not be wholly satirical, especially in comedy.

Scene A section of a play that occurs in a particular place and time.

Setting The place where the dramatic action is situated either through design elements, dialogue or non-verbal communication. This includes qualities about that place including temperature, features, light levels, population levels and other environmental factors.

Stage directions The instructions in a script that describe where, what, when and how something is to occur and who is going to do it.

Thespian Noun meaning *actor* or *actress*; adjective referring to any person or thing pertaining to Greek drama or drama in general. The word is derived from *Thespis*, the name of a Greek of the 6th Century B.C. who was said to have been the first actor on the Greek stage.

Tone a very vague critical term usually designating the mood or atmosphere of a work, although in some more restricted uses it refers to the author's attitude to the reader (e.g. formal, intimate, pompous) or to the subject-matter (e.g. ironic, light, solemn, satiric, sentimental).

Trilogy a group of three connected plays or novels. Ancient Greek tragedies were presented at Athenian festivals in groups of three, but the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus is the only such trilogy to have survived. Shakespeare's *Henry VI* is a later dramatic example. There are several examples in modern prose fiction, including Samuel Beckett's trilogy of novels, *Molloy* (1950), *Malone Meurt (Malone Dies,* 1951), and *L'Innommable (The UnnamaUe,* 1952).