CHAPTER II
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Any interest in the human condition and the human mind leads us straight to Freud. There is no one who has been uninfluenced by Freud's compelling theory, after contact with it. In fact even though at one level, he is faulted with being too primitive or too sophisticated, he nonetheless enters literary critical discourse at every level. As Roger Poole says "Freud is omnipresent. He has saturated the discourse of literary theory to the point where that theory itself seems to be little more than a further set of revisions in Freud's own writings." The "question of desire" that Freud asked is still the crucial question of the century. As Malcolm Bowie comments, "Desire is the cosmological principle of our secular age" and even though Freud did not delineate a unitary desire, his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) was the first text of importance that dealt with both "high" and "low" desire, leading to the conceptual system of psychoanalysis. While on the one hand, Freud was more biased towards the higher socialized division of "desire" against its lower, merely self-gratifying version, simplifying "libido-liberators" have reduced "desire" to a readily marketable metaphysical gadget on the other hand. Much of this problem has arisen because of Freud himself, as a result of, as Harold Bloom says, "Freud's almost perpetual, self-revision, because Freud wrote no definitive, single text; but the
canon of Freud’s writings shows an increasingly uneasy sense that he had become his own precursor, and that he had begun to defend himself against himself by deliberately audacious arrivals at final positions."

However, psychoanalysis, whether it is fuelled by Freud or a rejection of Freud has come to stay both in "theory" and "fiction" and "desire" has become a ritualized concept with a wide currency. At the end of the "Interpretation of Dreams", Freud uses the term "theoretical fiction" to describe a state of affairs that a given theory seems to require or predict but for which no supporting evidence can be found. For though theory points to truth and fiction to more fiction, together they create a terrain of near-synonymy and semantic overlap. For example, in "A la recherche du temps perdu," Marcel Proust provides a fictional kernel surrounded by a commentary dealing with aesthetics and moral philosophy. His narrator asks of Albertine’s pronouncements, "What sort of construction is this -- lie, half-lie, alibi, well-intentioned whimsy, camouflaged truth?" Similarly Freud and Lacan ask of their patients, "What are you really telling me when you confess all this, when you relate the fiction of your dreams and phantasies in the secondary fiction of your narratives on the couches inside consulting rooms?" Proust’s narrator has his own doubts too," "Why are my own pronouncements any less mendacious than Albertine’s?" he asks. In fact all three writers betray a skepticism about their
own constructs as to why their interpretations are any less
delusional than their patients' stories. At the same time, they
also display an awareness of philosophical vantage points that
would facilitate the rescuing and establishing of the notion of
veracity. Therefore, the combined role of theorists and
fictionalists that they play, both excites and disconcerts. So
even though they may be relatively inchoate, indecisive and even
self-defeating at times, "the psychoanalyst" as John Wisdom
says, "seeks to bring into the light those models from the past
which for good and evil so powerfully influence our lives in the
present, so powerfully distort reality and so powerfully
illuminate it. For, of course, these models don't only distort.
By no means. No doubt the lover sees what we see isn't there.
But doesn't he also see what we can't see? ... Hate may blind,
but hate, even neurotic hate, also reveals. The subtle evidence
assembled to prove suspicions of Albertine may not prove
precisely those suspicions but they don't prove nothing. The
phantasies and models, illuminating but distorting, which
metaphysical philosophers and psycho-analysts try to bring to
light are unconscious."6

"Saxa loquuntur!" ("Stones talk!"), says Freud in his early
paper on "The Aetiology of Hysteria" (1896), where he develops an
analogy between the archaeologist and the student of primitive
mental life. He contends that psychoanalysis, like archaeology,
is the quest for, and the systematic study of, anterior states:
for Freud "that" which came before, whether in the life of a
civilisation or in the life of the mind, has a peculiar and unparalleled capacity to organise our perception of "that which is". Insights such as these, made Freud's followers compare him to Columbus. Defining the nature and basic premise of Freudian insight, Elizabeth Wright has said, "Freud's original insight centered upon the determining force of the unconscious aspect of utterance which revealed that mechanisms working in dreams, puns, and slips of the tongue can be shown to be analogous to certain mental and linguistic processes." Such an insight is particularly well adapted to the needs of literary theory and criticism.

Positing that the dream is a language in itself, Lacan takes the theory further by stating that "the unconscious is structured like language." On the basis of Freud's "Interpretations of Dreams," he contends that "the dream has a structure of a sentence or... of a rebus; that is to say, it has the structure of a form of writing... The important part begins with the translation of the text, the important part that Freud tells us is given in the elaboration of the dream -- that is to say, in its rhetoric. Ellipsis and pleonasm, hyperbaton or syllepsis, regression, repetition, opposition -- these are the syntactical displacements; metaphor, catachresis, autonomasia, allegory, metonymy and synecdoche -- these are the semantic condensations in which Freud teaches us to read the intentions -ostentatious or demonstrative, dissimulating or persuasive, retaliatory or
seductive -- out of which the subject modulates his oneiric discourse."

The dream, as Freud interpreted it, is a rhetoric with transformational rules of its own. Through displacement and condensation of the elements, the dream can, as Lacan says, show and demonstrate, lie or persuade, avenge and seduce. Thus it is an active intending force with a will of its own. However, it speaks in our own mother-tongue and observes the rules of our grammar. Giving the literary theorist his tools, Freud showed how the unconscious manages to get its messages past the repressing censor and which manoeuvres it has to carry out, in order to escape that censorship. The "latent content" of the dream in the unconscious gets "scrambled" through condensation, displacement, the various means of representation and the secondary revision of the dream-work, so that what issues out into the "text" of the dream is far from the optimum form that the unconscious has. Apart from the obvious one of avoiding censorship, is the grammatical one, for a dream does not dispose of a grammar or a syntax, neither can it directly imply cause and effect, nor can it show its materials in a temporal sequence. To overcome these constraints, Freud devised, what Poole calls the "dream semaphore". With only two flags the unconscious can, through combinatorial expertise and substitution alone, manage to express itself in a "dream grammar" which the analyst can eventually comprehend and analyse. Co-presence in time, of events, people or ideas will appear together in the dream.
Contraries and contradictions are simply disregarded by the dream and the responsibility of deciphering them is left to the conscious waking mind. Freud also relied on condensation by the figure of reversal. "If only it had been the other way round!" is the ploy that the elements in the dream insinuate, both temporally and spatially. Therefore, the unconscious in its workings can be compared to the play and slippage of rhetorical devices in a literary text.

Lacan reinterpreted Freud in terms of a linguistic phenomenology of deferred or impossible desire. Since the desire was anyway confounded by the Phallus, the marker of absence, lack, deprivation and oppression, the failure of desire was capable of a merely textual demonstration. Inverting Saussure's proposition that the linguistic sign is the unity of the signifier and the signified, Lacan insisted that the signifier cannot refer to a signified at all. This is not only because, it works by metaphor and metonymy, it is also because, like language itself for the post-structuralists, it is composed less of signs than of signifiers. The unconscious is just a continual movement and activity of signifiers, whose signifieds are often inaccessible because they are repressed. The signifier, in the unconscious discourse or anywhere else, refers not to a signified but to another signifier, which in turn refers to another signifier in an endless chain. Thus Lacan extends Freud's proposition that the dream rhetoric proposes and negates its own
truth. Critics like Paul de Man and Harold Bloom have carried this assumption of undecidability to a point where no decision is possible. This emphasis on undecidability engineered by Freud and Lacan is of great value to literary theory. However, it is not the theoretical Freud, but the Freud who shows the reader the analogies between the workings of the literary text, the Freud who provides the instruments of translation and decipherment who is invaluable to our study of O'Neill's trilogy.

The South Sea Islands is an interesting point of entry into the text at hand. What can be more "Freudian" than the recurring reference by the leading characters, to the islands in the South Seas? It is significant that the islands appear both in dream discourse and the work of art. The Mannonian habitat knows only one dream of escape -- the sea and the ships that can take them to the islands, but in the trilogy, a whole group of people remain prisoners of tragedy for there is no favourable wind. It will be fruitful to mark the appearances of the islands in the course of the discourse.

In "Homecoming", Lavinia associates the islands with "naked, native women", while Adam Brant refers to them as the "Blessed Isles" and the "Garden of Paradise". (Act I, p. 706). The sublime link between Adam and Paradise cannot be overlooked here. In Act III of the same play, Ezra Mannon aspires "to the other side of the world -- find some island where we could be alone a while. You'll find I have changed, Christine. I'm sick of death! I want life!" he says (p. 704). Here it is
significant, that the characters allude to the islands with feelings of fascination and dread. Adam eulogizes about his experiences to a totally repulsed Lavinia who senses their paganism as being antithetical to her puritanical beliefs. However, as we see in the later plays, she and Orin are the only two characters who actually go to the islands in the play (apart from Adam's early escapades there) and while Orin who has assumed his father's outlook by then, disapproves, Lavinia, in the meanwhile has assumed the Dionysian characteristics of her mother. She revels there, as though to the manner born, much to Orin's outrage. Even though Orin and Lavinia escape to the islands momentarily, they come back to doom. Orin seeks refuge in death and Lavinia in death-in-life. Ezra Mannon's reference to "some island", again indicates that the repressed puritan in him is willing to change for his wife's sake, since he views the homecoming as a "mark (of) a new beginning -- new love between us." (Act III, p. 746). That the allusions to the Islands are imbued with sexual overtones becomes apparent gradually and this feature keeps growing in the later plays. For Adam, the Islands are a Paradise, where sin is unknown and life simple and sweet. For Ezra Mannon, they represent isolation and freedom from the "children", a chance to start all over again. The Islands are not only a symbol in the play; they are also very real. Christine and Brant, plan to sail there to attain happiness. As symbol the Islands beckon like a beacon promising release from
Puritan guilt and the sea and the ships are the escape routes to love and freedom on the islands.

In "The Hunted", the feelings of fascination and dread are replaced by a hankering after a phantasy, especially by Orin, who recalls his dreams of the islands to Christine. Stemming from his reading of Melville's "Typee", the South Sea islands, "came to mean everything that wasn't war, everything that was peace and warmth and security. I used to dream I was 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 colour as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you. (He smiles with a dreamy tenderness). 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!" (Act II, p. 776. The underscoring is mine).

Here the islands become a womb-substitute for Orin. His idealization of the islands is similar to Adam's reference to them as the "Blessed Isles," in the first play. It is significant that both the deprived sons, Adam and Orin fuse the mother figure with the islands. What is suggested in Adam's case finds complete assonance now in Orin's, where there is no doubt left, to the image of the islands in his dreams symbolising the security of a mother's womb. That the mother denies having read the book "Typee", but her still being aware of the islands indicates her culpable duplicity. For the islands referred to,
by the sons, Adam and Orin, represent a primeval and amoral haven for them, whereas for Christine, the infidel mother/wife, the islands denote a retreat for illicit love and an escape from puritanical guilt. The first exchange of words, between mother and son in Act II of "The Hunted", regarding the Islands, leads to Christine's startled question, "Islands! Where there is peace?" (p. 776). This prefigures her subterfuge. Orin is too full of his dream to decipher it at that point in time, though he is made "uneasy" by her longing wish that "if only you had never gone away. If you only hadn't let them take you from me!" (p. 776). Here, the sense of her deprivation of her son's presence in her life, while he was away at war, resonates later with Oedipal force when the son registers his own loss at the betrayal by the same idolized mother. As he bitterly says, "To think I hoped home would be an escape from death. I should never have come back to life -- from my island of peace! But that's lost now! You're my lost island, aren't you Mother?" (Act III, p. 787). The sinuous dream of the son is broken and the culprit is none other than the idol of that dream herself. Orin is now empowered to wreak vengeance.

The next reference to the island appears in the following act, where the warned lovers, Adam and Christine, plan to get away from detection as soon as possible. Beckoning them are the islands which now assume a mirage like quality. They can see the islands in their minds' eyes but ironically they can never get
near them. Adam who is a son of the sea, now doubts his kinship to the sea and fears whether the sea will ever accept him. He has a foreboding of his escape route closing up on him. As he says, "I'll give up the sea. I think it's through with me now, any way! The sea hates a coward," (Act IV, p. 799). He still hopes for the Blessed Isles, "maybe we can still find happiness and forget!" (Act IV, p. 799). Simultaneously, overhead, the eavesdropping Orin, sees his final betrayal by his mother, when the secret phantasy he thought he shared with her only, now turns out to be her own object of desire with another man, other than himself. He fumes, "And my island I told her about -- which was she and I -- she wants to go there -- with him (Adam)!... I'd have shot his guts out in front of her!" (Act IV, p. 801). Therefore, he proceeds to kill the paramour shortly after Christine leaves.

In Act V, Orin tries vainly to resurrect his dream again, with his mother, whose undivided attention and love he hopes he has acquired. He pleads with her, "I'll make you forget him! I'll make you happy! We'll leave Vinnie here and go away on a long voyage -- to the South Seas ...." (Act V, p. 805). But contrary to his object of desire, the companion with whom he does finally undertake that voyage is not his mother, but his sister Lavinia, in "The Haunted". Similarly, contrary to his phantasy of whatever closeness he had hoped for with his mother on the islands, he detaches himself completely from Lavinia even as she assumes her mother's Dionysian qualities on the islands, amidst
the natives, especially with Avahanni. The ambiguous nature of
the islands is highlighted when he tells Peter, "They turned out
to be Vinnie's islands, not mine. They only made me sick -- and
the naked women disgusted me. I guess I'm too much of a Mannon,
after all, to turn into a pagan. But you should have seen Vinnie
with the men .... !" (Act I, p. 831). Lavinia in her turn is
embarrassed, but flaunts her new identity. "I'm only half
Mannon," she says (p. 833). Carrying on, she "dreamily" recalls,
"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..."
(Act I, p. 834).

The structure of strong oppositions make the islands evolve
from the jointly desired dream haven of Adam and Christine to a
singularly desired phantasy of Ezra Mannon, Orin and Lavinia, in
turns, where the other party's desire in the union is at best
ambiguous. The structure of strong oppositions can be depicted
as:

(i) Adam + Christine = South Sea Islands.
(ii) South Sea Islands = Ezra + Christine (?);
    Lavinia + Adam (?); Orin + Christine (?); Orin (?) + Lavinia (?)
    = South Sea Islands.

This structure allows various substitutions to take place on
either side of the sexual divide. The repetitions of this
motif alongwith the symbolic assonances create a chain of textual substitutions that indicate towards an Oedipal centre of the discourse. Both the women, Christine and Lavinia seek to locate the positive in the South Sea Islands, while for the men, Adam and Orin, it has Oedipal overtones. Even the descriptions of the islands by them has very suggestive sexual innuendoes.

The overlapping description of the South Sea Islands by the various characters indicates towards a difficulty in interpretation. Adam's "Garden of Paradise" has a "green" beauty, with "clouds like down on mountain tops ... the sun drowsing in your blood ... singing a croon in your ears like a lullaby," (Homecoming, Act I, p. 706) invoking a mother-substitute image with the "lullaby". However, the image is fused with sexual overtones. This suggestiveness, finds its concrete enunciation later, in the other son's words to his mother. "The breaking of the waves was your voice. The sky was the same colour as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you," says Orin to Christine. ("The Hunted", Act II, p. 776). Adam invokes the islands again for Christine in The Hunted, Act V, p. 799. "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." Lavinia repeats his description word for word later, in "The Haunted", Act I, sc, ii, p. 834." The warm earth in the moonlight -- the trade wind in the cocopalms -- surf on the reef -- the fires at
night and the drum throbbing." O'Neill's careful repetitions produce a doubled acoustic effect at the level of the text, pushing the symbolic meaning further and dislocating its significance to any one particular character.

The image of the Blessed Isles is derived in all probability from a scene in the second book of Nietzsche's, "Thus Spake Zarathushtra". Perhaps, O'Neill suggests that the islands, like the sea, the longed for mother are all one, and that in them man can submerge into a paradise of bliss. Here it is also worth recalling that Freud on the basis of his study of dream-symbolism, showed the identity in signification between entering the sea and penetrating the mother on the one hand, and emerging from water and being born on the other. Similarly, the ship symbolism still holds in the analysis of the dreams of analysands the same value as representation of the genital organs.

The significance O'Neill attributed to the sea, is worth consideration here. As in his earlier play, "Anna Christie", the back-drop of the sea and fog symbolizes the "mystery behind existence" and hints also of the Jungian concept of race memory or collective unconscious. Jung himself has called the sea, "the symbol of the collective unconscious because it hides unsuspected depths under a reflecting surface."(10) Infact O'Neill's childhood fascination for the sea and sailors remained with him all his life and surfaces in his plays. As Virginia Floyd notes, O'Neill seriously considered writing "an
autobiographical novel in play form", entitled "The Sea Mother's Son"; echoes of this intention occur in several of the completed plays. As in "Long Day's Journey into Night," young Edmund declares, "It was a great mistake, my being born a man, I would always have been much more successful as a sea gull or fish."

Thus the South Sea islands represent on one level, "release, peace, security, beauty, freedom of conscience, sinlessness etc - a longing for the primitive -- and a mother symbol of ..... yearning for pre-natal non-competitive freedom from fear". The same spirit had animated Marie whose pagan life-embodied attitude lingers in Christine to a large extent and in Lavinia to a lesser extent. For the men, this is symbolized in their rich "copper gold" hair which unites them. Christine's acceptance of sexuality is opposed by Ezra Mannon's abjuration of it and his avowed Puritanism. She represents the release and sinlessness in varying degrees to Ezra Mannon, Adam Brant, Orin and Lavinia. Even Lavinia yearns to be accepted by her even though she "stole all love from me when I was born." She senses her inheritance from her mother, inspite of her strong Mannon lineage leading her to even disown it at the end. "I am half Mannon," she says.

Linked with the South Sea Islands, is the recurring chanty "Shenandoah -- a song that more than any other holds in it, the brooding rhythm of the sea." (Homecoming Act I, pp. 687-8). Associated in particular with Seth, who is cast in the mould of the all-knowing seer Tiresias of the Oedipus myth, it approximates to being the theme song. In fact, in his notes,
O’Neill stated that the chanty should be used "as a sort of theme song -- its simple sad rhythm of hopeless sea longing peculiarly significant -- even the stupid words have striking meaning when considered in relation to tragic events in play." As Doris V. Falk says, the Shenandoah is the river of life, and all the Mannons love its daughter.

The chanty occurs twice in the first play. It is heard right at the beginning, where it is used in exposition to set the atmosphere and theme. Later in Act III, it recurs to symbolise the vigil of the lonely daughter for her father on the one hand, as Lavinia awaits Ezra Mannon’s return from the war. "Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter", sings Seth in Act III, p. 727. On the other hand, it also prefigures the longing in vain, that Christine and Adam have for the islands, where they plan to go, once Ezra Mannon is killed. "Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you ... I can’t get near you," sings Seth in Act III, p. 727.

The chanty recurs in the middle of the second play, but now it is sung by a drunken chantyman as the melancholy of Ezra Mannon’s funeral hangs heavy on the atmosphere. The chantyman intersperses the mood with other chantys too, specially "Hanging Johnny" which prefigures the events before and after. "They say I hangs for money.... They say I hanged my mother," sings the drunk, much to Adam’s latent fear. He has a premonition, as he says, "Damn that chanty! It's sad as death! I've a foreboding I'll never take this ship to sea." (Act IV, p. 794). The next
snatch of the Shenandoah chanty is heard in Seth's voice, immediately after Christine's suicide in "The Hunted". "She's far across the stormy water," sings Seth, as Lavinia soothes a traumatised Orin, after Christine's death. (Act V, p. 811).

In the third play, Silva, a Portuguese fishing captain and part of the chorus, sings drunken songs in revelry. Seth's chanty is heard for the first time in Act IV immediately after Orin's suicide in Act III. The plaintive note of the song at this juncture focuses entirely on Lavinia again. "Wa-ay, I'm bound away," the words echo as Lavinia is in the process of getting completely bound to her Mannon legacy. Finally, as he sings it for the last time in the trilogy, Lavinia ultimately acknowledges its symbolic relevance as "picking up the words of the chanty -- with a grim writhen smile," she tells Seth, "I'm not bound away -- not now, Seth. I'm bound here -- to the Mannon dead!" (Act IV, p. 866)

The geography of the islands and the sea, on the one hand, versus the Mannon house on the other, supports a contiguous relationship amongst three tragic spaces. Firstly, the Interior of the house itself -- it is the mysterious and invisible inner sanctum, imbued with a sense of power and wealth, which is synonymous with the Mannon name. The chorus of different stratas of towns-folk talk of it with respect and terror, but hardly enter it as they hover outside in awe. It is in the inner-most realm -- the master-bedroom -- of the house that the symbolic murder of the master of the house occurs at the end of
"Homecoming". Again both Christine and Orin commit suicides within the inner chambers of the house. The very same inner chambers claim Lavinia at the end of the trilogy.

Lavinia is located in the second tragic space initially which is the Exterior of the Mannon house, namely the steps and the landing that lead into the house. This location is contiguous to the first one and is, as Barthes says, "the external space of all suggestions, because it is here, that one waits." The steps form the milieu of transmission for all the characters, as they invariably sit, stand or wait on them. It participates at one and the same time, in the interior and in the exterior, in the Power and in the Event, in the hidden and in the extended; held between the world, the Steps are the space of language for it is here that the tragic being, lost and confused between the substance and the significance of things, voices his reasons, from the premonition to the spoken fear. It is here that Christine, Lavinia, Adam, Ezra and Orin linger in turns, hovering, revealing, vacillating and unmasking.

Between the Interior and the Steps lies the symbol of contiguity and exchange -- the threshold and the entrance. Barthes compares this tragic space to a veil or "an eye-lid, symbol of the masked gaze."\textsuperscript{15}

The third tragic space is the Exterior. The Steps flow into the exterior in a contiguous way leading to the garden full of flowers, or the driveway which again "flows out" towards the wharf and the sea/islands. The exterior signifies two spaces --
death (Adam’s on his clipper) and escape (to the islands). The tragic character -- be it Marie, Ezra, Adam, Christine, Orin or Lavinia -- is enclosed within certain limits and is in captivity. Being caught within those parameters is his/her distinction, while the chorus and secondary characters are free to move about at will. Opposed to their liberty is the forced "quarantine" of the tragic character who is moored to his/her tragic situation.

Following the Greek influence, O'Neill begins the trilogy with music. "In the distance from the town, a band is heard playing "John Brown’s Body". Borne on the light puffs of wind this music is at times quite loud, then sinks into faintness as the wind dies." (Homecoming, Act I, p. 687). Alongside, Seth emerges on the scene, singing Shenandoah. These two intermingling types of music reiterate in aural terms, the visual and conceptual conflict inherent in the play between the "face" and the "mask", sea and land, peace and war, life and death. The melodious haunting sea chanty is contrasted with the martial brass music of the band. While the war music is associated with Mannon and his homecoming, the sea chanty invokes Lavinia’s latent non-Mannon like legacy and Christine’s Dionysian yearnings. The chanty also approximates to the choral songs in Greek plays, as Seth who sings it, also performs a choric role in the beginning and during the course of the three plays of the trilogy, with the townsfolk performing the role of a stylized chorus.

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Marie Brantome is also associated with music. She was always "laughin' and singin' - frisky and full of life." (Homecoming, Act III, p. 728). On the other hand, in a clear face-mask opposition, Ezra Mannon is distinguished by his silences. As Christine tells Brant, "He's a strange, hidden man. His silence always creeps into my thoughts... and I'd have to kill his silence by screaming out the truth!" (Act II, p. 723). O'Neill also uses silence as a sound effect, in his clever portrayal of the Mannons' silent but eloquent portraits through out the trilogy, with their varied effects on the different characters. Therefore, the alternating and symbolic sequence of sound and silence gives depth and meaning to the aural fabric of the plays.

Barret Clark comments that the Electra trilogy had been overly influenced by Freud. O'Neill countered such criticism by saying that modern critics "read too damn much Freud in stuff that could very well have been written exactly as it is, before psychoanalysis was ever heard of .... every human complication of love and hate in my trilogy is as old as literature and the interpretations I suggest are such as might have occurred to any other in any time with a deep curiosity about the underlying motives that actuate human inter-relationships in the family." Whatever O'Neill's reasons were for such a strong stand, it betrays a certain vulnerability. Perhaps the fact that psychoanalysis was considered suspect for being too illuminating,
added to the creative writer's discomfort. Freud's own attitude to literature may have been contributory also. Freud considered the writer to be a neurotic trying to solve his repressed problems through an art form. Therefore, the literary work of art for him, was the "sublimation" of the artists' worries and for Freud the work of art, thus became more of a case study. Freud refused to grant literary autonomy to works of art and so lent justification to the antagonism towards him by the creative community. That is why, a modern Freudian praxis must pay attention to the interrelation of signifying units in the text to make textual connections rather than to some specific theory of Freud.

This brings us precisely to the pitfalls that Freudian theory is rife with, and therefore, to a reiteration that Freudian tools must be implemented with great caution and sagacity lest we fall into the trap of "vulgar" or "cheap" Freudianism. Nevertheless, even though O'Neill parried all references to psychoanalysis in vehement terms, the text tells its own story.

Therefore, as a symbol, the South Sea Islands is, what can be called overdetermined. Freud used the term to describe the fact that a single element of behaviour can sometimes express a complex motivation. A single dream image for instance, could signify a preoccupation with various other desires and preoccupations. The South Sea Islands has a many sided symbolic function which also inhibits the emergence of one interpretation.
While the islands signify pagan yearnings for Christine, Adam and Ezra Mannon, on the one hand, they represent Oedipal hankerings on the other, for Orin, Adam, and Lavinia. The value of this symbol thus keeps shifting from the positive to the negative and this constant "reversal" is reflected in the predominant antithesis of the trilogy -- that of the tension between the face and the mask.

In O'Neill's work the conflict between the "face" and the "mask" is prevalent everywhere and it is used to depict the central theme of the inner division of man and his longing for truth and need for illusions. In his "Memoranda on Masks" written in 1932, he states that the dramatist must find a method to present the inner drama - the "profound hidden conflicts of the mind ..... or confess himself incapable of portraying one of the most characteristic preoccupations and uniquely significant, spiritual impulses of his time." He recommends the use of masks to depict the new "drama of souls."18

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

In "Homecoming," O'Neill uses the mask concept extensively
to depict this division between surface reality and the subconscious. But as he notes in the Fragmentary Diary for September 21, 1930, "Keep mask conception - but as Mannon background, not foreground! - What I want from this mask concept is a dramatic, arresting, visual symbol of the separateness, the fated isolation of this family, the mask of their fate which makes them dramatically distinct from the rest of the world." 19

However, on April 7, 1931, along with the sixth draft of the play, O'Neil wrote to Lawrence Langner that "the mask idea has also gone by the board. It simply refused to justify itself in the final accounting. It confused and obscured instead of intensifying. All that is left of it is the mask-like quality of the Mannon faces in repose, an effect that can be gained by acting and make-up. The dialogue is colloquial of today. The house, the period costumes, the Civil War surface stuff, these are the masks for what is really a modern psychological drama with no true connection with that period at all. I think I have caught enough, Greek sense of fate - a modern approximation to it, I mean - out of the Mannons themselves to do without any Greek theatrical effects." 20

In "Homecoming," O'Neil prefers mask-like faces to both full masks and half-masks. It suited his purpose better as, without breaking the realistic illusion, they suggest the essential underlying reality of the two basic impulses of paganism and puritanism, the fateful identity between the Mannons and their isolation from the world.
The mask is used by man to hide behind after discovering sin and losing the primordial unity with the "old God" - Nature. Once he is separated from nature, man becomes divided against himself, one part of him - the open, innocent part longing to return to the lost paradise, the other, rational part of him trying to adjust to the earthly hell. Thus the Mannons almost always wear the mask, while Marie, Christine, Peter and Hazel are closer to the "face". It is significant that they all are relative outsiders with no blood relation with the Mannons.

On this level of symbolism, the characters cease to be individuals but begin to typify the two dispositions of the human soul. The marriage between Ezra and Christine becomes symbolic of the unhappy state of man. In a way Christine's attempt to break away from it approximates to man's attempt to free himself from his "mask." But her love for Brant, who is a younger version of Mannon, signifies man's inability to escape his "mask." Besides, the masks make the audience aware that the real drama, as O'Neill himself said, "takes place on a plane where outer reality is mask of true fated reality." The life-like masks apparent on all the Mannons for generations, including their wives and servant represent a life-denying "fate springing out of the family" and corrupting everyone who comes within its reach.

Even the temple-portico that is like "an incongruous white mask fixed on the home to hide its somber gray ugliness," (p.687)
is not an exception. Christine finds the house "a tomb", and "more like a sepulchre!" The "whited" one of the bible - pagan temple front stuck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness! It was just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity - as a temple for hatred. (Then with a little mocking laugh). Forgive me, Vinnie. I forgot you liked it. And you ought to. It suits your temperament." (p.699)

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

Lavinia has "the same strange life-like mask impression on her face" (p.692) and is also compared to "an Egyptian statue" in Act III. (p. 727). The mask-like look is "more pronounced" (p.730) in Ezra Mannon than in the others. Even his movements and speech are masked and stilted. Far from representing a pose, the mask is an integral part of his character. Orin who appears in the second play is characterized by the "startling" family resemblance to Ezra Mannon and Adam Brant. There is the the "same life like mask quality of his face in repose" (The Hunted, Act I, P. 759).
Wherever O'Neill uses the mask there are overtones of death as is true in the case of the Mannons too. It appears that all the conflict between the face and mask can be summed up in the life-affirming and life-denying forces. When dealing with this face-mask symbiosis, it is not so much the difference between depth and surface that is significant but it is more in terms of conflicting impulses of life and death, love and hatred, humility and pride.

Christine's affinity to the "face" is apparent right from the beginning. She is linked with the flowering lilac shrubbery as she goes to and from the flower-garden, carrying a bunch of flowers. (p.691,697). Her clothes, "a green satin dress, smartly cut and expensive which brings out the peculiar colour of her thick curly hair" (p.691) affirm the life-celebrating force in her. After Christine's death, Lavinia assumes her qualities, and is seen in the same shade of green as her mother. Similarly she moves with the same voluptuous grace and becomes enamoured with flowers for a short while.

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

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

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

Similarly in the third play, in the last act, Lavinia takes over the role of the dead Christine when she is in the garden, plucking flowers. Seth is quick to recall the connection. As he says, "There she be pickin' my flowers again. Like her Maw used to.... " (The Haunted, Act IV, p. 857). Lavinia instructs Seth that "I want the house to be full of flowers", (Act IV, p. 858). However, at the end of the trilogy, once she has assumed her existential role completely, she "reverses" her instruction and tells Seth to "tell Hannah to throw out all the flowers." (Act IV, p. 867).

Right from the beginning Christine is allied to light as
she appears at her front door in the late afternoon of April 1865. On the other hand, Mannon first appears in the darkness as he "stops short in the shadow for a second". (Act III, p. 730). This is significant as O'Neill uses lighting as a means to evoke moods and to symbolize the difference between the face and the mask. He uses the positions of the sun to signify the various relationships between man and some external force. The sunset usually has an affinity with death and sunrise with re-birth or life beyond death. The moonlight, on the other hand, connotes eeriness, an unreal detached quality which is so fragile that the slightest impact can break its serenity into smithereens, as the developments of Act III indicate. Similarly all the crucial scenes occur in the moonlight. The murder of Ezra Mannon and Adam Brant, and the suicides of Christine and Orin occur on moonlit nights.

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

In "The Hunted", the action occurs at night only, with a "strange eerie" current running through. All the five acts of the
play occur at night, emphasizing the dark and dangerous atmosphere which begins with Christine and Brant being "the haunted" after Ezra's death, but ends with Lavinia and Orin on the run, after the deaths of Adam and Christine.

"The Haunted" releases the tension of night somewhat, with the action occurring mainly in the evenings. The last act of the trilogy, however, is timed on a late afternoon as "soft, golden sunlight shimmers in a luminous mist." Therefore, when Lavinia consciously rejects it for the dark interior of the "whited sepulchre", and "marches woodenly into the house", the solemnity of her choice indicates an abjuration.

Toshio Kimura makes an interesting comparison of O'Neill's use of "white" as a significant element in his portrayal of man. The dissension among the members of the Mannon family as well as the appearance of the "whited sepulchre" of the house itself, becomes increasingly grim as the play progresses. Lavinia is not the only one who regards the mansion as a tomb. Christine calls it "a monstrosity -- as a temple for his (Abe Mannon's) hatred" (Homecoming, Act I, p. 699). When Ezra Mannon returns from the war, he relates, how the Mannons went to the white meeting-house to "meditate on death...that white meeting-house. It stuck in my mind - clean-scrubbed and white-washed - a temple of death!" (Homecoming, Act III, p. 738).

Similarly in "The Hairy Ape", O'Neill refers to the wretched stokers forecastle as a cage of "white steel". Here O'Neill

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tries to suggest a world of cold materialism and duplicity, one devoid of spiritual substance. The daughter of Nazareth Steel, Mildred Douglas is usually dressed in all-white and is the embodiment of materialism and sophistry, invoking Matthew 23:27. "We unto you... for ye are like whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of uncleanness." The image of the whitened sepulchre is pervasive as Mildred reflects vacuity. "I have lots of white-dresses," she says. Finally, white steel drives Yank, the natural man to his death at the hands of the gorilla, "the hairy ape", with whom he feels such a strange kinship. When Yank falls to the floor of the cage he is finally integrated with the image of himself as the hairy ape. As Doris Falk says, the long agon with the mask is over and so is life.24

The images of white steel, Mildred's white dresses, the white-wash of the Mannons' mansion -- all correspond to the characters' masks, effectively hiding the duplicity of reality behind them. On the other hand, the stark use of white in O'Neill's Negro plays "The Emperor Jones" and "All God's Chillun Got Wings" have racial semantics governing them.

In "Mourning Becomes Electra", Lavinia is linked with the moonlight when she lets her "mask" drop at vulnerable moments. Brant refers to "that night we went walking in the moonlight do you remember? (He has kept her hand and he drops his voice to a low, lover-like tone...)")" (p. 703). Lavinia is now on her guard, the mask in place, not letting the memories of that night weaken

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her resolve. She is now aware of Brant's duplicity and when he tries to profess his love to her, recalling, ".....as you walked beside me that night with your hair blowing in the sea wind and the moonlight in your eyes," (p.706). Lavinia lashes at him calling him "a liar" as she cannot forgive herself those moments of weakness.

Again in Act III of "Homecoming", while Lavinia is out on the portico, Christine ironically asks her, "What are you moongazing at ? Puritan maidens shouldn’t peer too inquisitively into spring ! Isn’t beauty an abomination and love a vile thing ?" (p.729) When she hears that Lavinia is waiting for her father to return any time, Christine says, "You think he might come to night ? (Then with a mocking smile). So he’s the beau you’re waiting for in the spring moonlight !" (p.730)

Though Christine is linked to light in the opening, she becomes increasingly associated with the darkness as her crime begins to take shape, first in her mind and then in her deeds. It is significant that O’Neill emphasised on Christine in the first play while working on possible titles for the trilogy. He had toyed with "Clemence" (later called Christine) as a possible title for "Homecoming" and had named the second and third plays as "Orin" and "Elena" (later called Lavinia) respectively.

In Act II the lighting indicates the "mask" slowly taking over from the "face" as seen in Christine’s development. The stage directions indicate the fading remnants of daylight.
"Outside the sun is beginning to set and its glow fills the room with a golden mist. As the action progresses this becomes brighter, then turns to crimson, which darkens to somberness at the end." (p.711) Obviously, the golden mist is at its brightest as Lavinia sits on judgement on her mother. It begins to turn to crimson as Christine decides to plot Mannon's murder in her mind. It "darkens to somberness" when she is left alone, an ageing deceitful woman with dark thoughts in her mind, her face like "a sinister evil mask", as she has now set her plot of murder in motion with Brant totally under her control.

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

Even the historical background to the play, the Civil War, which Per Hallstorm compares to being America's Iliad, reinforces the death theme with Lincoln's death underscoring the tragedy. In fact, Raleigh calls "Mourning Becomes Electra" a "death" and "war" play because the Civil War becomes the chief agent in the plot as it is Ezra Mannon and Orin's absence that precipitates the situations for the tragedy to emerge.

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

"Mannon: We'd better light the light and talk a while.
Christine: (with dread) I don't want to talk. I prefer the dark.
Mannon: I want to see you. (He takes matches from the stand by the bed and lights the candle on it... ) You like the dark where you can't see your old man of a husband, is that it?" (p.744)

Christine is now moving towards the "mask" of hatred and guilt with the imminent murder in her mind and Mannon is trying to assume the "face" after the surfeit of death and professional murders he has seen in the war. Mannon has returned home hoping to retrieve their marriage but Christine refuses to put on the light as she has already assumed the "mask". It is ironical that Mannon struggles towards love and light in the darkness of life, just before his death. In fact, when Lavinia cries at the end of Act IV, "Father! Don't leave me alone! Come back to me! Tell me what to do!"(p. 749) it is her anguished pleading to him to give her some support and solace, as she sees herself sinking into an abyss of darkness. The evolution of Lavinia from the frightened and confused daughter after the death of her father in "Homecoming" to a frightened but paradoxically self-assured daughter after her mother's death at end of "The Haunted" is remarkable. From pleading to her dead father to tell her what to
do, Lavinia takes charge of the situation even as a "traumatized" Orin needs comforting and tells Seth exactly what to do. "I want you to go for Doctor Blake. Tell him Mother killed herself in a fit of insane grief over Father's death," she instructs Seth. Similarly at the end of "The Haunted", she "tells" Seth to "tell" Hannah to "throw out all flowers". Lavinia has obviously traversed a long and lonely path and is no longer afraid of "what to do". She looks for no support or succour, she knows that she has to rely only on herself. Her existential being has been in the process of becoming. She has realized that any support from god or religion is just as elusive as the Blessed Islands are and can never be attained even after death. In fact, the notion of salvation after death seems equally elusive to a Puritan mind.

While the mask-like faces denote the puritan aspect, O'Neill uses hair and eyes to mirror its pagan, life-affirming opposite. He outlined the significance of the hair in the "Working Notes" - "peculiar gold-brown hair exactly alike in Lavinia and her mother - same as hair of the dead woman, Adam's mother, whom Ezra's father and uncle had loved - who started the chain of recurrent love and hatred and revenge -- emphasize motivating the fate out of past .... strange, hidden psychic identity of Christine with the dead woman and of Lavinia ... with her mother". Christine has "thick curly hair, partly a copper brown, partly a bronze gold each shade distinct and yet blending with the other."
Mannon refers to it as "your strange, beautiful hair." (p.691) Lavinia has the "same peculiar shade of copper - gold hair" (p.692). Marie Brantome also had "beautiful hair like your mother's that hung down to her knees," (p.704) according to Brant. Seth also corroborates that she had "hair just the colour of your Maw's and yourn she had." (p.728)

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

The eyes of these women again associates them with the freedom and happiness of the South Sea Islands. Marie had "big, deep, sad eyes that were blue as the Caribbean Sea." (p.704) She appears to have escaped acquiring the mask as she remained vulnerable and therefore more human right up to her death. Christine's eyes are "a dark violet blue" but they are "deepset" and "alive" (p.691). It is apparent that the more mask-like Christine's face becomes, the more "alive" but silent her eyes become as Mannon asks her, "How do you know? Your eyes are shut ... Don't keep your eyes shut like that! ... God, I want to talk to you, Christine! ... shut your eyes again. I can talk better ... I never could when you looked at me. Your eyes
were always so-so full of silence! That is, since we've been married. Not before, when I was courting you. They used to speak then. They made me talk - because they answered." (p.737)

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

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

Mannon's face on the other hand, has become almost "eyeless", so pronounced is his "mask". His eyes in his portrait hold Christine and Brant in fascination and dread as they are "seeing" but do not reveal. As Christine, when alone in the study, after her confrontation with Lavinia, finds that "her eyes are caught by the eyes of her husband in the portrait over the fireplace...." (p.719). When Brant joins her, "She glances at the portrait - then turns back to Brant with a little shiver - nervously .... She is staring at the portrait." As the Act ends, "her eyes are caught by the eyes of her husband in the portrait and for a moment she stares back into them, as if fascinated.
She then jerks her glance away and with a little shudder she cannot repress, turns and walks quickly from the room...." (p.726)

When Brant enters the study and sees the portrait for the first time,"his body shifts to a fighting tenseness. It is as if he were going to spring at the figure in the painting." During the course of his conversation with Christine, "he stops and glances with savage hatred at the portrait." (p. 721) Similarly Orin's mask-like face is apparent and he appears a "weakened" version of the dead Ezra.

The costumes worn by the characters are also significant. Mannon is seen in his judicial robes in the portrait, stern, severe and threatening as Christine's behaviour in the study testifies. When he actually appears in Act III he is dressed in the uniform of a Brigadier-General. He resembles his portrait exactly, only now the "mask" is more "pronounced in him than in the others." (p.730). Earlier when Christine had fallen in love with him "he was handsome in his lieutenant's uniform" (p.714). But now he just symbolizes a professional soldier, who denies love and light in his life. In Act IV, however, he tries to make an effort to give up his puritanism and looks towards light with yearning. "I am sick of death! I want life," he says. (p.740)

The "foppish extravagance" (p.703) of Brant's clothes links him with Christine's extravagant dressing. As a result both of them are thrown in direct contrast with the plain, severely
clothed Mannons. Their clothes symbolize the sensual, life-affirming qualities even as the Mannons' costumes indicate their self-imposed asceticism. In the scenario in the "Notebook" O'Neill states that Christine's way of dressing is a source of conflict between her and Mannon as it goes against his "Puritan grain and seems to him as evidence of a sinful strain in her, an inclination toward vanity and worldly pomp. He also resents this income of hers (from her father) which makes her so independent of his commands. He thinks it selfish that she spends all this money on herself ...." 28

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

While the luxuriant growth of hair and blue eyes recall the sensual islands, Christine and Marie are also distinguished by their animal-like grace. Christine has a fine, voluptuous figure and she moves with "a flowing animal grace." (p.691). While Marie was "frisky and full of life - with something free and wild about her like an animile. Purty she was, too!". (p.728)

The characteristics of these women link them to the pristine
harmony and peace in life, before man discovered sin. The Mannons, on the other hand, represent man after his fall. Lavinia in her effort to be a Mannon, disowns whatever innocence and "face" like qualities she has similar to her mother, with her consistent effort to do "all in her power to emphasize the dissimilarity rather than the resemblance to her parent." (p.692) When Brant tells her that, "You're so like your mother in some ways. Your face is the dead image of hers," (p.704) Lavinia denies it harshly. "What do looks amount to? I am not a bit like her! Everybody knows I take after Father!" she says (p.704).

It's almost as though, Lavinia wants to retain the "mask" and submerge the "face" in her personality. Her constant affinity to the colour black indicates her jealousy and hatred for Christine by consciously rejecting the latter's sartorial extravagance. Throughout the first play her black dress is directly linked with the judicial robe that her father is seen wearing in his portrait. She sternly sits on judgement on her mother and condemns her. Her repeated efforts to incriminate her mother and win her father's approval and love is very clear. In the third play, Lavinia affects a "reversal" when she revels in the very stance and qualities she abhors in her mother in the first play. The catalytic factor for the qualitative "oscillation" in her is her mother's death. Eerily acting out, what Christine had accused her of in the first play, she covets
all that her mother had symbolized and swings away from her
Mannon legacy. Try hard as she does to sustain the "reversal", the "dead come between" and she is forced to enact yet another "reversal" when in the manner of a ritual she abjures the symbol of the South Sea islands and is claimed by the "whited sepulchre" as its own.

Undoubtedly, Freud's influence on O'Neill is apparent even in the forms he used in some of his plays. The technique of "manifest" and "latent" dialogue in "Strange Interlude" is a notable example. At the same time O'Neill's strongly developed sense of "classic fate" is also noteworthy, especially in "Mourning Becomes Electra", which he said dealt with "psychological fate," "psychic fate from the past", "fate springing out of the family" in a drama that "takes place on a plane where outer reality is mask of true fated reality -- unreal realism"\textsuperscript{29}, resulting in what Ernest G. Griffin calls "the ultimate in the drama of inwardness."\textsuperscript{30} The last of the puritanical Mannons, Lavinia decides that she has "got to punish" herself. So she withdraws into the shuttered Mannon house, "so no sunlight can ever get in". O'Neill tried to restore the mythical "otherness" of "classic fate" with a credible modern "psychological fate". As in "Mourning Becomes Electra", he uses the same aspects of nature both as external scenery and as metaphor for internal states of mind.

For example, "A Moon for The Misbegotten", ends with the sky "glowing with all the colours of an exceptionally beautiful
sunrise." James Tyrone is "profoundly moved" by this natural phenomenon but "immediately becomes self-conscious" and reveals his inner cynicism and despair. As Tyrone walks towards the sunrise, old Hogan appears on the scene and ironically comments on the natural sun-moon cycle and asks, "Are you going to moon at the sunrise forever?". The "forever" transcends the natural cycle and links up with Josie's "forever" in the last line of the play. "May you rest forever in forgiveness and peace". In this final scene, O'Neill has Hogan curse, not Tyrone or any other person but "life" -- "It was life I was cursing" -- thus reiterating the "otherness" of fate.

O'Neill's attempts at depicting a modern version of "classic fate" came to typify "psychological fate" and 'psychic fate". In fact, it is significant that he depicts death first in its psychological form before its physical manifestation. In "Mourning Becomes Electra", the variety of "life-like pale masks" on the "dead" faces of the characters is an indicator. Christine's reference to the Mannon house as a "tomb" and "sepulchre" add to the effect. The backdrop of war and Lincoln's elegy reiterates the pervading sense of "psychic" death, permeating the air. Ezra Mannon talks constantly of death before he is killed. Orin talks of "a taste of murder", (The Haunted, Act II, p.768) before he kills Adam and lives through the experience of his mother's suicide before he too commits it himself. "War meant murdering the same man over and over, and
that in the end I would discover the man was myself!" he says.
(The Haunted, Act III, p. 781). Just before his murder, Adam has
a "foreboding" after he hears the chanty, "Hanging Johnny" on the
wharf, (The Haunted, Act IV p. 794). Similarly Christine feels
"so strange -- so-sad-as if I'd never see you (Adam) again!"
(The Haunted, Act IV, p.800). Orin "feels" the sensation of
suicide on killing Adam. "He looks like me, too! Maybe I've
committed suicide!", he says (The Haunted, Act IV, p.803).
Before, he actually kills himself, Orin warns Hazel, "something
terrible will happen." (The Haunted, Act III, p. 849). As for
Lavinia, she ends up living her own "death" by immuring herself
with the dead Mannons in the Mannon house.

Similarly, in "The Iceman Cometh", Larry Slade the former
idealistic and social visionary becomes a "convert to death". 
Ironically using the same salvationist term "convert", yet
unwilling to act to discontinue his existence, he avoids the
sacrifice -- suicide polarisation and accepts the fate of a
debilitating ambiguity -- "a weak fool looking with pity at the
two sides of everything till the day I die". In the last act of
"A Moon for the Misbegotten," the father, Hogan exclaims about
Tyrone, "Be God, he looks dead!" to which Josie responds, "Why
wouldn't he? He is." She concludes with her "blessing", "May
you have your wish, and die in your sleep soon, Jim darling." In
the final scene of "A Touch of the Poet", Melody, the tavern
owner kills, not himself but his mare, a symbol of the proud and
gallant past of Major Cornelius Melody. After the deed, he
describes how the mare saw that "he was dying with her." As Parritt says of his mother, "she is dead and yet she has to live."

O'Neill thus plays on tightly strung emotional chords and his recurring theme is the split in personality that arises when an individual's true character is driven in upon itself by pressure from the world without, having to yield place to a make-believe character, its own living traits hidden behind a mask. He delves so deep that Per Hallstorm comments that "what he unfolds tends like deep-sea fauna, to burst assunder on being brought into the light of day." The element of masking true reality is predominant in plays like Desire Under The Elms (1924), Strange Interlude (1928) and reaches its ultimate realization in "Mourning Becomes Electra."

The conflicting opposites of dream and reality, pride and love, exultation and pain, Father and Mother wrestle for supremacy in "Desire Under the Elms". The warfare of maternal and paternal forces condition and control the destinies of all the characters. The play can be said to have a trilogic form, in that it is divided into three parts. In the first part, the Cabot brothers revolt against their tyrannical father Ephraim. The father is a self-centered, loveless man who has projected his own personality into that of his God, a tyrannic ascetic, restrictive embodiment of Puritanism. He is a God whom Ephraim identifies with the farm itself, from the rocky soil of which he
has by sheer doggedness won a living -- "God's in the stones!" he says. This God is an image of his own ego. Victims of that exploitive egotism are Ephraim's sons and his second wife from whom he has inherited the land.

The spirit of this dead wife -- her self-sacrifice, her longing for beauty and natural sexual love -- is opposed by the puritanical Ephraim and his God, in whose name love has been desecrated. The elms symbolise the positive force of Eben's mother. O'Neill depicts the profound love of a man for his mother repeatedly in his plays. He always makes the mother a symbol of lost happiness. In "The Great God Brown", Dion Anthony cries to be buried with his mother, "because her hands alone had caressed without clawing". In "Strange Interlude" and "Dynamo", the love for the mother is actually sublimated into a cosmogony. In "Desire Under The Elms", Eben can express his intense love for his dead mother only in the broken phrases, "She was kind. She was good."

In the play, the violated maternal spirit avenges itself through Eben and through Abbie, the third wife of Ephraim. Through Abbie, Ephraim receives what he had done unto his second wife. Upon consummation of the love between Abbie and Eben, the maternal ghost is placated somewhat. Eben wears two figurative masks -- owing allegiance to each of his parents' characteristics. Through the course of the play, Eben must break down the mask of egotism, if he has to become integrated with his other self. The subsequent action of the play, makes him grow
out of his father's legacy of egotism and greed to find true love and integration through the loss of his child. Both Abbie and Eben accept the justice of their fate implicitly and they find salvation in the reality of the situation itself.

Similarly, old Ephraim recognizes that he can never free himself from the farm which symbolises him and is his prison, just like the cage of "The Hairy Ape" and the house of the Mannons in "Mourning Becomes Electra." So while Abbie and Eben find integration in sacrifice, Ephraim lives on, but within the eternal illusion which is a living death for him.

Typifying a variation of another father-dominated progeny is Nina Leeds, the heroine of "Strange Interlude". The whole play has the gigantic shadow of the father hovering above. The egotism of Professor Leeds sets Nina off on her search for love, which ultimately determines her fate. Nina's search for the ideal husband, lover and son, makes her as destructively possessive and exploitative as her father had been. As Ned Darrell tells her, "You've got to give up owning people, meddling in their lives as if you were God and had created them!"

There is a marked change in O'Neill's conception of the archetypal woman with this play. Nina becomes herself an embodiment of God the Father. She has her own brand of egotism and in her, the eternal feminine now devours man instead of redeeming and supporting him. Yet, she also commands compassion for she too is searching. She finds peace and love finally, by
reverting to childhood in the arms of Charlie Marsden.

O'Neill substitutes dialogue and soliloquies for stage masks in the play. Soliloquies reveal the hidden motives and conflicts of the inner self while dialogue signifies the public face. When Nina turns to Charlie, the life-giving and life denying tension between the father and mother image dissolves. She has always seen life as "a strange dark interlude in the electrical displays of God the father."

In fact, in O'Neill's mature plays, he tries to seek the answers beyond the self in the struggling individual. Doris Alexander establishes a close link between O'Neill's affinity with Nietzsche and his friendship with Terry Carlin who was a confirmed mystic and philosophical anarchist. Alexander contends that Carlin's book "Light on the Path" completed O'Neill's education in mysticism. That the said book dealt with the Hindu wisdom of "Maya" and rebirth makes it the more significant. O'Neill was so influenced that the whole philosophy of his life and dramatic writings gives more credence to the emotions than the intellect. An overriding concept in Carlin's mysticism was the aspect of what Nietzsche called "eternal recurrence" or reincarnation. O'Neill presented this idea quite often in his plays. In "The Fountain", the idea appears in Juan's vision: "Life is a field, forever growing, Beauty a fountain forever flowing." In "The Great God Brown," Cybel rapturously says, "Always spring comes again bearing life! Always again! Always, always, forever again!" In "A Moon for the Misbegotten",

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Tyrone says, "There is no present or future -- only the past happening over and over again -- now". His words could very well sum up the terrible happenings in "Mourning Becomes Electra", as the same situations and flaws recur in generation after generation, to a feeling of being trapped in the cycle of events. In fact, the characters in "Mourning Becomes Electra" are trapped not only by their legacy but by their own pride which originates from the father who wears the mask as his trade-mark. The characters yearn to be one with the mother and escape his demanding legacy. As Doris Falk says, the father is the expansive, self-centered and isolated image of the embattled ego; he is also the rigid puritanical force -- the superego -- which forbids his child to give expression to the drives of the id -- the libido, the mother. This ideal mother for whom all men long still exists in human consciousness, representing peace, freedom and spontaneous love. Therefore, the obvious antithesis between father and mother, Puritanism and freedom, pride and love, death and life, the South Sea Islands and the Mannon house can be seen. All the power of the masks stem from the father versus mother images embodying the Oedipus and Electra complexes. O'Neill outlined the purpose behind "Mourning Becomes Electra" to be "a modern tragic interpretation of classic fate without benefit of Gods -- for it (the play) must, before everything, remain (a) modern psychological play -- fate springing out of the family."
Darwin's hypothesis about the marauding hordes of antiquity, establishes that the taboo of incest was instituted to put an end to fratricide fights and discord over ownership rights over women within families. This historical narration forms the whole basis of incest, the rivalry amongst brothers, the murder of parents and the subversion of the progeny in "Mourning Becomes Electra". These fundamental actions form the basis of the tragedy in O'Neill. His theatre finds its coherence at the level of this ancient fable, situated in history and the human psyche. In the primitive horde, the human rapports are arranged under two categories -- the relation of covetousness and the relation of authority.

There are two Mannonian eros. The first one originates in members of the same community who have been brought up together. They love each other over a duration of time which also imparts a legality to the relationships. It is the parents who found the legitimacy of this love. For example, the beloved is a sister whose covetousness is authorised and therefore, pacified. Barthes calls this love, "the sororal Eros" since its future is calm and it is a "duration love" which is always hoped for. The other Love, on the other hand, is an immediate, brusque, predatory and ravishing love which is always condemned, because it is illegitimate. Abe's passion for Marie, Ezra's for Marie, Christine's for Adam, Orin's for Christine, Lavinia's for Ezra/Adam are approximations of this Eros - Event. The sororal love is utopian, whereas the immediate Eros is a painted coin.
where hate is the other side of love. Such open physical hate makes Abe Mannon build his charnel house of the Mannons.

Therefore, what begins as desire for Abe turns into alienation, and the fundamental situation of the tragic figures descending from him is a relation of force. Each character gets his being from his place in the general constellation of forces and weaknesses. Thus the Mannonian world is divided between the strong and the weak, the tyrants and the captives, the virile and the feminine, irrespective of their biological sex. At the end of the trilogy, Lavinia is more virile than feminine, just as Orin is more effeminate, even though he murders Adam Brant in cold blood. The changing circumstances of the characters, between captivity or tyranny, the sex itself tends to be modified and invested. For example, Christine begins as a feminine character, moves to tyranny through the murder of Ezra Mannon and control over Adam and her children, but ends as a captive in her suicide. Inversely, the characters, who by their condition are outside the rapport of force and therefore, outside tragedy, have no sex. Seth, the townsfolk, the chantyman and Hannah are sexless in this sense. Even Peter and Hazel accede to a very limited sexual existence, for the rapport of force in their cases is one-sided and the covetousness is never mutual. So as Barthes states, sex is a tragic privilege in the sense that it is the first attribute of the original conflict: it is not the sexes that bring conflict, it is the
conflict that defines the sex\textsuperscript{36}.

Thus it is such an alienation that constitutes the Mannonian Eros. It implies that the human body is not treated in plastic but in magical terms. The body ceases to mean anything in the Apolonian sense where the body is equivalent to a statue, signifying a glorified arranged past. Instead it is a repository of emotion, discord and disorder. Even the clothes it wears, both masks it and projects it. The physical turmoils of the "masked" bodies -- the pale death-like masks, the brusqueness, the stiffness, the woodenness, the stillness, the stiltedness, the flurry of subterfuge and lies, the fitful speeches and the potent silences indicate disorder, signalling a sign and a communication.

Barthes states that the most spectacular emotion, that which corresponds best to tragedy is the one that involves a being by his/her most vital centre, the language. Prohibition of speech as in the case of Abe and Ezra Mannon expresses sterility and the immobility of the erotic relation\textsuperscript{37}. The difficulty with speech as Ezra Mannon personifies it or the felicity of expression indicate acute aridness or the lack of it. To escape from speech is to escape from the relation of force, and therefore, it is an escape from tragedy, since the being is not involved in any relation of force. So the periodic "silences" of Abe and Ezra, to which Christine refers is a dodging of tragedy. Depression is involved in the relation of force. While Orin goes into acute melancholy after Christine's death, Lavinia is only in
"mournings" at her father's death. So while Orin cannot come to grips with his loss and is depressed with melancholia and deteriorates thereafter, Lavinia internalises her grief and finds herself in a relation of force with her legacy. Orin, on the other hand, kills himself as he cannot come to terms with the relation of force that he is engaged in with himself. Thus for Lavinia and Orin, their biological sexes get interchanged in their respective engagement with melancholy and mourning.

Naturally, the turmoil is the privilege of the tragic character because he/she is the only one involved in the relation of force. The peripheral characters can at best sympathise with them but never quite empathise. They attempt to calm the tragic character but never have the ritual language of the emotions. Seth, for example, is characterised more by his "knowing" silences than by his gregariousness or forthrightness.

The Mannonian eros is always expressed through the narrative. The imagination is retrospective and recalls the coveted realm of the South Sea islands. Like a trance the past becomes the present with the subject reliving the scene in his dream or phantasm. Approximating to the hypotyposis, where the image holds the place of the thing, the islands are in fact veritable phantasms, recalled to nourish pleasure or bitterness and is subject to repetitions. The dream is also a premonition and a retrospection. Therefore, the Mannonian erotic is a case of the real being continuously deceived and the image becomes
elusive in a mirage-like fashion. As the crux of the Mannonian phantasm is the image transposed in the dialectics of the tyrant and the captive.

The fundamental conflict in the trilogy is not the conflict caused by love. In fact, the essential rapport is the rapport of authority. Love is present but only to reveal it. Barthes formulates such a conflict in the form of a double equation:

A has authority over B.

A loves B who does not love him\(^{38}\).

While the relation of love is fluid and implicit, the relation of authority is constant and explicit. Love can be masked as Lavinia's for Adam, problematic as Christine's for Adam, pacified as Ezra's for Lavinia, or inversed as Orin's for Lavinia. The relation of authority is revealed all along as Abe's over the Mannons', Ezra's over the Mannons', Christine's over Adam and Orin, Lavinia's over Christine, Orin and Peter and so on. The ensemble of this situation of authority results in hatred and violence since A and B refuse to acknowledge that they derive meaning from one another, and cannot be defined separately. Since A has no independent entity till B accedes to the relation, no epithet of relationship can be bestowed on it. When Christine gives birth to her children, they in turn, bestow motherhood on her. The conflict arises when Christine refuses to acknowledge the symbiosis of the relationship. Unless the relation is reciprocal and simultaneous at the same time, there will always be dominance of one over the other.
Abelard emphasized on the reciprocity and simultaneous nature of a relation. Tragedy occurs when the rapport of authority replaces the rapport of love. The reciprocal and simultaneous sentiments of A and B get overtaken by violence when one member of the equation assumes power and looks at the other as the subject. Unless A and B are held in the same lieu and enjoy a mutual rapport of love, the tragic space is created. So while Abe played the tyrant with his captives David and Marie, Ezra emulates him in similar fashion playing the dominant role with Christine and his children. Similarly, Lavinia and Orin play the tyrants with Christine and Adam expressing relations of force filled with hatred. The desire for the Other is felt simultaneously with a desire to usurp and own the other. The physical "being-there" of the other contains the germ to annihilate it. Barthes translates this feeling through "a horrible spatial fear.... it is necessary that one who occupies space must disappear..... or(be) destroyed. The radicalism of the tragic solution is due to the simplicity of the initial problem: all tragedy seems to be held by the idea that there is no place for two. The tragic conflict is a crisis of space." As the space is closed, the relation between A and B is immobile. The only escape route is through a dream -- phantasm, crime, accident, exile or death. As Sartre classifies it, A wants to possess the liberty of B by force and he is constantly engaged in an "insoluble paradox", for if A possesses it, he destroys it and
if he recognises it, he is only more frustrated as he cannot choose between an absolute power or an absolute love, between rape and oblation\textsuperscript{41}. Tragedy, is in essence the representation of this immobility and the characters in "Mourning Becomes Electra" destroy themselves in a bid to escape from it.

Since all relations are governed by the two perceptions of reciprocity or hierarchy, the Mannons engage in constant "psychical" duels with each other to gain ascendancy. Abhorring respect for the other, they end up in relations of power which by their very nature are brittle and prone to falling apart. Since such relations can never be sustained over time, the relations between parents -- progeny (Abe - David - Marie - Adam, Ezra - Christine - Lavinia - Orin); husband-wife (David-Marie, Ezra-Christine); lover-beloved (Christine-Adam, Orin-Hazel, Lavinia-Peter) and brother-sister (Lavinia-Orin, Peter-Hazel), collapse within the tragic space. Instead of defining each other vis-a-vis their relation to the other, each of the Mannons is caught in distintegrating relations of power. The Oedipus/Electra complex that Orin and Lavinia signify indicate a family situation based on feudal systems in which the parents see themselves as only givers to their progeny, refusing to acknowledge the mutual importance of each to the other. Abelard's concept of Godhead and fatherhood merge here. Unquestioning subservience -- theologically and familially -- can only lead to revolutions. Revolutions can only annihilate. Even Oedipus finally rises to kill his father, just as the French and Russian revolutions led
to bloodshed and changing of the order. Tragedy occurs when, in the destruction of the other, lies the seed of one's own destruction.

Destruction, despair and death seem to be the prevailing ethos, when the face and the mask come face to face at the end of the trilogy, vis-a-vis Lavinia's stock-taking at the end. Since the Mannonian Eros oscillates between life and death, Thanatos is always lurking there to impose itself. In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud distinguishes between the "ego instincts" and the "sexual instincts". The former, he says, "exercise pressure towards death and the latter towards a prolongation of life."

The struggle between the two sorts of instincts is advanced to a major conflict, within each psyche. For it is towards death, that the ego-instinct tends in a self-destructive way as the origin of the instinct is "the need to restore an earlier state of things." The South Sea Islands indicate precisely this and, therefore, justify the Mannons' preoccupation with them. Freud's paradoxical formulation, "the aim of all life is death", thus can take on a precise significance as an interpretative tool in the reading of the trilogy.

The thematic image of the South Sea islands in the trilogy fits in here, representing, just as the escape to the frontiers, the Western belief that distance is a way of escape and a remedy for all problems. The islands, for the Mannons, is the constant reminder of the inadequacies of their life on land. However, the
islands oscillate in significance, swinging between "blessedness" and a cursed fetish. In so far as the Mannons attempt to repeatedly "fix" the meaning of the islands in their own psychic economies, the theory of Lacan seems to impose itself at this stage. 43

In Lacan's version, the neonate has a utopian relationship with its mother till the withdrawal of the breast. In this metaphoric realm of the "Imaginary" everything is satisfactory. The experience of desire becomes apparent when the impossible object of desire -- the breast of the mother -- is withdrawn. Corresponding to the Oedipus complex, it leads to the child being involved in take over bids over its parents. Since the parents cannot be possessed as objects of desire, the child's attempts to colonise them is doomed. The child then learns the meaning of exclusion, absence, lack and defeat. Lavinia's pacing below the bedroom window of her parents, after Ezra's homecoming in Act III of "Homecoming" is a classic depiction of this complex. The harsh realm of the symbolic, belongs to the world of metonymy, where only endless displacement of possible meanings take place, with one signifier leading to another with the "real" significance of any signifier being elusive.

Lacan's contention is rife with problems as he does not quite specify the hierarchy of the Imaginary and the Symbolic or whether they are co-temporal and co-extensive. Similarly, Lacan refuses to look at any text in detail, using his pronouncements. On the rare occasion when he does a reading of Poe's "The
Purloined Letter," he clarifies that he is using it as an analogy to show how the unconscious works. However, even though Lacan's theory is limiting, his contention that the object of desire is always deferred, belated or irretrievable has a poetic suggestiveness, particularly well-adapted to the sensibility of the modern world. It is clear that the psyche most longs for that which has been made impossible for it. "Mourning Becomes Electra" is, therefore, overwhelmingly overdetermined in this respect. Everything in it is a portrayal of a state of unrequited longing. It is never very clear what each of the Mannons "lack", but their psyches reflect covetousness and are a manifestation of the acquisitive instinct.

The second Lacanian insight useful to us, is that the subject is created in terms of the language of others. Its reality is reflected back to it from what others say. Reality is largely linguistic and we define what we want in terms of words or signifiers and thus become a signifier in our own chain and get lost in the maze. Our subjective reality is very largely "real" because it is mirrored back to us from what the others say. We define what we want in other people's words and thus become signifiers too. Applied to "Mourning Becomes Electra", this shows that the Mannons are defined by and define themselves in terms of a certain social "set", specially the chorus. They are grounded in their social reality and gain in their "subjectivity", in the defining words and rhetoric of the others.
This, however, gives the lie to Lacan's claim that we have no "subjectivity", since a subjectivity is set up and maintained in O'Neill's trilogy.

Similarly, Lacan's theory about the impossibility of the "signified" may fit in very aptly with fashionable modern scepticism. Even though his stand gives us leeway to stop worrying about what a literary text means, since any discourse according to him is a mere extended set of signifiers and that there is no one transcendentally derivable "signified". Contemporary fiction and films reiterate this Lacanian view of the unconscious as the "sliding of the signified beneath the signifier." It is obvious that such "constant fading and evaporation of meaning" as Terry Eagleton calls it, would lead to incoherence and complete breakdown of communication. The answer to this vexed question then, lies in the ego or the consciousness repressing this turbulent activity and nailing down words on to meanings. Occasionally something from the unconscious slips into the discourse and it is such slips of the tongue that Lacan sees in language as it unfolds. For him, the unconscious is not a seething, tumultous private entity "inside" of us but an effect of our relations with one another. Therefore, the unconscious, for him is "outside" of us or exists "between" us, as our relationships testify. It manifests itself the most in the mutuality of relations vis-a-vis mother-son, father-daughter, husband-wife, brother-sister and so on. For Lacan, therefore, the unconscious, the parents and the symbolic
order are closely allied because, as he says, we can never dominate or subdue them to our own ends. They symbolise the other, which is the ultimately gratifying but impossible end to achieve.

Needless to say, Lacan's insights are valuable, however faulty their extraction. On reading "Mourning Becomes Electra", what possible final "signified" do the South Sea Islands indicate? For the Mannons, the South Sea Islands are the object of their desire. But they realize that the islands are the "mirror" which reflects not the Imaginary realm as hoped for by all of them. Instead they all find out, one by one, that the mirror is shattered and blind.

The decision of Lavinia to begin a living death in the isolated and possibly haunted "whited sepulchre" symbolizes a reawakening of resolve and determination. The isolation of the Mannon house and its monastic order of life, retraces the contiguity of the Exterior - Steps - Interior in reverse now. Like the receding waves of the sea and the evaporating vision of the islands, Lavinia retreats into the very house she wanted to escape from. But with a fresh resolve she reinforces her will in her complete rejection of the Dionysian dimension, even as she is being advised by Seth to leave the house for good. Just before her momentous decision, her plucking of the flowers in the garden like her mother, followed by her volte face unfolds a veritable mass of signifiers. The antithesis between flowers and no
flowers, lushness of the garden and the sterility of the house, the openness of the exterior and the claustrophobia of the shuttered interior, the past and the present hover in the realm of Lacan's undecidability between nature and culture. In the conclusion of the trilogy, O'Neill thus scatters many conflicting signifiers.

Lavinia is caught in the father - complex and paradoxically struggles at once to realize it and also to escape from a self-image reminiscent of her father. Her changing physical appearances indicate her psychical "oscillation". She is first shown resembling her father in her military bearing but her facial resemblance to her mother is also striking. She covets her mother's role as wife of Ezra, mother to Orin and beloved to Adam. Once the mother is annihilated, Lavinia assumes Christine's characteristics with chilling conviction. "She seems a mature woman sure of her feminine attractiveness. Her brown-gold hair is arranged as her mother's had been ... The movements of her body now have the feminine grace her mother's had possessed." (The Haunted, Act I, Sc. ii, p. 825). Now at perhaps her most guilty moment, she has lost her sense of sin and death. The Mannon ghosts have been placated. Like her father, she finds life only after the experience of death.

While Lavinia, becomes more and more like Christine, Orin shows a "reversal" towards the characteristics of his father. He even wears a beard and walks "like a tin soldier." On their trip together to the South Sea Islands, after the reversals have
occurred, Orin is repulsed by Lavinia’s new sexuality and is consumed with puritanical disapproval and jealousy. He feels that he and Lavinia have actually become Ezra and Christine. "Can’t you see I’m now in Father’s place and you’re Mother?... I’m the Mannon you’re chained to!" (The Haunted, Act II, p.843).

Orin is thus drawn to his sister in a symbolic incest pattern representing the lonely Mannons introversion and narcissistic love. The same duality of love and loathing for oneself and its reflection in another which dominates the Mannon psyche also underlines this relationship. Orin hates Lavinia as much as he loves her. He accepts her and rejects her at the same time. She becomes what the Furies were to Orestes, a living reminder of his guilt. He suggests incest to her to damn her too. "You would feel as guilty then as I do. You would be as damned as I am!" he says (The Haunted Act III, p. 853).

Lavinia is fascinated and repelled, "I hate you! I wish you were dead! You’re too vile to live! You’d kill yourself if you weren’t such a coward!" she cries. (The Haunted, Act III, p. 854). Thus Lavinia commits her last murder as Orin proceeds to do just that. When Orin kills himself, Lavinia’s last illusion of her own innocence begins to crumble. In a reversal, the Puritan conscience (super ego or father-god) from which she had gained partial release when she became her mother’s daughter, now reasserts itself. She tries to be defiant as she shouts at the Mannon portraits "I’m Mother’s daughter -- not one of you!" but
succumbs to their inevitable drawing power. She is reclaimed as her new-found femininity reverses itself as she "squares her shoulders, with a return of the abrupt military movement copied from her father which she had of old -- as if by the very act of disowning the Mannons she had returned to the fold -- and marches stiffly from the room." (The Haunted, Act III, p. 856).

Lavinia makes one desperate bid to stall this reversal when she reaches out from behind her mask of death towards life. She sees Peter as a possible saviour but even as she tries to move towards life, she knows that the dead have not forgotten and will not forget till the cycle of justice has turned full circle. She realizes that she must pay for their lives with her own, but not with the simple expiation of her own death but by a living death that will bind her to the Mannon fate. So she tells Peter to "go home. Make it up with your mother and Hazel. Marry someone else. Love isn't permitted to me. The dead are too strong!" (The Haunted, Act IV, p. 865).

The reversals and chiasmus keep the elements in the kinetic work of art in constant relations of substitution. The oscillation in "Mourning Becomes Electra", even as it is grounded in legend, is a direct modernist influence, corresponding perhaps to some of the techniques of Impressionism. It is also reminiscent of what Paul de Man calls, "aporia", emphasizing the necessity of deciding upon one of two possible solutions and the imposed impossibility of finally choosing either. Very similar to the "oscillation" discussed above, it also recalls some of the
ambiguities that William Empson mentions in his work. When O'Neill presents the myth in modern dress, the superterrestrial world which threatens to overtake Orestes in the form of the Furies is also transposed into the present. Lavinia's acceptance of her fate as she is driven into the final solitude -- she walls herself in, has the windows nailed shut and intends to live a life far from people but with all the earthly tortures of memory intact -- is an apt transposition of modern existential loneliness and the ancient concept of fate.

It is possible, then to say, that in "Mourning Becomes Electra", death itself is a positive value. It would be unwise to write off Lacan's premise that a signifier can never be tied down to a single signified, but that the other signifiers in the text are all involved in each individual signifier. Nevertheless, the South Sea islands are rife with death-associated values while the Mannon house is explicitly given those values.

It is then possible, also to say that O'Neill here may be involved in seizing the Freudian paradox of "The aim of all life is death". His biography reveals that O'Neill was susceptible to a similar sort of death wish, where the nervous system can finally give up the struggle and rest. It is possible that O'Neill is depicting his rendering of the Freudian paradox in the Mannons' "fatal attraction" for torpor, especially Orin's yearning for infancy and the womb. It is immensely significant.
that in this return to the Imaginary realm of the womb’s security and happiness, Christine is the major interlocutor of Orin.

It is possible that Freud’s Eros and Thanatos are in subtly twined agon as Eros is always in thrall to Thanatos. It could be that the Mannonian fascination for the islands has a death wish as its basis. Orin’s constant recollection of childhood bliss and security, throbs in his present psyche as an aching absence. It is compounded by repeated disappointments and betrayals that could easily be converted into a death-wish. In fact, this seems to be the most potent reason behind the suicides of Christine and Orin. If then, O’Neill is working at the Freudian paradox, it is possible to say that for Orin (and by substitution, the other Mannons), since all satisfaction has belied hopes, then all that is desirable is connected with death or living death.

If we read the signifiers in the chain, in the same vein, then the meaning or at least "a" meaning of the islands and its relation to the death-dealing house and its inmates would emerge. It is however, thanks to the strength of Lacan’s insight, about the undecidability of signifiers, that it remains only a possibility. In any case, a hermeneutic study of the discourse along these lines would make perfect sense, but it would also mean the arbitrary privileging of some signifiers over others. Faced with such a dilemma, Lacan offers the answer and it is best to stop looking for precise, grounded signifieds. When Lavinia turns her back and marches into the shuttered house, O’Neill virtually instructs us to leave her alone, as a still unravished
but strangely fulfilled girl-woman, a Mannon yet a "half-Mannon", and to turn literary theory from drawing a hasty conclusion to a politic contemplation.

NOTES


15. Ibid.


29. O'Neil in "Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Diary". Reprinted in V. Floyd.


34. O'Neil in "Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Diary". Reprinted in V. Floyd.


36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.


41. Barthes discusses the Sartrian schema in his essay "On Racine".


