CHAPTER I
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MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

The function of a title is to indicate a work of literature and point to its content. According to Roland Barthes in his analysis of Poe's "Valdemar", the proper noun should "always be properly questioned" as it is "the prince of signifiers; its connotations are rich, social and symbolic." Therefore, the title poses the text's first enigma. Is O'Neill referring to the mythical Electra in person or is he creating a modern approximation to her? The answer comes only at the end of the trilogy, for though there is no physical character called Electra in the three plays, the trilogy is imbued with the essence of the Electra and Oedipus myths. This convention that governs the appearance of the protagonist of a tragedy serving to whet our curiosity with a mystery to unravel, falls neatly into what Barthes calls the hermeneutic code. Common to all narrative it motivates the consumption of the 'lisible' or 'readerly' texts by raising questions and withholding the answers till the end. After completing the trilogy in 1931, O'Neill revealed that he "sought to convey that mourning befits Electra; it is her fate; black is becoming to her and it is the colour that becomes her destiny". Therefore, 'mourning' and 'Electra' are signifiers which deliver multiple meanings through the progression of the trilogy.
In Barthes' semic code, semes appear to be fleeting citations with no real significance, "a galaxy of trifling data" at first acquaintance, but in fact they coalesce into overriding thematic importance through repetition.\(^4\)

The titles of the three plays which constitute the trilogy, make up the referential code, derived from the cultural stereotypes of the age. "Homecoming", "The Hunted" and "The Haunted" are codes that are so familiar, as Barthes says, that they have an "emetic virtue" so as to "bring on nausea by the boredom, conformism and disgust with repetition that establishes them".\(^5\)

The opening act of the trilogy plunges us straight into the semes that will help us break as Martin Esslin says, "the total image down into the separate items of information that have been present, and convert the multidimensional instant impression into a linear sequence of separate ingredients", remembering all the while that "for each member of the audience this impact of the image, at any given moment, will be different, simply because different people notice different things in a different sequence".\(^6\)

THE FIRST PLAY: HOMECOMING

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

Clearly, O'Neill attempts to develop assonantal parallels with the Greek names from the myth. Ezra Mannon is Agamemnon, Adam Brant is Aegisthus, Christine is Clytemnestra, Lavinia is Electra and Orin who is only referred to here is Orestes. Repeated semes originate from the characters' names several times, underscoring the complexities of their personalities for as Barthes says, "The proper name acts as a magnetic field for the semes".7

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

To achieve a "modern psychological approximation of Greek sense of fate" O'Neill recognized that the Civil War with its heroic, even epic scale was the best possible period, allowing him the desired modernity and also providing the time and distance essential to the tragic legend. The Mannon house was made to resemble a Greek temple with total architectural and thematic justification.8
The scene opens with the sound of the victory band playing in the distance. Closer home the chanty, "Shenandoah" reminiscent of the brooding rhythm of the sea is heard sung in Seth's voice - who is being followed by a threesome - Amos Ames, Louisa and Minnie. The life-like mask apparent on the faces of the Mannons is evident also on Seth as he leads the choric group to an inspection of the domain of "the rich and exclusive Mannons". They reveal how the society at large reacts to the isolated Mannons.

Commenting on the need to celebrate the victory, they are awe-struck at the "party" house of the Mannons. Seth reminds the group of how privileged they are to be allowed in so close. Performing their choric role, the group discusses how the Mannons have come by such wealth. Seth betrays his loyalty to the family by boasting about the Mannon family background, Ezra Mannon's wealth and accomplishments which includes his being a soldier, judge, mayor and general. He explains how the Mannons have been "top dog" for almost two hundred years.

Talk then veers to the "furrin looking and queer" wife of Mannon who Seth obviously dislikes. He leaves his audience to find Lavinia. While they stand chatting, Christine makes her dramatic appearance on the portico, at the top of the steps. The reaction is instant. Christine stands out as "a tall, striking looking woman". Her hair and clothes are striking too and her face though handsome gives the impression of being "not living
flesh but a wonderfully life-like pale mask" in which only the eyes are alive.

As Christine moves on towards the flower garden, the chorus whisper about the skeletons in the Mannon closets, especially the scandal of Abe Mannon's brother marrying the French Canuck nurse girl whom he had got into trouble. Seth rejoins them complaining about the negress cook who always overworked him just as Lavinia makes an appearance similar to her mother's.

Lavinia's resemblance to her mother is striking, though her effort to emphasize the dissimilarities is also noticeable. Her austere look contrasts with Christine's voluptuousness and sensuality. However, the "life like mask impression" is intact.

Seth makes an attempt to go and meet her but stops on seeing the bleak and bitter expression on Lavinia's face. While Christine hears the victory band as a threat, Lavinia reacts with triumph as she stands listening to it. The chorus in the meanwhile comment on Lavinia's looks. Seth sends them off to the orchard so that he can talk to her. He gives her the good news of the victory and to expect her father home soon. It is clear that Lavinia is awaiting Mannon's return with grim satisfaction.

Seth questions her about her movements the previous day and night. Lavinia lies about it, saying she had spent it with Peter and Hazel. But Seth catches her out. She then confesses to having gone to New York. Seth's sympathy is obvious as he hints at the truth but Lavinia cuts off any confidences from him. Nevertheless he warns her of Brant. They are interrupted in their talk by
Peter and Hazel. Lavinia tells him to meet her afterwards. She then turns to show false warmth in welcoming her friends. Their faces, in comparison, are open, innocent and guileless with no shades of "life-like masks".

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

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

Peter reminds her that Mannon has her mother but Lavinia retorts sharply that, "he needs me more!" She then tries to be nice to Peter and says that she cherishes him as a brother and nothing more. Peter has to agree but does not lose hope for the future though he is chary of Brant becoming his rival. Lavinia
gets angry and says, "I hate the sight of him." Peter comments on Brant's reminding him of someone he knows. Lavinia puts him off the scent, by saying that that was not possible as Brant was just someone her grandfather had liked in New York. They discuss Brant's antecedents and Lavinia tells him of his sea-faring background, especially his South Sea island escapade. Lavinia's bitterness about Brant is apparent as she talks of him. They are interrupted by Christine who returns from the garden with a big bunch of flowers. Peter makes a hasty exit, leaving mother and daughter alone with the bitter antagonism between them surfacing.

Christine comments on Lavinia's shabby treatment of Peter and wonders why Lavinia has been avoiding her. Lavinia says it was to think things over. Christine is tense and changes the subject by commenting on the trespassers. Lavinia reveals that she had given them permission as Christine had been away in New York and so could not be consulted. Lavinia then stares at her mother, wanting to know more about her grandfather's health as Christine had been making such frequent trips to see him. Christine avoids her eyes and hopes that her father would be on his feet again soon. Anxious to change the subject, she mentions plucking the flowers to brighten up the tomb-like house, revealing her intense hatred for the "monstrosity" that Abe Mannon had built. She feels that Lavinia likes "the whitened-sepulchre" because it suited her temperament. On her way in, she turns as though she had just remembered and mentions that she had met Brant on the street in New York and that he was coming for
supper that evening since he was very keen to meet Lavinia.

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

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

What is being formulated here is a sequence, the progress of relationships and the developments of liaisons and marriages. This is part of the proairetic code or code of actions, whereby whoever reads the text amasses certain data under some generic titles for actions. The code is founded on sequence to illustrate how actions in narrative are systematically coded by a dependence on the logic of the already seen, the already read and the already done. By this system a cultural code of actions is established.

Brant covers up his surprise at seeing Lavinia outside. His face too has a "life-like mask" quality about it. He tries to charm Lavinia with his manners and is overjoyed to hear that he can get some time alone with her. He holds her hand and Lavinia pulls it away in agitation. She tries to control herself and talks about Lee’s surrender and Mannon’s expected arrival at home. Her tone makes Brant suspicious. He is aware of her extreme fondness for her father. Lavinia reiterates her love for her father and how she would do anything to protect him from hurt. Brant feels that it is most natural for daughters to be close to
their fathers and sons to love their mothers more. But in Lavinia's case he expected an exception as the resemblance between mother and daughter was so striking. He recalls his own mother who had had hair similar to that of the Mannon women. He betrays a deep reverence for her when he mentions her. Lavinia protests against the alleged likeness to her mother as she hates it. "Everybody knows I take after Father!" she says vehemently. Brant is taken aback by her harsh tone and wonders why she is angry. He wonders whether he has unknowingly upset her by any chance and asks to be forgiven. He tries to get intimate with her by recalling the night when they both had walked along the shore and kissed. Brant repents that he may have "grabbed" too much that night and bored her with his talk of ships. Lavinia recalls the very words he had used for his ships in a dry tone, leading Brant to think that she was perhaps jealous and threatened by his devotion to the sea and ships, as most women were. Trying to make light of it, he reassures her but says he had told her everything because she too had seemed so interested, especially about the islands in the South Seas where he had been ship-wrecked. Lavinia remarks dryly on his professed admiration for the naked native women of those islands, who appeared to be living in the garden of Paradise. Brant again recalls the pristine beauty of those "Blessed Isles" where the dirty dreams of greed and power had not yet corrupted the natives. Lavinia asks him ironically about dirty dreams of love. Brant is confused and tries to change the subject by recalling their walk in the moonlit night and how
unforgettable it had been. He tries to hold her hand, but she retaliates angrily. She calls him a liar and remembering Seth’s advice, calls him "the son of a low Canuck nurse girl."

Brant is stunned and tries to ignore it but the insult to his dear dead mother enrages him. He forgets all prudence and betrays the truth himself. Lavinia is appalled, now that the suspicion has been verified. Brant tries to control himself and is defiantly proud of being his mother’s son while professing shame over "the dirty Mannon blood" in him. He crudely points out her earlier responsiveness to his advances. Lavinia defends herself by saying that she had acted so to find out the truth. Brant is not convinced. He feels that Mannon has lied to her about Marie Brantome and he now wants to tell her the truth. He grabs her arm and taunts her with the fact that it was her grandfather Abe Mannon’s jealousy, since he too had loved Marie, that had made him throw David Mannon out of the house and cheat him out of his share of the business. Inspite of knowing that David and Marie were starving, he had not helped them. David had soon taken to drinks being "a coward like all Mannons" and it was Marie who had looked after the family. Brant’s hatred for his father is obvious, when he relates how he had hit him as a seven year old boy for having hit his mother and how his mother had always loved David inspite of this treatment.

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

Lavinia hints coldly at Brant's love affair with Christine, as being the form of revenge he was talking about. She feels it is typical of a cowardly son of a servant. Brant is confused but Lavinia refuses to enlighten him further and is in full command of the situation. She instructs him to wait outside until she has finished talking to her mother. Brant tries to defy her, but is coldly threatened with the fact that Mannon will be told about it all if he does so. Brant tries to pacify her by professing his love for her but she only climbs the steps and turns and stares at him venomously. He is silenced, she controls herself, goes stiffly in and closes the door in silence. Act II opens in the interior of Ezra Mannon's study. Chronologically, it is an immediate follow-up to Act I. The description of the study, again reiterates plainness and greyness. It is situated in history by the use of portraits of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton and John Marshall on the walls. The book-case filled
with lawbooks underline Ezra Mannon's legal background. His portrait on the wall, focuses on the startling likeness between him and Adam Brant. His black judge's robe and stern and cold expression in the portrait again harks back to "the life-like mask" motif, that has been evident in Christine, Lavinia Brant and Seth till now. The setting sun adds to the aura of short-lived crimson brightness leading to sombreness at the end.

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

Christine is tense and covers it up with derisive behaviour. But Lavinia's revelations startle her thoroughly. Lavinia reveals how she had made a pretext of visiting Hazel and Peter overnight, when in actual fact she had followed Christine to New York and seen her go into Brant's room and heard her professing her love to him. Lavinia then accuses her mother of adultery. Christine produces alibis and lies that it was a lady-friend's house and that she had visited the place only once, but Lavinia counters it with her knowledge, after having cross-checked with the land-lady.
of the house while she had been there. Lavinia now accuses her mother of lying about her frequent visits to New York and her affair with Brant, calling her "shameless and evil". She loses control of her poise and voice as she stands trembling.

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

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

Lavinia winces at this harsh truth and realises why her mother had always repulsed her affectionate advances, right from her childhood. That unrequited love turns into bitter hatred for her mother and produces a rivalry with her for the affection of her father, brother and Brant. Orin, Lavinia bitterly finds out, escapes from his mother's disgust because all the time that she had been carrying him, Ezra Mannon was away in Mexico. So to
Christine, Orin becomes totally her own child. But Lavinia resenting the bond between mother and son tries to break it up by provoking Orin to go and fight in the war. When Christine accuses her of this, Lavinia assumes the stern tone of a guardian and justifies it by claiming it to be a Mannon duty to fight for the country.

Christine then justifies her affair with Brant by saying that it was Orin's going away that had made her vulnerable and want revenge for all the injustices done to her. Brant's entry on the scene, she claims, filled the void. Lavinia startles her mother again by revealing Brant's heritage of illegitimacy. Christine plays it down and thereby puts Lavinia on the defensive by pointedly asking her what her next course of action would be. For Lavinia protecting her father from the harsh truth and ensuring his welfare is of paramount importance. Therefore, she demands a price for her silence. Christine must give up Brant totally and promise not to even see him in the future, she says.

Christine knows Lavinia wants to save the family from scandal but she also accuses her of doing all this as she had wanted Brant for herself and could not bear the thought of him loving her mother. Lavinia denies it, but the mother has known her daughter to covet everything that she has had right from her childhood. Christine states it boldly, "You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always schemed to steal my place!"
Lavinia denies it vehemently but betrays herself by threatening her mother. Christine tries to make light of the threat and plans to defy Lavinia and openly acknowledge Brant. But Lavinia's rejoinder of Ezra Mannon's wrath falling on Brant's professional life chastens her. Besides, she also touches a sensitive chord in Christine when she warns her that Brant would finally get to hate her as she, being older would age and lose her looks while he was still in his prime. Christine's vanity is stung and she betrays her fears by trying to strike Lavinia.

However, Lavinia controls her actions now, and Christine concedes to her demand of not meeting Brant again after the night. In the bargain, she denies Lavinia the pleasure of seeing her mother grieve at losing Brant. Lavinia shudders at how she had nearly fallen for her mother's ruse of having Brant court her to cover up his real intentions. Lavinia again denies being tricked but Christine knows better as she only smiles mockingly in turn.

To regain the upper hand in the situation, Lavinia startles Christine with the news that she has already hinted about Adam's frequent visits home and the insinuations about it, in her letters to Ezra Mannon and Orin. Christine realises that Lavinia is trying to blackmail her and control all her future actions. She almost warns her that Lavinia would be responsible for any fall out of the situation in the future. Nevertheless, she promises "to obey" Lavinia's orders as there is nothing else that she can do.
Lavinia leaves to go and find out news of her father while Christine is given half an hour "to get rid" of Brant. Christine waits for her to leave, pauses in deep thought while her face assumes the sinister look of an evil mask, then quickly as though she has decided something writes down two words on a piece of paper and calls Adam into the room. While she waits for him, her eyes are held by the eyes of her husband in the portrait. All her hatred comes out in a venomous statement, "You can thank Vinnie, Ezra", which hints at the sinister plans she has for the future.

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

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

Christine begins to voice her plan of action, is momentarily unnerved by Mannon's portrait and wants to leave the room, then defiantly sits down again, saying, "No! I've been afraid of you long enough, Ezra!" Brant feels that it had been a mistake to have courted Lavinia as that had made her pay too much attention to him. Christine rues her overenthusiasm to see Brant oftener which has led to all their problems. She had also been wishfully hoping that Mannon would die in the war and so had thrown discretion to the winds.

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

Christine brings him back to earth by reminding him of the consequences of murdering him which would only mean certain death for both of them. Brant then plans on fighting him out alone as he has seen it done in the West, or challenging him to a duel publicly. Christine points out the illegality of all these plans
and reminds him of Mannon's judicial experience which would only lead to having him arrested. Taking the cue from Brant's seething anger, Christine provokes him further and says that instead of revenge he would only become the laughing stock of the town. Brant thinks of his ship, the "Flying Trades" as an escape route but Christine is quick to point out how Mannon's far-reaching influence would have him black-listed in no time.

Christine steers the conversation again to the good luck Mannon's death would have brought their way, as then they could have married and Brant would have inherited the Mannon estate that was rightfully his. That would have enabled Brant to buy his own ship as he has so often dreamed about. Brant's enthusiasm at the idea is Christine's aim. He considers his ship as beautiful as Christine, compares the two as sisters and plans their honeymoon on it to China and the South Pacific Islands.

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

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

Brant is stunned but takes the slip mechanically and before he can react to it Christine asks him to get the drug from a druggist on the water-front by saying it was for a sick dog on the ship, and she herself plans to lie in wait for the mail to escape Lavinia's detecting it. After that Brant is to wait on his ship till he hears from her. Brant is afraid but Christine confidently allays his fears. She goads him into hurrying up with the plan, as the sooner it happened to Mannon after his return, the less suspicious it would seem.

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

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

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

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

Seth suddenly remembers his previous talk with Lavinia in Act II and asks her whether she has checked up on Brant's heritage. Lavinia lies to him instinctively, and says that their assumptions had been wrong. Seth stares at her in disbelief, then understands and says that he will leave things as she wants them to be. Lavinia then wants to know about the kind of woman Marie Brantome' had been, thus giving the lie to her earlier statement. Seth recalls Marie as a charming happy-go-lucky person, full of life, free and wild, almost animal like in her gay abandon. She had been pretty too with hair exactly the colour as that of Christine and Lavinia. Seth mentions how popular Marie had been with everyone, including Mannon, who had been a youngster then. His mother had been a stern person and Marie, the complete opposite, had made much of him. Lavinia is amazed that even her father had been charmed by Marie but Seth is quick to point out that it also had made Mannon hate her all the more when the truth of the affair between Marie and his uncle David had become known.

Lavinia has a vague premonition of a strange fear, cuts off her confidences to Seth and tells him that she cannot believe her father's weakness for Marie and attributes it to Seth's having drunk too much. She asks him to go and sleep off his whiskey. Seth understands her compulsions and then signals to her as the front door opens behind her to reveal Christine outlined in the light from the hall. She is dressed in fine clothes and walks to
the edge of the stairs behind Lavinia. The moonlight falling on
the faces of the mother and daughter accentuates the resemblance
between them and also their antagonistic effort to be unlike each
other in body and dress. Lavinia does not acknowledge her mother
and after a moment's silence, Seth takes his leave and disappears
around the corner.

After a pause, Christine mocks at her daughter, wondering
why she of all people was moongazing, considering it was not
right for puritan girls to look into spring, as beauty and love
were considered hateful by them. She wonders why Lavinia is not
marrying Peter as she is sure she does not want to be left an old
maid. Lavinia quietly assures her of her duty. Christine mocks
at the word "duty" which she feels is bandied about too much in
their house. She says that she has done hers all these years, but
after some time there must come an end to that. Lavinia reminds
her of another end that has come and her duty as a wife again.
Christine is tempted to be defiant but then quietly acquiesces.
That makes Lavinia suspicious about what Christine is plotting
this time. Christine is taken aback at her perception but
conceals it. Lavinia is amazed at Christine's calm attitude
inspite of the thought of losing Brant. Christine voices her
resolve not to reveal her feelings and let Lavinia gloat. After a
pause she asks Lavinia for information about Mannon's return as
henceforth she has to play a part and therefore would like to be
forewarned. Lavinia tells her that Mannon is expected to come
anytime as he had written to say that he would not wait for his
brigade to be disbanded before coming home.

Christine taunts Lavinia, saying perhaps the beau she had
been waiting for in the moonlight was Mannon. Then she feels that
the night train must have arrived a long time ago and so there
was no hope of his coming home that night. Lavinia gets up
excitedly as she hears footsteps down the drive. Christine also
rises in anticipation. Mannon enters and stands in the shadow
staring at his house, wife and daughter. He too wears the
significant mask-like look on his face and it is more pronounced
in him than on the others. He resembles his portrait in the study
except for the extra lines on his face now and the battle-
weariness. He is stiff and wooden in speech and mannerisms but
brusque and authoritative at the same time.

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

Christine makes light of the compliments from her husband
and is concerned about how tired he must be, asking him to sit
for sometime on the steps as the moonlight was so beautiful. Lavinia who has been jealously watching husband and wife, butts in, saying it was too damp and that Mannon would be hungry. She mothers him and wants to take him in to eat. Mannon enjoys his daughter's attention but is embarrassed before his wife and so tells his daughter to sit down on the steps too, so that he could rest a while.

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

Lavinia feels bad for the President who had to die at the moment of his victory which leads Mannon to talk philosophically about all victory ending in death and wondering whether all defeat ended in the victory of death. Lavinia and Christine stare at him in surprise and wonder. Christine asks him about Orin wondering why he too could not have come home on leave. Mannon admits to having kept quiet about Orin's getting wounded in the war. Lavinia is concerned while Christine fears the worst. She feels that Mannon was lying and that Orin was dead already. She accuses him of forcing Orin into the war. Lavinia cannot bear to hear it, while Mannon with a trace of jealousy, curtly tells Christine off for imagining the worst about "her baby". He is
glad that now Orin is no more a baby as he had done one of the bravest things in the war and had got wounded slightly on the head. He had developed brain fever due to the shock and was now recuperating in a hospital, more from nerves and restlessness than anything else. Mannon continues that Orin has inherited the restlessness from his mother.

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

After a pause, Lavinia asks Mannon about his heart trouble as she had been afraid that he had underplayed it to stop them from worrying. Mannon tells her not to worry, as he would have warned them if it had been serious. He adds that having seen so much of death in the past four years of war, he was not afraid of it anymore. He jumps up to his feet and says it was time to change the subject as he has had his fill of death and wants to forget about it all. He starts walking about while Lavinia watches him worriedly. He comments on the pain, like a knife in his heart when he gets an attack and how it puts him out of
action totally, which was why the doctor had advised him to avoid worrying, over-exertion or excitement.

Christine stares at him and comments on how unwell he was looking, and advises him to go to bed soon. Mannon stops pacing, looks at her and says that he too would like to go to bed soon. Lavinia is jealous and interrupts them saying that her father had just got in and they had not talked at all. Looking defiantly at her mother, she wonders why Christine feels he was looking tired as he looked his normal self to her. Then vindictively she tells Mannon that she has a lot to tell him especially about Captain Brant.

Christine's reaction is cool, and she does not let Lavinia put her on the defensive. Mannon wants to know more about Brant about whom Lavinia had mentioned in her letters. Christine lies easily saying that he was Lavinia's latest beau and that she has also gone walking with him at night. Lavinia gasps at her mother's defiance. Mannon is now suspicious of his daughter and wants to know why Lavinia had not mentioned that in her letters. Lavinia defends herself and says that she had gone out with him only once and had stopped even that when she had realized that Brant went chasing after every girl he saw. Mannon gets angry with Christine for allowing a chap like him to come to the house. Lavinia tells Mannon that Brant had thought that Christine too was flirting with him and so she had thought it her duty to write and warn him of the town gossip. She also tells her father to
warn Christine that it was foolish to allow Brant to call at home.

Mannon is incensed but Christine coldly interrupts him by saying that she would only discuss the matter when they were alone. She also calls Lavinia extremely inconsiderate to have annoyed him with "such ridiculous nonsense" the moment he got home. She tells Lavinia off for doing the mischief and asks her to leave them alone. Lavinia defies her. Mannon tells them sharply to stop squabbling as he had hoped they would have outgrown that nonsense by now and that he was not prepared to tolerate it in his house. Lavinia obeys her father and kisses him good night. Before leaving she expresses her happiness again at having him back home and tells him not to believe what her mother had said as he was the only man she would ever love, and that she planned to stay with him always.

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

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

Mannon is startled and feels guilty at that. Christine goes on to say that all his suspicions were based on a stupid letter that Lavinia had no business to write in the first place. She rues the fact that the day had come when she, an old woman with grown-up children should be accused of flirting with "a stupid ship captain". Mannon is relieved and placates her to say that he was not accusing her of anything but foolishness for giving the gossips a chance to be malicious. Christine wants to be sure whether that was all he held against her. Mannon is embarrassed and tries to make up to her by promising to say no more on the subject, except to know how Brant had "happened”.

Christine says that she is only too glad to comply and explains that she had met him at her father's, who had taken a fancy to him for some reason. So a guest of her father's could not have been rudely received at the Mannon household. She also claims to have hinted to Brant that his visits were not welcome, but since men like Brant did not understand such hints, it had not made any difference to him. She further explains that Brant had been there only four times in all, and all the talk of gossip was nonsense as the real purpose of his visits was to court
Lavinia. Christine asks Mannon to even verify her account. Mannon is angry at Brant's impudence and tells Christine that she should have told him off. She acts contrite and says that she had not minded Brant's coming as he always brought her news of her father who, as she had written to Mannon also, had been sick for the past one year. Then trying to restrain a derisive smile, she reminds Mannon of the strain she has been going through, worrying about her father, Orin and him. Mannon is so deeply moved by this revelation that he takes her hand in both of his and regrets having been unjust to her. He kisses her hand impulsively, but is embarrassed at this emotionalism and jokes about it, saying that perhaps she had been afraid that Johnny Reb would have killed him in the war. Christine controls a wild desire to laugh derisively at that.

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

Christine cannot help shrinking away from his caressing hand. Mannon turns away hurt and resentful at the rebuff. She tries to quickly make amends by saying that she was nervous and that she had not meant to rebuff him. Mannon goes back to pacing and stands looking at the trees while Christine eyes his back.
with hatred. She affects a sigh of weariness and closes her eyes, telling him that she was tired.

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

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

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

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

Christine professes total ignorance and says that she does not even understand what he was talking about. But Mannon insists that she has known about the wall all along and tells her not to lie. He looks at her still face and closed eyes and almost begs her to reassure him. He tells her that perhaps she has always known that she did not love him. He recalls the time of the Mexican war when he had sensed her desire to see him go. He felt that she had grown to hate him. He asks her but she stays quiet. He explains that he too had gone then, hoping to be killed. He guessed that perhaps she too had been hoping the same thing.

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

Christine is desperate and says that she does not deny
anything. Then as though in total surrender, he reveals all that
is inside him to her. He loves her, as he has loved her all
through the years. Christine is alarmed at Mannon’s behaviour and
tries to put a stop to it but in vain. Mannon gives vent to
another emotional outburst. He says that he wants it out in the
open lest she has forgotten. If so she was not to be blamed as
he has always kept quiet about the things he would like to have
said the most and compares the whole thing to a dead man in a
town square. He takes Christine’s hand suddenly and wants to know
what the wall in their marriage was. He asks for her help to
smash it down as they still have twenty good years before them.
He has even thought of the means for them to get closer to each
other. He suggests that they leave the children behind and go off
on a voyage to some island where they could be alone for a while.
That would help them find each other. He pleads with her that she
would find him a changed man now, as he was sick of death and
wants life. He begs her to love him and in desperation says that
he would make her love him.

Christine reacts wildly, pulls her hand away and asks him to
stop talking as she could not understand anything. She asks him
to leave her alone and says that what was destined will have to be. She feels weak. Mannon senses the rebuff deeply and takes it to heart. He assumes his previous stiffness and corroborates that it was late as his watch showed six past eleven. It was time to call it a day. He climbs two steps and then the irony of the situation hits him as he says it was funny that she should tell him to stop talking. Christine changes her stance cleverly. She takes his arm and seductively says that there was no need for words as there was no wall between them and that she loved him. Mannon grabs at the chance, stares at her, willing to give his soul to believe her words, but is afraid to do so. She kisses him, while he hugs her possessively. Just then Lavinia opens the door and appears on the top of the steps. She is dressed for bed in dark coloured clothes. She averts her gaze from the embrace as her parents separate, startled by the intrusion.

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

After the door closes on her parents, Lavinia stands staring after them, then walks, sits down and stands again. She looks up when she sees the light appear in the chinks of the shutters in
her parents' bedroom upstairs. She lets out an anguished cry against her mother, hating her for stealing her father's love from her again, accusing her of stealing all love from her, ever since her birth. She almost sobs in despair and wonders why her mother has done this to her as she had not done any harm to her. She looks up at the window again and wonders aloud how her father could love that "shameless harlot." She loses control of herself and says she could not tolerate the farce anymore as it was her duty to tell him the truth. Resolving to do just that, she calls for her father loudly. The bedroom window is opened and Mannon looks out, irritated at her behaviour. Lavinia loses her nerve and stammers that she wanted to say goodnight to him. Mannon is exasperated but then gently humours her, wishes her good night and tells her to go to bed soon, like a good girl.

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

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

Mannon wants a light in the room so that he can see her. As
he lights the candle, Christine quickly sits down with her face
turned three-quarters away from him. He sits up with a bitter
look on his face wondering whether she preferred the dark so that
she did not have to see her old man. Christine gets up to leave
the room in protest if he planned to say such stupid things.
Mannon pleads with her not to leave him alone and as she sits
down, apologizes, blaming it on his own bitterness and
cussedness. Christine comments that he had always been like that
since they married. Mannon asks her whether it was true of him
even before marriage. She says that she does not remember. Mannon
feels that she wants to forget the past when she had loved him.
Christine tries to change the subject by commenting on Lavinia
pacing before the house like a sentry guarding him, till two in
the morning. Mannon feels glad that at least Lavinia loves him.
After a pause, he complains about feeling strange. Christine
jumps at the conclusion that it may be his heart condition.
Mannon harshly denies that he is sick and accuses her of waiting
for just that to happen, suspecting even their hours together.
Christine springs up to leave the room. Mannon again apologizes
and says it was because something had been troubling his mind and
he was waiting and watching for something to happen. When
Christine asks him as to what it was, he confesses ignorance, but feels that his house, his room and his bed seem as though they were not his, and were waiting for someone to move in. Most of all he feels that she was not his wife and that she was waiting for something to happen.

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

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

Christine threatens him. But Mannon is past caring and talks bitterly of his hopes that his homecoming would be a new beginning for them. He feels he had torn his insides out for her, but he had only been an old fool. Christine gives vent to her anger now and asks him whether he had hoped to make her forget
all the years before. She claims that it was too late. There is a change in her voice, as though she had suddenly decided on a new course of action. She now gives him the truth, accusing him of having used her, making her have his children but even then she had never been his even once. She blames him for it as she had loved him when she had married him but he had filled her only with disgust. Mannon is furious, then tries to calm himself down, aware of the consequences of exciting himself. But Christine goads him on. She threatens to tell him some more hometruths. Mannon tries to put a stop to it but in vain.

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

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

Lavinia turns on her in hatred, accusing her of wanting him to die. Then suddenly as though her father’s last words were dawning on her, she asks Christine why he had called her guilty. Christine stammers, that she had told him about Brant being her lover. Lavinia is aghast and accuses Christine of murdering him. Christine accuses Lavinia of making Mannon talk of love and death all the time and forcing her to tell him the truth. Her voice thickens and her eyes half close as though she were fighting off sleep. Lavinia grabs her fiercely and wants to know why Mannon had said "not medicine". Christine professes her ignorance.
Lavinia suspects something but says even Christine could not be that evil. Christine says she did not know what Lavinia was talking about. She sways as though all her strength had gone. She moves away from Lavinia, takes an unsteady step and suddenly collapses in a faint at the foot of the bed. As her hand strikes on the floor, the box slips onto a rug. Lavinia does not notice it. She bends to check Christine and is relieved that it is only a faint. Her anguished hatred returns and she denounces her unconscious mother for having murdered her father by telling him about Brant. She vows that she will never allow Christine to marry Brant till she lived, as she was going to find a way to punish her. As she is getting up to her feet, her gaze falls on the little box on the rug. She snatches it up, and the suspicion turns to a horrified certainty. With a shuddering cry she shinks back, hugs her father and pleads with him in anguish, to come back, not leave her alone and tell her what to do.

Syntagmatics: The First Play: Homecoming

In this section, an attempt is made to present the outline of the semiotic discourse. It can be arranged into nineteen signifying ensembles, I,II, III....; through which the conceptual architecture of the work is manifested.

The first signifying ensemble is further divided into four images or sub-ensembles: a,b,c,d...

The sub-ensemble (Ia) begins with a "comprehensive" proposition delineating the exteriority of the place where the
action is to begin. The Mannon house surrounded by mournful
trees, Lincoln's assassination, setting sun, martial music, the
Shenandoah chanty and the chorus describe the time and
composition of this exterior space. The sub-ensemble (Ib) is a
semiological "extension", where even the house is "masked."

The second signifying ensemble (II.a.) is replete with
choric talk which in turn is full of partial "signifiers" of the
prosperity and social superiority of the Mannons. This unit of
choric talk is a micro ensemble in extension and also activates
the over-riding proposition of the Mannon scandals of the past.
The next sub-ensemble (II.b.) is an "infix", a proposition in
comprehension, which will keep recurring, highlighting the
animosity between mother and daughter and the affinity between
father and daughter. This is revealed in Lavinia's secret trip
to New York to spy on Christine (II.b.0) and her imitation of her
father's military stance. This is an important signifying unit
as it reiterates a proposition in "disjunction", heralding the
dynamicity of the discourse.

The micro ensemble (II.b.p.) introduces Seth who is located
in the role of seer-prophet. The next two ensembles introduce
Peter and Hazel and refer to Orin, with intricate relationships
being worked into the narrative, acting as infixes to be
interrelated and integrated later. In the next sub-ensemble
(II.d.n.) Peter proposes to Lavinia but she refuses vehemently
because of her commitment to her father. The Electra theme gains
more footage alongwith the introduction of the Oedipus theme in
the next sub-ensemble (II.d.p), when with the introduction of Brant, the Aegisthus factor comes into play. In the next signifying ensemble (III) there are three sub-ensembles which highlight the anti-thetical relationship and the power-struggle between Christine and Lavinia. The micro ensemble (III.a.n.) introduces Christine’s affinity for the garden and flowers in antithesis to Lavinia’s lack of such diversions. This looks forward to the third play when Lavinia is seen with flowers in a similar situation to Christine’s, very short-lived though it is.

The signifying sub-ensemble (IV.a.) "flash-backs" to the Mannon legacy when the secret of Brant’s parentage is revealed by Seth. The function of the flash-backs in a narrative is to allow the "whole" and the "parts" to run in a parallel stream with the conclusions being ambiguous at this point in time.

The sub-ensemble (V.a.) develops a unit of significance that extends the Electra theme. In (V.b.) Brant attempts to unveil the reason behind Lavinia’s devotion to her father.

The micro-ensemble (V.c.) introduces one of the most important kernel themes of the discourse, that of the South Sea Islands, but in the syntagmatic progression there will be several infixes. The actantial model of Propp, or even the modified form of Greimas, does not take account of the simultaneous signifying strands of the narrative. A narrative always begins with the introduction of multiple layers of a semiotic structure, which in the unity of the whole, act both independently and in conjunctive "network of strands", and is not just a linear progression of
events. In the sub-ensembles (V.d., V.e.m, V.c.n) Brant’s relation of tension with his Mannon legacy is carried forward in extension. His lack of control is counter-balanced by Lavinia’s full control over the situation in (V.f.)

The signifying ensemble (VI) is an extension in continuation of the earlier scene. The micro ensemble (VI.a.n.) introduces the Mannon portraits as equivalents to ghosts, signifying a searing paternal absence.

The signifying sub-ensemble (VII.a.) now shows Lavinia in a state of agitation, in sharp contrast to (V.f.) when she is in control. In (VII.b.) Lavinia and Christine engage in a bitter bid to unmask each other’s motives. In the micro ensemble (VII.b.n.) Christine confesses to her infidelity with Brant. In (VII.b.o.) she reveals the farcical marriage she has with Mannon. This is a proposition in extension for it forms the basis of the entire structure of death and revenge that is to follow. In the micro ensemble (VII.b.p.) Lavinia finally sees the light, as far as her relationship with her mother is concerned. Christine’s conscious exclusion of her daughter, engineers the situation for the Electra and Oedipus complexes to take hold with vengeance. This is an important signifying unit as it opposes the norm of parental relations with the offspring, leading to deviant behaviour. In the micro-ensemble (VII.b.t.) the power-play between Christine and Lavinia reaches a crescendo with each hurling accusations and threats at the other. As the narrative progresses, the micro ensembles form an integral part of the
sub-ensemble and act as infixes to be integrated into the text later. The comprehension of this metonymic structure is thus over-shadowed by the unity of the whole.

The signifying ensemble (VIII) has seven sub-ensembles highlighting the relation of power that Christine has over Brant. In (VIII.a.) Christine is alone in the study, plotting. In (VIII.b.) Brant is roped in as an active participant in the "transgression", even though he initially resists the cowardly act in the micro-ensemble (VIII.b.n.). The ensemble traces the see-saw nature of the relation of authority between the two till finally Christine subjugates Brant to her own will. Thus, this ensemble is both a complete unit of significance and indirectly introduces a conceptual opposition, a threshold to be "transgressed."

In the ninth signifying ensemble, the dramatic-discourse continues to spread its network by integrating new strands of significance. It has three main sub-ensembles, dealing with the imminent homecoming of Mannon, with canons booming (IX.a.), Brant leaving to get the poison (IX.b.); and Christine's sinister intent being countered by the Mannon portraits (IX.c.).

The tenth signifying ensemble leads us to another confrontation between Lavinia and Christine. In the micro-ensemble (X.a.m.), Lavinia is seen sitting on the steps like a statue. The tragic space incorporated in the steps is a kernel scene that establishes a contiguous relationship with the other two tragic spaces in the discourse later, that of the interior
and that of the extérieur. In (X.a.n.) the natural environment mirrors the psychic state of the characters.

In the signifying ensemble, (XI.a.) we move to the origin of a kernel theme - Marie Brantome’, who like the Mannon portraits becomes an icon symbolising a searing absence, maternally and sensually. The micro ensembles (XI.b.m,n and o.) extend the proposition where Lavinia is jealous of Marie’s hold even on her father. The signifying ensemble (XI.c.m.) invokes a conceptual juxtaposition between Christine and Lavinia. The micro ensemble (XI.c.n.) is a continuation of the earlier proposition. In the tussle that follows between them; (in XI.c.o; XI.d.m.; n; o;) the two engage in desperate relations of authority over each other to be interrupted by the approaching footsteps of Mannon.

The signifying ensemble (XII.a.) leads us to a full-blown depiction of the father-daughter-mother triangle. Mannon’s mask-like face and his stiff wooden mannerisms are referred to.

The signifying ensemble (XII.c.) is an important extension of the Electra proposition. Lavinia’s effusive welcome of her father is contrasted with the cold manner of Christine. Similarly, Mannon’s unself-conscious relationship with his daughter is contrasted with the unnaturalness in the husband-wife relationship in (XII.d.m.). Mannon, however is attracted to his wife’s beauty in (XII.d.n.) which looks forward to the signifying ensemble in (XVI.c.m.) where he wants to escape to the islands with her. Lavinia and Christine squabble again in (XII.e.m.and n)
which makes Mannon tell them off in (XIV.e.m.).

The thirteenth signifying ensemble refers to the political situation and locates the discourse historically. In (XIII.b.m.) reference is made to Orin's getting wounded in the war. The war theme is an extended proposition in the discourse though it has a disjunctive role to play as it is due to the separation caused by the war that Christine looks elsewhere for a son-lover substitute in Adam. This flash-forwards to the micro-ensemble (VII.d.q. of The Hunted) where Christine regrets the war causing the separation between mother and son. The function of predictions in a narrative is to allow the "whole" and the "parts" run in a parallel stream. These flash-forwards as opposed to the usual flash-backs reveal the conclusions in advance to superimpose the level of metaphoric comprehension on the syntagmatic denouement of the discourse. The ensuing sub-ensemble (XIII.b.n.) extends the proposition of a clear-cut division between the manifestations of the Electra and the Oedipus configurations while (XIII.c.m.) forwards the proposition of Mannon's jealousy of the mother-son affinity. The micro ensemble (XIII.c.n.) reveals Orin's relapse into childhood prefiguring once again, the events yet to come. The micro ensemble (XIII.c.o.) inverses the earlier situation in (XII.d.n.), with Mannon and Lavinia being the excluded party in the mother-son pairing.

In the next micro-ensemble (XIII.d.m.) we are introduced to the one physical vulnerability in Mannon's armour -his heart condition - which becomes the basis of Christine's sinister plot.
The following three micro-ensembles (XIII.d.n.; XIII.e.m;n.) are extensions of the same proposition.

Lavinia introduces a fresh sense of disjunction in (XIV.a.m.) by referring to Brant and his womanising. The following signifying ensembles extend the proposition to a point where Mannon has to mediate between the mutually accusative pair that Lavinia and Christine make. In the micro ensemble (XIV.e.o.) Mannon wants Lavinia to be his little girl a little longer. The auto-suggestion of the Electra theme is already at work.

The next signifying ensemble has ten sub-ensembles. The marital problems between Mannon and Christine now surface, when they are alone in (XV. a.), without the distracting presence of their children. Christine is on the offensive in (XV.b.) when she mentions the letter written by Lavinia. Mannon is on the defensive in (XV.c.) but is also curious to know the truth. In the micro-ensemble (XV.d.n.) she lies glibly about her father’s illness being the cause of her trips, and that Lavinia was the cause of Brant’s visit. Mannon’s possessiveness is revealed in (XV.e.m.) but Christine skillfully manipulates his anger to contriteness in (XV.f.n.). Mannon’s attraction towards Christine is revealed in (XV. f.o.) but her apparent revulsion at his physical overture humiliates him. He apologises in the micro-ensemble (XV.h.m.). A sense of psychic premonition assails him in (XV.h.n.), prefiguring a clairvoyance that all the major characters feel before the impending disaster takes place. In the wake of the uneasiness he feels, the next micro-ensemble
(XV.h.a.) Mannon remembers the past in the wake of the present and dwells on the ritualisation of death which after the mayhem of war has become meaningless in (XV.i.n.). It is when Mannon has crossed the threshold of blood and destruction of the war, that he appreciates life and all that the subconscious signifies for an individual. In the signifying sub-ensemble (XV.j.) Christine is unnerved by the constant references to death.

In the next signifying ensemble, there are six sub-ensembles. In (XVI.a. and b.) both Mannon and Christine discuss the problems in their marriage. As an extended proposition, he mentions the South Sea Islands as the answer to solve their problems in (XVI.c.m.): Christine is his object of desire along with the islands. But in the micro ensemble that follows Christine refuses to comply with his desire. The syntagmatic progression follows the process of disjunction in (XVI.c.n.). Mannon's hurt at the rebuff is seen in the micro-ensemble (XVI.c.o.). But in the following ensemble, Christine makes a quick recovery in (XVI.d.) and tries to seduce him, realising her mistake.

With the next sub-ensemble (XVI.e.m.) we are confronted with the mother-daughter antithesis again. Mannon is irritated at their open antagonism in (XVI.e.m.). Christine has the final say and takes Mannon away into the house in (XVI.e.p.). The next four micro-ensembles are crucial extensions to the feeling of "exclusion" that Lavinia undergoes, when her mother "deprives" her of the paternal presence. The micro-ensemble (XVI. e.q.),
is about Lavinia looking up at the lighted window of her parents' bedroom in an otherwise darkened house. In the micro-ensemble she calls out to her father, who is irritated but gentle with her in (XVI.f.o.). In (XVI.f.p.) Lavinia is left alone, staring up in fascination and wringing her hands in desperation. This micro-ensemble crystallises the instant that portrays the Electra matrix both emotionally and psychologically, where the taut psychography of a mind obsessed with maternal and paternal absence can be deduced. This instant also leaves a lingering feeling of anticipation of what such exclusion results in, in the psyche of a child.

The signifying ensemble (XVII) deals with the bedroom scene between Mannon and Christine. The micro-ensemble (XVII.a.m.) is about Christine stealing away from the bed. (XVII.a.n. and XVII.a.o.) show that Mannon is suspicious of her furtiveness. In (XVII.a.p.) he confesses to feeling old and defeated. He asks for a light in the dark room while Christine wants to keep the room in darkness. The conceptual opposition that this invokes can be summarised thus - Mannon needs light when he is close to death and Christine who is associated with the exterior more than the interior, prefers the dark now, to match her evil intentions.

The micro-ensemble (XVII.b.o.) is a significant one where Christine mentions that Lavinia had been pacing outside their bedroom window till two in the morning. This flash-backs to the sense of anticipation that was apparent in (XVI.f.p.).
In the following sub-ensemble (XVII.d.; e; f; and g) Christine does her best to provoke Mannon's heart condition to surface. In (XVIII.b.m.) Christine goads him and confesses to her infidelity with Brant in the micro-ensemble (XVIII.b.n.). This results in Mannon's cardiac seizure in the sub-ensemble (XVIII.c.) where the struggle within and the struggle without converge. In the ensuing confusion, Christine poisons him in the sub-ensemble (XVIII.d.). Mannon realizes the truth in the next sub-ensemble and falls into a coma, after calling for Lavinia. The micro-ensemble (XVIII.g.m.) is about Christine staring in fascination at the murder spectacle in front of her. She regains enough presence of mind to hide the poison-box in (XVIII.g.m.).

Thus the signifying ensemble XVIII with its seven sub-ensembles and six micro-ensembles can be seen as the point of no return for Mannon, Lavinia, Adam and Christine. This ensemble is a complete unit of significance in itself and also introduces the kinetic energy that is required for the conceptual opposition now introduced to be integrated in the comprehensive proposition O'Neill is aiming at. It can now be demonstrated that at this stage of the syntagmatic analysis each proposition is an extension, exactly in the same manner as the concept of "attribute" is taken with reference to "subject", of what may be called the basic semanteme or kernel idea or image, beginning with the house, tomb, mask, the martial band and the dirge-like chanty in the first signifying ensemble, to most of these semantemes in the unit just referred to, as the Electra theme is
in full play, with the puritan Lavinia linked to the interior of the house and the pagan Christine linked to the exterior of the house now coming face to face over a prostrate dead body. It is thus a series of kernel semantemes around which propositions are composed in extension, which are the main pulsational forces for transforming one given existential situation into another. These kernel semantemes are conceptual images and signs and the extended propositions play only an explicatory role.

The last signifying ensemble has seven sub-ensembles. In (XIX.a) we see a disturbed Lavinia entering the bedroom in answer to a telepathic call from her father. The vague sense of premonition and dread that Mannon referred to in (XV.h.n.) has now taken tangible shape. The psychic proximity between Mannon and Lavinia is revealed in (XIX.b.m.) as she has heard her father call for her in her dream. She becomes agitated when she sees the physical enactment of the dream in front of her eyes. Christine is equally agitated and afraid and collapses with the strain. In the crucial micro-ensemble (XIX.f.a.) Lavinia finds the incriminating pill-box and realizes the truth. The kernel semanteme here is her "hatred" for her mother and devotion to her father. With the unmasking of the truth behind the first murder of the trilogy, Lavinia is on the threshold of attaining a truly existential being. She is about to cross the "threshold" and now begins the Becoming of her Being. O'Neill's Electra has begun her mourning. In the sub-ensemble (XIX.g.) Lavinia beseeches her father not to leave her "alone" but help her and
tell her what to do. What follows now in her evolution is her dawning realization that the existential being is perforce "alone" and must do what he must do, with full responsibility.

**Problematics**

The structure now reveals with increasing recurrence, as we go on to the next two plays, a drawing together of disparate elements of the narrative into a network of antithesis. In Barthes symbolic code, such lexia belong to a huge network of antithetical pairings which work to structure psyche, the gender and the ethos in binary oppositions of nature versus culture, instinct opposed to civilization.\textsuperscript{10} Semes scattered throughout the discourse draw on references both within and outside of the narrative theme. Marie Brantome is the pivotal figure in this text's structuration of psyche and the gender and both Abe and David Mannon are set in binary opposition to her. This sets off a chain of similar structures right up to the youngest generation of Mannons. Marie with her hair and "laughin' and singin" becomes the quintessential mother archetype. Because she is bridally attainable to only one man and therefore forbidden to the rest they search for her perpetually, sublimating the sexual object into a maternal configuration.

O'Neill states his intention of keeping the exact family relationship between Aegisthus and his first cousin Agamemnon and the rivalry between their fathers, in the scenario of the first act of the play, dated May 19, 1929. However, the rest of
the scenario, differs considerably from the published text. One can detect a developing depiction of the role of the Electra and Oedipus myths in the psyches of the characters and the complexes they will perpetuate later on.

Act I is basically an exposition to the entire action of the play. The past is invoked to give continuity to the present. The play on the "face" and the "mask" is in full use to reiterate the basic opposition underlining the dramatic action. Act II, though shorter in length, is taut with repressed passions and explosive emotions. There are two confrontation scenes in it. The first one is between the mother and daughter as they try to gain control over each other in an emotional tug-of-war. The second confrontation is between Christine and Brant which is more one-sided as Brant remains hopelessly manipulated by the wily Christine. Christine is edgy and defensive with Lavinia, whereas with Brant she is in complete control of the situation.

O'Neill's constant reminders of the resemblance among the Mannon men serves the dramatic need to draw a parallel with the Greek motive of a cursed house and is also modern and plausible in the present context. The South Sea Islands symbolise the image of the sea as a means of escape and fantasy. Act II takes place entirely in the Mannon study which Christine hates for its mustiness and association with Mannon while Lavinia draws strength and inspiration from it.

Act III is emotionally surcharged. There is the anticipation of Mannon's homecoming. Lavinia is waiting for her
father's return while Christine is tense at the prospect. This act is longer than the preceding two acts. According to O'Neill's original scheme, Mannon's role in the play was to have been larger than it is now in the published text. Seth's chanty "Shenandoah' heralds the homecoming. He fulfills his choric role by commenting on Marie Brantome'. The elusive image of Marie is given concrete shape as the Mannon curse is reiterated.

Ezra Mannon finally appears to a warm homecoming from his daughter, highlighting the lack of warmth in his wife. His mask-like face is conspicuous. The mother and daughter squabble over him again. Mannon reveals his emotions to Christine, about his life, his marriage and the war. This scene is similar in situation and emotional content to Ephraim's dialogue with Abbie in "Desire Under The Elms". As Bogard says, as a scene it is one of the most effective moments of the play but what is of importance is that Mannon speaks to Christine not only as a husband to a wife but a patient to a doctor, especially when he tells her to close her eyes, so that he can speak better. The warped relationship between husband and wife is indicated. Later the imbalance in the father-daughter and mother-son relationships also become apparent.

Act IV is the shortest act in the play but follows O'Neill's scenario the closest. However, the published text has deviations too. O'Neill's original plan in the scenario was to have a multiple interior-exterior setting like the one he conceived for "Desire Under the Elms." He had planned on an interior-exterior
view of the characters showing Christine with her face distorted in loathing upstairs, while Lavinia was seen pacing below in her night clothes. After finishing this play on June 20, 1929, O'Neill spent the next six days, "studying Greek plays" before continuing the scenario. He jotted down two significant ideas in the 1928 notebook, - "plots from Greek tragedy" and "Oedipus".

Christine's deceitful murder of her husband and Lavinia's poignant cry for help over her father's dead body, looks forward to the dramatic developments in the next two plays of the trilogy. The machinations of the Electra and Oedipus complex have been set into motion.

With this presentation of the first nineteen signifying ensembles, we complete the first part of the trilogic discourse. It would be fruitful to give a summary of the kernel semantemes whose propositional extensions are responsible for the syntagmatic progression of the narrative/dramatic discourse.

I.a Act I: Exterior landscape sets the tone.

I.a.m. house, variously called pagan temple, tomb, sepulchre etc; tree in shades of black and white; lilacs are symbolic of Lincoln's assassination following Whitman's elegy; declining sun; reiterating of the Mannons' social superiority and involvement in the events of the time.

I.a.n. Colours represent the mood; grey, black and white predominate the scene, underscoring the lack of life and colour around the Mannon abode.
I.b. Mask - referred to many times by O'Neill in the stage directions with increasing significance. He stated, "what I want from this mask concept is a dramatic arresting visual symbol of the separateness, the fated isolation of the family...".

I.c.m. Band to celebrate Lee's surrender. Music. (contrast with the chanty).

I.c.m. Shenandoah - the chanty underlines the role of the sea.

I.d.m. Characters. Seth is derived from the servant character in the classical story. (Clear delineation between major and minor characters is established).

I.d.n. Amos Ames, Louisa and Minnie perform a choric role.

II.a. Choric talk of the political situation; Ezra's family, wealth, ability; Christine's animal-like beauty, aloofness, unpopularity; Mannon secrets especially the scandal of David Mannon and Marie Brantome'. (Exposition)

II.b. Lavinia appears. Her likeness and dissimilarity to her mother is mentioned and her military bearing and likeness to her father is highlighted as the Electra theme is set into motion.

II.b.m. Her strange life-like mask impression.

II.b.n. Her trip to New York to spy on her mother. (Her ability to lie is established).

II.b.o. Seth's sympathy and attempt to warn her. (His empathy for her).
II.c. Peter and Hazel - their openness in sharp contrast to the masked Mannons. (They were originally conceived to perform the role of the siblings of Oedipus and Electra in the classical story).

II.d.m. Reference to Orin and his letters. (Hazel's love for him is established).

II.d.n. Peter proposes to Lavinia.

II.d.o. Her rejection of the marriage proposal and her justification being the looking after of her father. "Father needs me" she says. (p.696). (Electra theme gains significance.)

II.d.p. Reference to Brant by Peter. (The Aegisthus factor is introduced subtly with the possibility of a blood relationship emerging).

III.a.m. Christine versus Lavinia - the antagonism is palpable. (Their anti-thetical relationship is established unambiguously.)

III a.n. Christine carrying flowers. (Overtones of the virginal flower maiden?)

III.b. Brant's impending visit. (Suspense)

III.c. Lavinia's threat to reveal all.

IV.a.m. Seth's suspicion of Brant and his family likeness to David Mannon.

IV.a.n. Seth scent's the truth.

IV.b.m. Brant's courting of Lavinia and nearly fooling her with his intentions.
Lavinia and Seth plan to catch him off guard.

Lavinia's devotion to her father and hostility to her mother is apparent. (The Electra theme has emerged and is in full play.)

Brant's attempt to find out the reason behind Lavinia's unnatural loyalties, thus highlighting the antithetical relationships between mother-daughter and the yet to come father-son relationship.

Reference to the South Sea Islands which come to symbolise all that is repressed in the conscious mind but lurks in the subconscious.

Reference to the theme of the sea and ships. (a recurring and dominant theme).

Brant is trapped into admitting his parentage to Lavinia. (The meshing with the ancient legend has been completed.)

His latent antagonism for the Mannons. (Antithetical relationship with his legacy).

His plans of revenge against such heritage.

Lavinia is in control of the situation having found out everything.

Act II. No time has elapsed. There is no release of dramatic tension.

Interior landscape. - Mannon's study - "musty room" (P.712) Reiterates tones of grey and dullness as in the exterior.
VI.a.n. Mannon's portrait - prime symbol derived from an icon used to establish the resemblance between Mannon and Brant and then between Brant and Orin.

VI.a.o. The Mannon portraits - equivalents to ghosts and signify a searing paternal absence.

VI.a.p. Mannon's "life-like mask", (p.711), his stance in the portrait and legal robes are symbolic.

VI.a.q. Setting sun heightens feeling of unreal reality. Crimson fading into night and darkness. Significance of time of day.

VII.a. Lavinia's agitation as she prepares for the confrontation.

VII.b. Confrontation between Lavinia and Christine, highlighting their mutual antagonism.

VII.b.m. Lavinia reveals trip to New York, unmasking Christine's lies.

VII.b.n. Christine's attempt to lie and then pleading for sympathy and mercy.

VII.b.o. Details of her unhappy marriage. Her disgust and hatred for her husband. (A weakness in O'Neill's adaptation of the myth as the Clytemnestra of the ancients had more justification for her actions.)

VII.b.p. Lavinia realizes why her mother has always hated her as she symbolised that unhappy union and Christine's love for Orin as Mannon was away in Mexico when he was born.
VII.b.q. Christine accuses Lavinia of trying to break the bond between mother and son. (The Oedipus theme underscores the confrontation and is introduced unambiguously.)

VII.b.r. Lavinia startles Christine by revealing Brant's secret lineage.

VII.b.s. Christine's allegation that Lavinia secretly loves Brant. (This underscores Lavinia's covetousness for everything that Christine has.)

VII.b.t. Lavinia's ultimatum and Christine's compliance even though it is blackmail. (In the power-play between the two, Lavinia is on the ascendant.)

VIII.a. Christine is alone in the study - her face is a "sinister evil mask." (p.718). Mirroring her evil thoughts. VIII.b. Her plotting with Brant. (Deviation from the classical texts as Aegisthus is the prime mover in them, whereas O'Neill's Clytemnestra takes the initiative here.)

VIII.b.m. Mannon's heart condition to be used as a cover-up to his murder by poisoning.

VIII.b.n. Brant's instinctive recoil at such a cowardly act. imbuing him with some valour and dignity.

VIII.c.m. Christine's subtle strokes with which she skillfully manipulates Brant's emotions. (In this power-play, Christine is superior as she plays the tyrant.)

VIII.c.n. Brant agrees to get her the poison, overcoming his innate goodness and sense of fair play. Makes him a
victim to Christine's tyranny.

VIII.d. Christine's elation at her control over Brant.

IX.a. Cannon boom announces the homecoming of Mannon, reiterating the theme of war which forms the background action.

IX.b.m. Christine sends Brant on his errand.

IX b.n. Awaits Mannon as she is full of her evil plot to kill him and to ensure keeping Brant for life.

IX.c. Christine's eyes held by Mannon's piercing gaze. Shudders and leaves the room quickly. (The portraits influence the lives of the Mannons, in their own way.)

X.a. Act III: Scene is similar to Act I spatially and a week later temporarily. In this part of the play the emphasis is almost exclusively on the antithetical relations between mother and daughter.

X.a.m. Lavinia, resembling an Egyptian statue, sitting in the dark, on the steps. (The steps form a contiguous tragic space linking the exterior with the interior of the Mannon house).

X.a.n. Dark overtones to the house and surroundings, unreal moon. (The natural environment echoes the psychic one.)

X.a.o. Seth's drunken rendering of the Shenandoah chanty, which foregrounds the imminent action.

XI.a. Marie Brantome is referred to and she emerges as a potent symbol in the narrative; established as an icon symbolising maternity and sensuality at the same time.
XI.b.m. Seth tells Lavinia details of her physical beauty, vitality and popularity.

XI.b.n. Ezra Mannon’s fondness for Marie in his boyhood. (A mother-son equation which foregrounds the Oedipal yearnings of Adam and Orin.)

XI.b.o. Lavinia is startled by her father’s alleged weakness for Marie. Streak of her possessiveness surfaces, corroborating Christine’s allegation about her covetousness.

XI.c.m. Christine appears in green, looking sensuous against Lavinia’s severity. (Conceptual juxtaposition is highlighted in the physical realm also.)

XI.c.n. The moonlight falling on them accentuates their natural resemblance in looks and their studied efforts at dissimilarity in dress and body language.

XI.c.o. Their tussle for control over each other again. (Christine and Lavinia are constantly involved in power struggles.)

XI.d.m. Lavinia is suspicious of Christine’s motives in giving up Brant.

XI.d.n. Christine reveals her determination to stick to her resolve.

XI.d.o. She taunts Lavinia and feels that Mannon is the beau she is waiting for.

XII.a. Mannon’s footsteps are heard. He appears. (The Electra triangle of father-daughter-mother is completely
XII.b. Mannon has the most prominent life-like mask face. Wooden, stiff, emotionless and brusque in speech and mannerisms.

XII.c. Lavinia's joyous welcome in contrast to Christine's restraint and tension. (Reinforces the antithetical relationship they have.)

XII.d.m. Mannon revels in Lavinia's concern and is self-conscious of Christine's disdain. (Christine is the excluded party.)

XII.d.n. He is struck afresh by Christine's beauty.

XII.e.m. Lavinia tries to hold and keep Mannon's attention.

XII.e.n. She is very resentful of Christine.

XIII.a. Reference to the political situation of the times, indicating aspects of a history play.

XIII.b.m. Reference to Orin getting wounded in the war.

XIII.b.n. Lavinia is concerned while Christine blames it all on the father-daughter duo. (Part manifestation of the Oedipal mother-son-father triangle begins.)

XIII.c.m. Mannon is jealous of Christine's concern for Orin. (Mannon is the excluded party.)

XIII.c.n. Reveals Orin's relapse into childhood while sick. (The Oedipus theme is beginning to emerge.)

XIII.c.o. Christine is gratified while Lavinia is scornful. (Reflects the inverse of the situation where earlier Mannon and Lavinia were made conscious of Christine's
scorn at their mutual fondness and love).

XIII.d.m. Lavinia's concern over Mannon's heart condition. (A vulnerability in Mannon is introduced for Christine to make use of.)

XIII.d.n. Mannon makes light of it and talks of war and death.

XIII.e.m. Christine's observation about his looking unwell. (She capitalises on the weakness.)

XIII.e.n. Lavinia, reiterating her antithetical position to her mother, contradicts it.

XIV.a.m. Lavinia brings up Brant in the conversation. (It is still a power-struggle between mother and daughter to gain Mannon's attention.)

XIV.a.n. Mentions that he was a womaniser.

XIV.b. Mannon's angry curiosity.

XIV.c. Christine's cool countering of his suspicions.

XIV.d. Lavinia mentions the town gossip about Brant's visits.

XIV.e.m. Mannon tells Christine and Lavinia to stop squabbling as their antagonism is palpable.

XIV.e.n. Lavinia obeys him and professes her love to him, lest Christine mislead him.

XIV.e.o. Mannon wants her to be his little girl a little longer. (Auto-suggestion of the Electra theme is already at work.)

XIV.e.p. Christine is scornful of this exchange.

XV.a. Mannon and Christine are alone.

XV.b. Christine mentions the letter written by Lavinia. She
is on the offensive.

XV.c. Mannon is on the defensive but nevertheless wants to know about Brant.

XV.d.m. Christine says she would be glad to explain.

XV.d.n. Mentions her father's fondness for Brant and says that the real reason for his visits was Lavinia. (Lies glibly.)

XV.e.m. Mannon is incensed indicating a possessive father.

XV.e.n. Christine is contrite that she encouraged Brant for news of her sick father. (She manipulates Mannon subtly).

XV.e.o. Talks of her worry for her father, Orin and Mannon.

XV.f.m. It is Mannon's turn to be contrite.

XV.f.n. His emotional outburst about his homecoming.

XV.f.o. He is awe-struck by her beauty.

XV.g. Christine shrinks away from him revealing her innate disgust for his physical overtures.

XV.h.m. Mannon senses the rebuff and apologises.

XV.h.n. He feels uneasy about the quietness of his house after the war. (Sense of psychic premonition.)

XV.h.o. He remembers the past in the wake of the present.

XV.i.m. Theme of war as Mannon recalls the gory details.

XV.i.n. Method of ritualising death by meditation. Rituals for him seem meaningless now after the war.

XV.j. Christine is terror struck at such constant references to death.
XVI.a. Talk of the problems in their marriage. (A psychic compulsion to air the problem).

XVI.a.m. Mannon's feelings of being rejected by Christine.

XVI.a.n. Explains that his yearning for glory in the war was to forget her.

XVI.b. Christine professes ignorance and innocence, but feels cornered and is desperate.

XVI.c.m. Mannon's plan to sail to an island, only with her. (The South Sea Islands start emerging as an utopia).

XVI.c.n. Christine's refusal to comply with his desire.

XVI.c.o. Mannon is deeply hurt by her rebuff and becomes wooden.

XI.d. Christine realizes her mistake, recovers and tries to seduce him.

XVI.e.m. Lavinia intrudes on them.

XVI.e.n. Mannon is embarrassed and irritated.

XI.e.o. Rivalry between Christine and Lavinia surfaces, for his affections.

XVI.e.p. Christine takes him away into the house.

XVI.e.q. Lavinia is left looking up at their bedroom window. (A classic scene depicting the sense of exclusion felt by the offspring, coveting a role in the marital relationship of the parents. Resentment at the parent of the same sex is inherent in such a case.)

XVI.e.r. Disgusted at Christine's two-timing.

XVI.e.s. She feels it is her duty to warn her father.

XVI.e.t. She calls out to him from below.
XVI.f.m. Mannon opens his window and is exasperated at her.

XVI.f.n. Lavinia loses her nerve and makes a feeble excuse.

XVI.f.o. Mannon is irritated but gentle and tells her to go and sleep.

XVI.f.p. Lavinia is alone again, looks up in fascination, and wrings her hands in desperation. (This instant portrays the Electra matrix both emotionally and psychologically, "where the taut psychography of a mind obsessed with maternal and paternal absence can be deduced.

XVII.a. Act IV: It is a continuation of the same action. The scene shifts to the bedroom.

XVII.a.m. Christine is seen tip-toeing away from the bed.

XVII.a.n. Mannon's dull voice startles her.

XVII.a.o. He is suspicious of her furtiveness and is bitter about her revulsion. It has not been the homecoming he had hoped for.

XVII.a.p. He says he is an old man now. Feels defeated.

XVII.b.m. Mannon wants light in the room. (Ironic that with imminent death staring him in the face, he wants light.)

XVII.b.n. Christine wants darkness revealing her dark and evil intentions.

XVII.b.o. She comments on Lavinia pacing outside till two in the night. (The Electra theme is in full play now.)

XVII.c. Mannon is pleased and also feels uneasy. (Premonition.)
XVII.d. Christine grabs at the chance and feels it is his heart condition.

XVII.e. Mannon feels the house, room, bed and Christine appear as though they are waiting for something to happen and that she is waiting for his death.

XVII.f. Christine derides him but Mannon accuses her of pretending love to him. He feels he would have felt more honourable if he had gone to a brothel.

XVII.g. Christine warns him that her patience is ending.

XVIII.a. Mannon is ironic about his hopes of a warm homecoming.

XVIII.b.m. Christine goads him on diabolically, looking for an excuse to medicate him.

XVIII.b.n. She confesses to her infidelity with Brant, daring and baring all. (The Agamemnon - Clytemnestra - Aegisthus triangle is clearly indicated. There can be no retracting now.)

XVIII.c. Mannon is in a frenzy and collapses in pain. (The struggle within and the struggle without begin to crush.)

XVIII.d. Christine looks satisfied and feeds him the poison as though it were his medicine.

XVIII.e. Mannon swallows it and gasps in terror as he realizes the truth. Dawning realization of Christine's duplicity.

XVIII.f.m. He tries to call for help but can only whisper Lavinia's name.
XVIII.f.n. He falls into a coma.

XVIII.g.m. Christine is fascinated at the spectacle.

XVIII.g.n. She hides the box on hearing a sound from the door.

XIX.a. Lavinia enters, responding to a telepathic call from the father.

XIX.b.m. She feels dazed after the dream she has just had. (The psychic proximity between father and daughter is established through the dream-communication.)

XIX.b.n. She is stupefied but feels that her father was calling for her.

XIX.c. Mannon sits up, accuses Christine and dies. (The murder is revealed.)

XIX.d. Lavinia turns on Christine in hatred.

XIX.e.m. Christine confesses that she had told him of Brant.

XIX.e.n. She blames Lavinia for goading her to do the horrible deed. (Lavinia's complicity in the first death itself is implied.)

XIX.e.o. Christine collapses with the strain and the medicine box falls out of her grasp.

XIX.f.m. Lavinia is worried about her and checks on her.

XIX.f.n. She notices the pill-box on the floor.

XIX.f.o. She snatches it up even as her suspicions turn into horrified certainty.

XIX.g. She hugs her father and cries to him, not to leave her alone and to tell her what to do. (Lavinia is on the threshold of attaining a truly existential being,
having traversed the realm from ignorance to knowledge. This is the prelude to the Becoming of her Being as she begins her mourning.)

THE SECOND PLAY: THE HUNTED

In the entire action of "The Hunted", the second part of the trilogy, the action takes place in five acts. Orin, the Mannon son appears during the course of the action. A few secondary characters are also introduced. They are Josiah Borden, manager of the shipping company, his wife Emma, Evertt Hills, D.D. of the congregational church and his wife, Doctor Joseph Blake and a chantyman. The action in Act I resumes after two days, from the ending of the last part. The exterior of the Mannon house is shown. It is two days after the murder of Ezra Mannon. Even the house looks "masked" in the moonlight. A funeral wreath is visible. As in the beginning of 'Homecoming' the choric actors emerge first, Borden and his wife, Hills and his wife and Doctor Blake, who is the family physician are being seen out by Christine. These people are "types of townsfolk" representing a chorus from a different stratum of society and function as "a human background for the drama of the Mannons" (p. 753).

After having been seen out, they are now free to comment. The ladies, Mrs. Borden and Mrs Hill agree on Christine being an unpleasant person. As Mrs Hill says "she looks terrible" (p.754). They also comment on the Mannons who are "not easy to make head or tail of" (p.754). They compare Christine's obvious state of
mourning with Lavinia's cold and calm exterior. They have also heard Lavinia's argument with her mother about going to meet Orin's train. Meanwhile the men are also gossiping at the same time. They wonder why Ezra Mannon is being given a private and quiet funeral. They feel that having been a major personality of the town and such "a great man. His death is a real loss to everyone in this community", Mannon should have been given a big public funeral, befitting "a national war hero". They also comment on Mannon not being a person "for show" as "he did the work and let others do the showing off". All the while that they extol his greatness, the chorus also mention the Mannon "pride that goeth before a fall and that some day God would humble them in their sinful pride". (p 755).

The comment is seen to be ill-timed and there is a sense of awkwardness amongst the group. They attempt to be more generous with their praise and feel that "the town won't find another as able to Ezra in a hurry." (p 756) With that the group moves to disperse and go home. The men, however carry on with talk which turns loose. There are salacious remarks about the actual cause of Ezra Mannon's sudden death. The family doctor puts it down to "love killed Ezra!" (p.757). The locker - room talk again mentions the attraction that Christine exudes for the opposite sex. Infact Borden jokingly envies Mannon his death which they feel was caused by his physical reunion with his wife. They leave chuckling.
Just then Christine emerges from the house and stands at the top of the steps. She is "in a terrible state of strained nerves", beneath the "mask - like veneer" (p.757). Her eyes burn feverishly as she looks desperate. Hazel, looking the same as she did in the previous play, enters on a cheerful, sympathetic note. Christine confesses to the strain that the situation has brought for her. She finds the public curiosity "harrowing". Hazel comments on the imminent arrival of Lavinia and Peter who have gone to the station to receive Orin who is coming in on the same train as his father had done two days earlier. Christine finds it strange that the last two days seem like "a lifetime I've grown old." She wants to look "pretty" again for Orin as "he used to be my baby." (p.758) She conspires with Hazel to monopolise Orin between the two of them, so that Lavinia will be left out. She is worried about Lavinia's course of action and so tells Hazel, "We mustn't let Orin come under her influence again" since she was in the "morbid, crazy state of grief." She asks Hazel whether she too had noticed how "queer" Lavinia had become. Hazel tries to stand up for her friend. Christine is touched by her gesture and envies her the goodness of heart she has. She remembers her own unsullied youth in remorse when "I was like you once." She wonders, "Why can't all of us remain innocent and loving and trusting?" She feels that God does not leave anyone alone as He "twists and wrings and tortures our lives with other's lives until - we poison each other to death!" (p.759). Pulling herself up she announces her dislike of moonlight as it makes everything
look haunted and goes into the house. Hazel follows her and shuts the door.

Footsteps are heard and Orin Mannon enters with Peter and Lavinia. The "life like mask" quality of his face in repose hark back to his startling family resemblance to Ezra Mannon and Adam Brant but a weak chin betrays the fact that he is not of the same mettle as his father had been. Although just twenty years old, he looks thirty, which seems to be an effect of the travails of war. His yearning to be back home while he was away is apparent when he says, 'God, how I've dreamed of coming home! ...Home at last! ... But the house looks strange ... like a tomb," he says (p.760). Lavinia reproaches him, saying that it actually was a tomb right then, as their father was still resting there, before the funeral. Orin is ashamed he forgot that for a moment, as he had always thought that his father would "live forever" or at least "outlive me".(P.761). He is amazed that he died of a weak heart of which Orin himself was not aware. Lavinia is glad to know that her view on her father's heart condition is corroborated by Orin. She asks Peter to go in and announce that they were on their way since she wanted to speak to Orin alone.

Orin is glad to be back home and take up life from where he had left it before he went to the war. He comments on Lavinia's strange silence ever since his return. Lavinia defends herself, saying that she is still in shock as he too should be. Orin explains that the scenes at the war-front have desensitized him to the horror of death. He relives the horrors of war which he
says made him grow up suddenly. Lavinia is amazed at his "unfeeling" state and Orin shamefacedly says that his "mind is still full of ghosts," and that Mannon had been "the war to me" (p. 761). His confused mental state is obvious as he confuses the heroism and the horror of war in his mind at times. But he is also alert enough to ask Lavinia about her mentioning Brant in her letters. He wants to clarify the doubts before he meets Christine. Lavinia warns him about the lies Christine will be bound to tell him to save her skin. She does not want him to fall for the mollycoddling that Christine would resort to. Orin is bewildered and wonders as to how much he can believe Lavinia's story. He also is aware that her "ever lasting squabble with Mother" (p. 762) could also generate such hostility.

They are interrupted in their talk as the front door opens and Christine hurries out, angry with Peter for not having told her earlier of Orin's arrival. As Lavinia had predicted, she babys Orin who obviously revels in it. He melts at the sight of her but also cannot help commenting on how different she looked. Lavinia watches the effusive reunion between mother and son and ominously warns Orin. "Remember Orin!", she says (p.763). Orin draws back from his mother but Christine is quick to capture his attention and affection again. She sends Orin away into the house, and falls back to be alone with Lavinia, outside. Christine is desperate to make her peace with Lavinia. She wants to know why Lavinia keeps following her silently around the house. She pleads that Lavinia should get rid of her "insane
suspicions" (p.763). She is worried about what had happened when she fainted after Mannon died. She has registered the loss of the medicine box and claims it was for a sedative she took at night. She says that Lavinia could not possibly suspect anything fishy as even Doctor Blake had certified about Mannon's heart condition.

Lavinia answers her with a stony silence. Christine breaks down in dread. "Answer me when I speak to you! What are you plotting? What are you going to do? Tell me!", she pleads, but Lavinia refuses to answer and walks away woodenly (p.764). Christine stares after her, with all her strength drained away from her. Orin's voice calling for her, from inside the house, brings her back to the present circumstances. She shakes off her fear and putting on an act, answers Orin in a normal voice and goes into the house.

Act II is a continuation of the previous scene with the locale having shifted to the sitting room of the house. It is "a bleak room without intimacy". Hazel and Peter are sitting, while Orin is calling for his mother in the hall. The Niles talk of the grief-stricken state of Christine and Lavinia. Hazel comments on "the terrible home coming" for Orin. (p.766) Christine enters and lies that she had lingered outside for some fresh air. Orin is contrite and fusses over her. Christine refuses to go to bed and rest since Orin has just got home. She in turn would rather look after Orin. She asks Hazel to look after him too and says that both she and Hazel should play nurses to him. Christine asks
Hazel to give Orin a cushion. Peter is asked to look for Lavinia so that he can also get a cushion put for himself. Hazel replies perceptively that, "I can't picture Vinnie being that soft." (p.767). Orin recalls resentfully that Lavinia was capable of softness only when it concerned her father. He still refers to his father in the present tense and is duly admonished by Christine. But he says, "I feel him in this house - alive!" At the same time he confesses to a feeling of a change, "Everything is changed - in some queer way". (p.767) Christine shivers in answer to the comment and tries to change the subject by focussing on Orin's injuries instead. Orin is diverted and loves the fuss being made over him. He comments on Christine looking younger and more beautiful than before.

Then, Orin reiterates the war and death theme by commenting on how "a taste of murder" would give all the mothers, wives, sisters and girls a jolt from their idealizing the heroes of war. (p.768) Christine is shocked but Orin continues that all women folk need to outgrow their hero-worshipping. Recalling his war experience, he remembers how Hazel's singing always remained at the back of his mind, "at the queerest of times - so sweet and clear and pure! It would rise above the screams of the dying" - (p.769). Christine implores him not to talk of death so much.

Lavinia appears in the doorway and reminds Orin that he still has not seen his dead father. Orin reacts in confusion as though his father had spoken and is embarrassed at his actions. He is astounded that Lavinia sounded exactly like his father to
him. Christine is angry with Lavinia for trying to rush him. Orin is caught between divided loyalties and Lavinia gracefully acquiesces, but reminds him to "only remember what I said", much to Christine's fear and dread. (p.769) She refuses to answer Christine and leaves the room. Orin's suspicions surface again and Christine tries desperately, to retain her calm. Both Peter and Hazel are uncomfortable and take their leave.

Christine sees them off, quite effusively. Her obvious attempt to befriend Hazel is registered by Orin. Infact, the moment they are alone, Orin asks Christine for an explanation to the sudden "fancy" she has taken to Hazel, especially since he knows that she "never used to think much of her." (p.770) Christine now braces herself for the impending questions that follow from Orin. He wants to know why she is matchmaking for him so soon after his return, especially since he could be with her as long as he wanted since she was now a widow. Christine lies about her love for him being the only reason for her actions. Orin however, is not convinced as she had written only two letters to him in the preceding six months when he had been away. Surely, he feels, if she loved him as much as she now claimed, she could have improved on that. Christine lies again and says she had written more letters and perhaps the others had got lost in the mail. Orin is not convinced and he now wants to know more about Brant. Christine feigns surprise and attributes his suspicions to Lavinia's mischief-making. "There isn't anything your sister will stop at," she says. (p. 771) She even claims
that while Orin was her flesh and blood, Lavinia was her father’s daughter only. Orin is eager to agree to that, as he too yearns for the "secret little world of our own", which Christine has always promised him. (p.772) Christine is quick to grab at the chance and promises him all his secret desires, now that his father is no more. Orin is manipulated completely and confesses that he is actually glad that his father was dead. Christine conspires with him against Lavinia and says that she "won’t let Vinnie poison your mind against me with her disgusting lies!" (p.772)

Orin comes back to the present and wants to know what she meant by "lies". Christine laughs and makes light of "the great captain Brant scandal" (p.773). She makes out his visits to have been very innocent ones and that Lavinia’s "craziness" made them seem suspicious visits. She alleges that Lavinia was foolishly connecting Brant’s parental lineage to something significant when it was not actually so. She keeps harping on Lavinia’s "strange" mind concocting "jealous" stories.

Orin’s face hardens and Christine shrinks back from him, as she is suddenly reminded of his resemblance to the late Mannon. She continues her tale of woe in a bid to sway Orin from getting close to the truth. Orin is angered and remorseful in turns. Christine, acting the martyr as it were, cleverly weaves in the story of the alleged murder into her pitiful narration. "I haven’t told you the most horrible thing of all! Vinnie suspects me of having poisoned your father!" she says (p.774).
Orin is truly horrified and feels that Lavinia should be put into an asylum if she has gone around with such preposterous stories. Christine reveals her fear that Lavinia in her demented state is quite capable of going to the police. Orin tries to soothe his agitated mother, reassuring her that he would prevent Lavinia from harming her. He is prepared to forgive his mother everything "except that other - that about Brant!" (p.775). Christine is frightened at Orin's outburst and his possessiveness of her. Orin longs to be loved by his mother and tells her about his fantasy land, the South Sea Islands, "where there is peace and warmth and security" (p.776). Christine wishes fervently that Orin had never gone away and left his mother bereft. She becomes fatalistic and says, "It had to be." He promises to take care of her now and consoles her by saying, "You are my only girl." He remembers how she used to let him brush her hair much to his father's anger. He looks forward to the togetherness he had always wanted with his mother, now that his father was dead. He plans to marry Lavinia off to Peter so that his dream of a union with his mother can come true. "Just you and I !," he tells her (p.777).

Lavinia returns to remind Orin of their father. Orin is irritated at her interruption, but accedes to her wish and goes to see his father as though it were a chore. Christine and Lavinia are alone and the mother tells the daughter that Orin has been briefed adequately enough, not to believe her "insane" allegations. She also attributes the lies to Lavinia since she
herself coveted Brant. So she tells Lavinia that her bid for revenge would boomerang on the family as "a public disgrace as a murder trial" would only bring out all the sordid history of the Mannons' which included Brant's ancestry and her own adultery. More than anything else she threatens Lavinia, with, "I'll show you to the world as a daughter who desired her mother's lover and then tried to get her mother hanged out of hatred and jealousy!". (p.778). Christine's defiant attitude collapses, however, when faced with Lavinia's steeliness. She begs her not to tell Orin about Brant as "he's changed! He's grown hard and cruel. All he thinks of is death --- He would kill him! I couldn't live then! I would kill myself!" Lavinia controls an impulse to say something and walks away with hatred in her eyes. She resembles "a tragic, mechanical doll", as she about - faces her mother and leaves the room. (p.778) Christine stares after her, with a dawning premonition and wants to rush off and see Brant, so that he can be warned.

Act III is the axis on which the whole trilogy revolves. O'Neill devised it so, that the crucial revelation takes place in the exact middle of the trilogy. O'Neill structured his plays very carefully. (For example, the nine acts of "Strange Interlude" and the name of the heroine Nina, symbolise the nine months of a woman's pregnancy. To return to "The Hunted" the war theme, is also discussed at length.) The scene in Act III opens in Ezra Mannon's study, where his body is lying. It immediately follows the previous act. Orin is seen, standing at
attention, by the head of the bier, at the rear of it. Looking straight ahead like a sentinel, he seems to be brooding with suspicion. The similarity to his father in his looks and stance is striking. He blames Lavinia for putting such vile thoughts in his head. Lavinia enters on cue, to hear Orin mocking his dead father. "Death sits so naturally on you! Death becomes the Mannons!" he says. He is startled by Lavinia's admonishment of his behaviour. She goes and locks the door. He apologizes, saying "You have to learn to mock or go crazy, can't you see?" He demystifies the father she revered and idolized so much by revealing his nick-name in the army, to have been "Old Stick-short for Stick-in-the Mud". (p.780)

Lavinia tries to stop the frivolity by telling Orin that he should grant Mannon his due, since he was not only his father but also a dead man now. She tells him how proud Mannon had been of Orin and his "heroic deed." Orin is intent on demystifying the heroism of war also. He says, "I'll tell you the joke about that heroic deed," which actually amounted to his killing the enemy in cold blood. Lavinia recoils at the bald admission. Orin proceeds to elaborate on "war meant murdering the same man over and over, and that in the end I would discover the man was myself!" Apparently, the horrors of war have not ended for Orin, since it is still "inside". (p.781)

Lavinia is desperate to get on with the dilemma at home and begs Orin to "forget the war" since she wants to speak to him. Orin carries on, unmindful of her entreaty, and explains how a
tactically foolish action of his in the war made him a hero since his father recommended the case and since he had got a bullet in his head for his pains. He reduces the whole thing to the level of a joke, even though Lavinia reminds him of his bravery and the pride they all took from that.

The talk now veers to the problem at hand. Orin warns her that his mother had warned him off and therefore she, Lavinia, would only be "wasting your breath". (p.782) He wonders how Lavinia could even suspect Christine of adultery and murder. "Crazy stuff", he says. Lavinia is bitter that Orin has been brainwashed by Christine. So she threatens to go to the police and have a murder trial. She finds it would be "impossible to live on", having known the truth. Orin counters her, but Lavinia swears by her dead father that she is telling the truth. She beseeches the dead man to "make Orin believe me." (p.783) She shows him the little medicine box to corroborate her story. Orin calls her "a damned lunatic". Lavinia tells him what Mannon's dying words were. "She's guilty", he had said. Orin attributes it all to her "crazy imagination". Lavinia then taunts Orin, saying that he still was a baby. She reveals more details about Christine's lover. Orin is provoked to the quick as the word "lover" awakens his jealous suspicions. She opens Orin's eyes to Christine's double faced act where "she pets you and plays the loving mother" (p.785) on the one hand, and confesses ardent love to Brant on the other. Orin becomes frenzied and alleges that Lavinia is lying to him and dares her to prove it. Lavinia agrees
to prove her allegation but on condition that on getting proof he would help her "punish father's murderers." Orin is provoked enough to say, "I'll kill that bastard," provided Lavinia proves the adultery. (p.785) She tells Orin to watch Christine carefully as she is "frightened out of her wits" and would look for a chance to see Brant and that they must give her that chance to prove the story. Orin is tortured with rage, just as Christine calls for him through the locked door in a frightened voice.

Orin, moves to let her into the room, while Lavinia acts on the spur of the moment on an idea she gets. Telling Orin to watch Christine for proof of the murder, Lavinia quickly places the medicine box on the body over the dead man's heart. Christine enters confessing to her fear on seeing the door locked. Orin wonders why she should be afraid of that. Christine begs him not to look at her like Mannon. "I am his son too, remember that," says Orin in a significant way. (p.786) Lavinia warns him in time before he gives the game away. Christine turns on Lavinia and accuses her of lying to Orin again. Orin, playing his part, concurs with his mother. Christine is fooled into believing him and tells him to convince Lavinia not to "do anything dreadful". She wants to save the family from scandal since Mannon "needs rest and peace". Turning to her dead husband, she says. "You seem the same to me in death, Ezra! You were always dead to me!" (p.787) She then notices the poison - box and starts back with a stifled scream and stares at it with guilty fear.

Having given herself away hopelessly, Orin laughs with
savage irony at the discovery. "You're my lost island," he says and stumbles blindly out of the room. (p.787) Lavinia stealthily snatches the box as Christine snaps out of her spell. Lavinia is convinced now that it was Brant who had got her the medicine. Christine denies it but in vain for Lavinia has confirmed proof now. She puts the box back in the bosom of her dress and rigidly walks out of the room. Christine stares after her as she realizes that the game is up. She turns to beseech her dead husband in her desperation, pleading that his children should not harm Brant as "I am the only guilty one!" (p.788)

In Act IV there is a dramatic change in locale now as the scene shifts to the stern section of a clipper ship in East Boston. It is a moonlit night of the day following Mannon's funeral. The melancholy chanty, "Shenandoah" can be heard in waves as it is borne on the wind. A drunken chantyman lounging in the warehouse, comments on the bad singing and begins his own rendition of the chanty. Surprisingly he sings well, even as he continues to talk to himself in his drunken stupor. He realises that his pocket has been picked and attributes it to the "yeller-haired pig with the pink dress on". (p.790) He threatens to go and give her a "sea-boot" and lurches around. (p.791)

Brant appears looking cautious at the companion-way door on the poop deck of the vessel. He acts furtive and is tense and nervous. The chanty-man startles him. He threatens to shoot him but the chanty man also mistakes him for a robber. The confusion is cleared and Brant tries to placate him, saying he was the
captain of the vessel and since he did not have a watchman he was only being cautious. They talk of robbers raiding some other vessel. The chantyman is now looking for work as his job with "the Mannon packets" had come to an end when Mannon died. He comments on Mannon's heart being "a dried turnip" as he was an old skinflint. (p.793) Brant tries to change the subject by complimenting him on his singing and offering him a job in a month's time, when he hopes to sail off on his ship. The chantyman admires the ship and leaves singing "Hanging Johnny" much to Brant's discomfort.

As the "mournful dirge" recedes, Brant now alone, voices his sense of foreboding that "I'll never take this ship to sea." (p.794) He feels he has broken the honour code that the sea expects out of every person who sails on her to make a living. He has now become "a coward hiding behind a woman's skirts! The sea hates a coward." (p.794) He is distracted by the shadowy figure of a woman moving stealthily. He calls out in anticipation as the figure gasps in fear.

Christine enters, relieved that it was Brant who stood there. He cautions her to meet him at the gangplane. She confesses her fright on seeing the drunken chantyman lurching away earlier. Brant tells her that he had fired the watchman so that he could be alone. Christine asks him about the revolver in his hand. They are both tense and worried. Brant says that "these last days have been hell" as he senses that "something has gone wrong". Christine then points out that "Vinnie knows." (p.795)
Brant is now worried about Christine covering her tracks on the visit to him, since the alibi to go to her father's would not be credible at such a time. Christine allays his fears by telling him that both Lavinia and Orin had gone to visit their cousins' Bradfords at Blackridge. Brant is relieved that the coast is clear, atleast temporarily. Christine urges Brant to plan as "so many things have happened, I couldn't foresee, I came to warn you". (p.796).

Brant is on guard and takes her down to his cabin where they can talk without fear. The stage is empty and only the sound of the shipmates' singing is heard. Orin and Lavinia creep up stealthily along the deck. Lavinia is dressed in black while Orin has an overcoat over his uniform. They position themselves over the cabin, listening. Orin's face contorts with jealousy and Lavinia restrains him from making a noise. The light dims and the scene fades out. Several minutes are supposed to pass. When the lights brighten, the scene depicts the interior of the cabin. Both Brant and Christine are seen sitting. Christine, looking "haggard and ageing" is about to finish recounting her murder story. Orin and Lavinia are seen as before, bending down by the transom, listening. Christine is defending her actions after she had poisoned Mannon. She had not planned on either getting so provoked by Mannon's talk or for Lavinia's entering the bedroom at precisely that moment. Brant wants to know whether Mannon had been told about whose son he was. Christine repeats herself saying, "Something made things happen". Brant is also overcome
with gloom as he repents the underhand way in which he had plotted Mannon's death. He wishes he had killed him honourably in a duel, instead. Christine is also touched by the bitter self contempt he feels and says to him, "You make me feel so guilty!" (p.798) She confesses her terror of Lavinia and wants to escape on any ship. Brant reminds her that her flight would be most incriminating but she feels that both Lavinia and Orin would keep quiet or lie out of a sense of shame. In their desperation they now decide to abandon their plans for the "Flying Trades", and leave shore as soon as possible. Christine feels guilty for changing Brant's plans. "I've brought you nothing but misfortune!", she says. (p.799) Brant consoles himself by saying that he would get other ships in the future and that he was willing to forego the 'Flying Trades' for Christine. "You're all mine now, anyway", he says. (p.799) Christine is aware that she is losing her looks with the trauma and tension of the murder. Brant has come to terms with the loss of his ship and resolves to "give up the sea". Christine tries to cheer him up by referring to the "Blessed Isles" which promise safety and happiness. Suddenly, she remembers Orin's reference to an island.

Up on the deck, Orin takes a threatening step when he hears that, but Lavinia restrains him. Below, Brant views the islands as the last resort where they can hope to have happiness and forget all about the past, provided they are able to find those islands ever. Christine assures him desperately that they would find them and gets ready to go back home. Brant cautions her to
be careful of Lavinia. She in the meanwhile cautions him to be careful of Orin. Saying "Goodbye, my lover", she tears herself away from him with a premonition that, "I feel so strange - so sad - as if I'd never see you again!" (p.800). She feels "a horrible feeling of despair", even though Brant reassures her that they would be happy in the future. Brant walks her down to the wharf and she is glad that he can be with her for some more time.

Lavinia and Orin come into Brant's cabin in the meantime and hide. Lavinia is satisfied that Orin has found his proof. However she cautions him to be careful and not lose his head. Orin is in a frenzy at Christine's complete betrayal of trust, in connivance with that "skunk." Lavinia plans the attack on Brant and positions Orin outside, so that he can creep up on Brant from behind. She is in control of the situation. Orin is excited and impatient that Lavinia had not allowed him to shoot Brant outright, when Christine was talking of the islands. Lavinia explains how that would have meant ruining their own lives, thus satisfying Brant's yearning to avenge the maltreatment of the Mannons.

Brant returns, full of remorse and sadness at having to give up his ship. "I wasn't man enough for you!" he says (p.801). Orin creeps up from behind and shoots him twice point blank. Lavinia is fascinated at the murder. She then, commands Orin to simulate the scene of a burglary in the cabin to mislead people. She looks down at the dead body and asks of it "How could you love that
vile old woman?" (p.802) She turns away from the body, then abruptly turns towards it and as though carrying out a duty, prays for the peace of the departed soul of "our cousin, Adam Brant."

Orin stares at the body and is struck by Brant's similarity in looks to his father. Lavinia refutes it. Orin hallucinates and feels that he has committed suicide, since Brant looks so much like Mannon and himself. He envies Brant the love he shared with Christine, since he feels that he too would have done the same thing as Brant, for the love of Christine.

Act V opens on the following night and the exterior of the Mannon house is shown. There is a play on light and shade. Christine is walking up and down, in an agitated manner as though she is expecting someone. Hazel enters and Christine hugs her effusively. She had sent for her and is relieved to see her since she was feeling "so terribly sad-and nervous". Hazel is full of pity at her condition. Christine is envious of her goodness of heart. Hazel asks her to sleep and Christine wonders whether there was such a thing as sleep. "Its only in the earth that one sleeps," she says. (p.805) Hazel is alarmed at her "gloomy thoughts". Christine wants to know if either she or Peter have heard from Orin and Lavinia. Hazel is surprised to hear that they have gone visiting their cousins so soon after the funeral, especially leaving Christine alone "just now." Christine is worried about them. While Hazel reassures her and offers to sleep in the house if she wants. Christine is grateful but is afraid to
sleep. Hazel is puzzled and gets up to go and tell her mother about her plans. Christine urges her to hurry back as "I’m afraid to be alone." (p.806)

On her way down, Hazel meets Orin and Lavinia. Orin is in a state of morbid excitement, carrying a newspaper, while Lavinia looks grim and hard. Christine who has been watching their arrival is tense. Orin tells Lavinia that he will do the talking. They are startled on bumping into Christine outside the house. Orin mocks at her vindictively, stating that this time atleast, Christine was waiting for his arrival. He quotes Hazel who has just then told them in the drive-way that Christine was terribly frightened. Christine asks them whether they were at Bradfords’ all that time. Orin is quick to retort that they had not gone to see them at all, but had gone to Boston instead. Christine is terrified at this disclosure. Orin reveals the entire charade of how they misled her to follow her all the way to her "lover in his cabin". (p.807)

Christine tries to fight back but breaks down and begs Orin not to look like that at her. Orin exposes everything that he had over-heard from the deck and wonders whether his mother would have asked Brant to kill him if she had known that he was listening in all the while. He then reveals the sequence of events upto Brant’s murder and shows her the newspaper where it had been reported. Christine is appalled that Orin could hurt her so, after professing his love for her. Orin reminds her of her action of killing Mannon which started off the cycle of events.
Christine sits in stricken anguish, while Lavinia stands at the side rigid and erect, with a mask-like face. Orin continues to tell Christine how they covered up their tracks. He is savagely resentful of her devotion to a "servant's bastard," and is convinced that she had been hypnotized by him. He is outraged at her betrayal of his trust, when she had planned to leave for the islands with Brant.

Christine remains still, but moans to herself with the horror of the revelation. Orin now tries to bring her back from her distraction by pleading with her. He hopes to make her forget Brant and go away on "a long voyage to the South Seas", alone with her. Lavinia admonishes him sharply when she sees Orin's capitulation. Orin is oblivious to everything but "the numbed grief" of his mother: He sinks to his knees in front of her and pleads for her forgiveness. Lavinia is scornful of his relapse into "a crybaby again". She orders him to leave Christine alone and go into the house. Orin obeys her unquestioningly as though responding to a military order.

Christine stares ahead blankly while Lavinia regards her with "bleak condemning eyes." She finally speaks, in a stern voice, her conviction that whatever happened was "the only way true justice could be done." (p.809) Christine starts out of her numbness and the anguish returns. She springs to her feet and stares at Lavinia with such fierce hatred that Lavinia recoils inspite of her "frozen self-control". Christine backs away from her and goes up the steps, staring at her. Lavinia is shaken by
the piercing look and as though the words were dredged out of her, against her will, says, "Mother! what are you going to do? You can live!" (p.809)

Christine mocks at Lavinia's presumption and bursts into shrill laughter, stops abruptly and gesticulates as though she wants to wipe out Lavinia forever from her sight. She then turns around and rushes into the house. Lavinia makes a bid to follow her but fights down the impulse and stands"stiff like a grim sentinel in black." Carrying on implacably she is convinced that "It is justice!" (p.810) Seth is heard singing "Shenandoah" off stage, as he is returning from his nightly visit to the saloon. Alongwith, his chanty, a sharp pistol report is heard from inside the house. Lavinia shudders and gasps, starts to go up the stairs and then stops again. "It is justice! It is your justice, Father!" she reiterates. (p.810).

Orin's voice is heard, enquiring about the shot. He rushes out after a horrified cry when he sees his mother's body in the study. He tells Lavinia to get a doctor since their mother has shot herself. He also knows that it is too late, as "she is dead." He is full of remorse at the way he had tortured his mother and repents that he had not softened the blow of Brant's death by not stating the fact behind the newspaper report. He feels that his mother would have forgiven him then. But it is too late now and he is convinced that "I murdered her," since it was his vindictiveness that had driven her to her death. (p.811)

Lavinia orders him to be quiet as he can be heard by others.
Orin, however, is in a frenzy and ignores her command, to be quiet and wants to make his mother "forgive me!" He breaks down and sobs despairingly. Lavinia consoles him, saying he has got his sister for comfort. Orin continues to sob, unmindful of her. Seth enters, asking about the shot. Lavinia tells him to get the doctor and explains that her mother "has killed herself in a fit of insane grief over Father's death." Seth with an expressionless face, agrees to do her bidding. "Anything you say", he says. (p.811) He goes off and Lavinia stiff and erect, follows Orin into the house.

Syntagmatics: The Second Play: The Hunted

The second part of the trilogy, "The Hunted", begins with an emphasis on the infix of the exterior of the house as in the signifying ensemble (I.a.) and (I.a.m.) and (I.a.n.) of "Homecoming". In the ensemble (I.a.) the funeral wreaths and moonlit night expound the feeling of loss and death. Similarly, the chorus in (I.b.) here, invokes the same proposition of (II.a.) in "Homecoming". Together, they form a proposition in comprehension as they proceed to mention Christine's unpopularity and the apparent difference between Christine and Lavinia. The sub-ensembles (I.c. and I.d.) are extensions of the same proposition here. The comment on Mannon in the first play in the signifying ensemble (II.a.) is further extended now in the micro-ensemble (I.e.m. and I.e.n.). The "sinful pride" of the Mannons is highlighted again. This image is an extension of the awe and
fear felt by the chorus of "Homecoming." The kernel semanteme "sinful pride" is the immanent undercurrent of all other manifest syntagmatic inter-relationships of the dramatic discourse here. This is conceptually opposed to the "fear", behind the "mask-like veneer" felt by Christine in the signifying ensemble (II.a.) establishing both simultaneity and disjunction.

The arrival of Hazel in the micro-ensemble (II.c.m.) relieves the tension. Christine discloses that she is waiting for Orin to come home. Again, we see a juxtaposition of two homecomings. In the first play, Lavinia was the daughter-in-waiting and in the second play it is Christine, the mother-in-waiting. The love angle is developed in (II.c.o.). When Hazel reveals her love for Orin, a new strand to the narrative structure is added, a paradigmatic infix in the syntagmatic chain. Christine capitalises on the love-angle between Orin and Hazel to alienate Lavinia in the micro-ensemble (II.c.p.). However, Hazel's sympathies for Lavinia are apparent in (II.c.r.).

In the micro-ensemble (II.c.s.) Christine covets Hazel's goodness of heart. There is a similar reaction from Orin in the sub-ensemble (XI.h.) in the third play. In both cases, it is significant, that it is only after the committing of their respective crimes that both Christine and Orin covet goodness and purity. These are inter-related kernels across the syntagmatic chain, for Lavinia also is attracted to the openness and sinlessness in Peter in the third play.
In the micro-ensemble (III.a.m.), Orin comes home. The resemblance established between him and Mannon and Brant is again a proposition in extension, functioning as attribute to the proposition in comprehension (I.b.) in "Homecoming" about the "mask-factor". Orin's eagerness to meet his mother is obvious, but Lavinia has engineered it so that she can meet him first in (III.a.o.).

The micro-ensemble, (III.a.p.) is a proposition in extension about the house looking like a "tomb", which it is, literally. Also, as Mannon's dead body is still lying there. Furthermore, "tomb" leaves a lingering proposition in anticipation of the events to follow. Orin has changed locale, from the battlefield to the "tomb", an infix, full of dread. From the tomb-like house, commences the three tragic spaces in the trilogy. The Interior of the tomb-like house, the Steps leading out and the Exterior. The contiguity of one tragic space flowing into another, can be traced later. At this point, the syntagmatic movement of the discourse is still not sequential. O'Neill continues to include new strands to be inter-related later, both with, before and after. The transformational process of the discourse is both pulsational and criss-cross which requires a continuous reference to past, present and future.

In the micro-ensembles, (III.b.m. and n.) Mannon's death and the heroic deeds of war are discussed by Orin and Lavinia. Orin's lack of pride in his heroic exploits is significant. In (III.c.m.), Lavinia's letter about Brant is discussed. Lavinia
warns Orin to be careful of Christine as she would manipulate him. Orin’s disbelief of her story is shown in the micro-ensemble (III.c.o.).

The fourth signifying ensemble shows Christine’s angry arrival and bid to catch Orin’s attention. The emotional reunion between mother and son in (IV.a.n.) is a proposition in extension to the father-daughter reunion in "Homecoming". Just as Mannon had wanted his "little girl", Christine fawns over, "My boy! My baby." This comes close to the seduction scene in the Greeks, where Clytemnestra even bares her breast to distract a suspicious Orestes. Orin is quick to sense a change in her in (IV.a.o.). Christine cleverly side-steps in (IV.a.p.). Lavinia in the spectator’s role, warns Orin in (IV.a.q.). There is a tussle similar to the one in "Homecoming", where mother and daughter try to outmanoeuvre each other for control over Mannon earlier, and Orin now.

In the fifth signifying ensemble, Christine sends Orin into the house and begs her daughter to forget her "insane suspicions" in (V.a.n.). Lavinia only stares at her in answer in (V.a.o.) Christine becomes hysterical in (V.a.p.) and Lavinia’s silence in (V.q.) is eloquent. Christine is a highly disturbed being now and Lavinia is implacable in her indictment of her mother.

In the sixth signifying ensemble, the tension is broken with the change of act, action and characters. However, the interior of the sitting room is as "bleak". In the signifying sub-ensemble (VI.b.) Hazel and Peter comment on Orin’s "terrible
homecoming”. In the sub-ensemble (VI.c.), Christine and Orin revel in mutual affection while (VI.d.) reports on Orin’s comments about the changes in the house, his mother and Lavinia, the only exception being "Father, He’s the same and will always be here." It takes a number of ensembles to represent Mannon’s identification with the house and vice-versa.

The micro-ensemble (VI.e.m.) invokes the war theme. Orin wants women to outgrow their heroism and get "a taste of murder." This is followed by shock on the part of Christine and Hazel in the micro-ensemble (VI.e.n.). In (VI.f.) Orin’s attraction to the "sweet and good" Hazel is revealed. This sub-ensemble links up with (II.c.s.). In the next micro-ensemble, (VI.g.m.) Lavinia enters the scene, much to Christine’s consternation as she wants to hold Orin a "little longer" in the micro-ensemble (VI.g.n.). Orin disobeys Lavinia’s order to go and see his dead father and stays for a little longer with his mother instead. This pre-figures a complete reversal later in the play. For after overhearing the intrigue of his mother and Brant, Orin becomes absolutely obedient to Lavinia’s orders in (XV.d.n., XV.f.n., XV.g and XV.h.). When Peter and Hazel leave in (VI.g.p.), the mother and son are left to talk more openly. Christine braces herself in (VII.a.m.) for the impending inquisition.

In the sub-ensemble, (VII.a.n.) Orin questions his mother on her new found love for Hazel, and she diverts the question deftly in (VII.a.o.). Orin questions her lack of correspondence with him during the war in (VII.a.p.). Christine resorts to lies
again. The micro-ensemble (VII.b.m.) is significant as talk of Brant crops up between the closed relationship of mother and son. In the micro-ensemble (VI.b.n.). Christine tries to back-bite about Lavinia so that she can alienate her. Just as she had done with Hazel earlier in the micro-ensemble (II.c.p.), Christine continues to criticize Lavinia and her "moody and strange" ways, palming off the reason for Brant's visits also on her. In (VII.c.m.) Orin is horrified, believing everything his mother tells him. He even goes as far as saying that Lavinia should be put in an asylum. Orin is now traversing a path that begins with ignorance and gradually evolves into knowledge at that. Upto now he is relatively at peace, but this respite is an interval, an infix for reflection, introspection and which later ends in remorse. It is the halting place before the avalanche of knowledge consumes him and ultimately destroys him.

In the micro-ensemble (VII.c.n.), Orin consoles his mother like a solicitous son. However, in (VII.d.m.) he shows signs of the avenging son who is about to emerge, as he is willing to forgive anything except "that about Brant." This Aegisthus factor becomes his nemesis. Christine is afraid but distracts him. The reference to the South Sea Islands in (VII.d.p.) is significant. The beauty and the womb-like security they symbolise for Orin is a kernel semanteme as a criss-cross of desire-related network evolves in the developing discourse. For Christine, they represent "peace" from the torment she is undergoing, just as for Mannon they had represented a positive
change, in the signifying micro-ensemble, (XVI.c.m.) in "Homecoming". Similarly, in the same play, the islands signify the maternal presence for Brant and pagan revelry for Lavinia. The "memory" and the "desire" for the islands are followed in the extended proposition of "dreams". The psychic pulsational desire is a persistent urge to escape the existential situation, they find themselves in. Both dream and desire are correlated in this kernel semanteme, all others are partial signifiers, only attributes to the main subject. In the micro-ensemble (VII.d.q.) Christine regrets the fact that Orin had to go away to war, leaving her alone and vulnerable. But she is also aware of the inevitability of it - "It had to be" - thus realising the significance of her existential situation.

Lavinia enters in the eighth signifying micro-ensemble (VIII.a.m.) and admonishes Orin for not having seen his father yet. Orin complies in (VIII.a.n.), but with bad grace. In the sub-ensemble (VIII.c.), Christine warns Lavinia off, but her bravado collapses in the face of Lavinia's implacable resolve. Christine then, begs Lavinia to keep the secret for all their sakes in (VIII.d.) as Orin has "grown hard and cruel". Lavinia refuses to even reply. This is a very significant ensemble as the ensuing tragedy is prefigured in Christine's pleading and realisation that Orin only "thinks of death". The Orin who leaves the room to see his dead father in the micro-ensemble, (VIII.a.n.) is different from the Orin who appears in the next signifying ensemble. It seems that when he crosses over the
threshold of the room where his father lies in death, he crosses over to the realm of knowledge, leaving his ignorance behind. Here the signifying correlation is that of "confirmed knowledge" and the compulsion of tumultuous inner psychic layers which Christine dreads and Lavinia hopes for in her quest for "justice".

In the ninth signifying ensemble, we see the beginning of the tumultuous change in Orin, after the calm till now. This is continued in the tenth and eleventh ensembles, with an infix in the ninth. In the sub-ensemble (IX.b.) Orin is still unconvinced about Lavinia's story. He then addresses his father in (IX.c.). The proposition he voices, "Death becomes the Mannons", extends right upto the title of the trilogy, "Mourning becomes Electra". Again, becoming also invokes the state of being and Orin now begins to exert his will. He is startled by Lavinia in (IX.e.) while she admonishes him for his mockery of everything. Orin is intent on demystifying the reverence for one's father by mocking at Mannon's nickname in the army in the sub-ensemble (IX.g.). Similarly, he jokes about his so-called "heroic deed" in (IX.h.). The sub-ensemble (IX.i.) is significant as he has realised that every time he had killed in the war, he had felt that "the man was myself." The infix "murdering the same man over and over" extends the semantic relationship between, "I had the queer feeling" and "I would discover the man was myself." The proposition is now complete with the formation of an image that does not exist at the manifest level right now. The
transformation from "feeling" this and "doing" it later is accomplished with the ease of psychic interpolation in the micro-ensemble (IX.k.n.). "I'll kill that bastard," he says, of Brant.

The tenth signifying ensemble has Christine trying to interpolate before Lavinia damages her completely. Lavinia plans to give Orin the proof he wants to indict Christine. She places the medicine-box on the dead Mannon's chest in (X.b.). Christine tries to convince Orin about Lavinia's "vile lies", but gives herself away completely in the sub-ensemble (X.e.), on spying, the medicine-box. Lavinia has established the truth and Orin has attained the state of knowledge. In the process, he loses his "island" in (XI.a.m.'). Lavinia accuses Christine of murder in (XI.b.). Christine is left alone by her children in (XI.d.). It is significant that she beseeches the dead body to save Brant from Lavinia and not Orin as she has known all along that Lavinia will be her nemesis. She unmasks herself, finally to the dead Mannon. "I am the only guilty one", she says.

As in the earlier signifying ensembles, these eleven signifying ensembles with their kernel propositional elements, the partial signifiers, included in inverted commas, function as attributes to the last subject-proposition of masking and unmasking. The preceding images serve to crystalise the kernel semanteme of deception leading to the desire for knowledge which will now lead to an existential confrontation of that damning knowledge. Structurally, O'Neill places this literal and figurative act of unmasking in the middle of the trilogy. Such
centering reveals that the "unmasking" is the kernel semanteme around which the act of the previous play and the action upto now has led. Once Christine confesses that she is "the guilty one", the generative process of the narrative will move on irrevocably to its denouement.

In the twelveth signifying ensemble, there is a change of locale. The tragic space now shifts to the exterior. The act is located on a clipper ship in Boston. The architectonic structure of this signifying ensemble begins with snatches of the chanty, Shenandoah, but it is not sung by Seth. A drunken chantyman lurches around singing. Brant emerges on the deck, looking tense in the sub-ensemble (XII.c.). Both of them exchange news and Brant offers him a job on his ship when he hopes to sail and sends him away in (XII.d.p.). Meanwhile, in the micro-ensemble (XII.d.o.), the chantyman offers a choric comment on Mannon's heart being like "a dried turnip". He then leaves, singing "Hanging Johnny", in the micro-ensemble (XII.d.g.) which Brant finds symbolic in (XII.e.).

The thirteenth signifying ensemble reveals Christine in black clothes which is significant. In (XIII.b.) Brant and Christine reveal their tension to each other. Brant senses something "gone wrong", and Christine reveals that "Vinnie knows" in (XIII.d.). The unmasking is complete as far as Christine is concerned. She realises that things are out of control, as she says, "something made things happen" in (XIV.c.). They move into the cabin, fearing eavesdroppers in (XIII.g.).
In this state of existential destabilisation, Orin and Lavinia appear stealthily on the deck, in the next ensemble, (XIV.a.m.). Lavinia is dressed in black like Christine. They overhear what Christine is telling Brant below in (XIV.c.). Brant is gratified that his revenge on Mannon is complete, as he had died with the knowledge of Brant’s lineage in the micro-ensemble (XIV.d.m. and n.). At the same time, he abhors the cowardliness of the act he has committed in (XIV.d.o. and XIV.e.) which also reveals Christine’s guilt at bringing "misfortune" to Brant. Sick with fear, they decide to set sail as soon as possible, forgoing the "Flying Trades" in (XIV.f.). In the sub-ensemble (XIV.g.) Brant realises that he has "to give up the sea" since he has betrayed her. This sense of honour surfaces in him before he dies.

In the next sub-ensemble, (XV.a.) Christine consoles him with talk of the "Blessed Isles". Brant wonders if he will ever find them again, as he can never attain the state of sinlessness again, in the sub-ensemble (XV.b.). Christine leaves in (XV.c.) while Orin and Lavinia have listened in on them in (XV.d.m.). The simultaneous action, both above and below is pregnant with revelations both for the self and for the other. While Brant and Christine, reveal to each other, they individually also realise the existential dilemma facing them now. Christine realises that she has to retain her youth and looks to keep Brant by her side. Brant realises that the sea will never accept him again as her son. Similarly, on the top deck, the bald truth is revealed to
Orin and Lavinia, even as they both realise the betrayal done to them by the people below. For Orin the knowledge that his mother has committed the ultimate betrayal when she plans the "island" trip with Brant and not him in (XV.d.n.) is a turning point. For Lavinia, the revelation that Brant is actually in love with Christine is confirmed in (XV.c.). The most significant conceptual relation here is between latent violence and knowledge. Orin and Lavinia know the truth and there is impending violence because Christine can smell it in the air. "I feel so strange... as if I'd never see you again!" she says in (XV.c.). Her premonition of impending disaster networks with Mannon feeling similarly in (XVII.e) of "Homecoming". Lavinia and Orin creep into the cabin, when Brant goes to see off Christine in (XV.e.m. and n.). Lavinia plots the finer details of the murder in (XV. f.m.). It is significant that she is in complete control while Orin is "agitated" in (XV.f.n.).

The sixteenth signifying ensemble establishes a conceptual juxtaposition between Orin and Brant. While Brant labours under guilt and remorse at his "cowardly" contribution to Mannon's murder even though there had been a revenge motive, in (XIV.g.), Orin commits a cold-blooded murder without remorse or dread in (XVI.b.). Lavinia, who engineers the deed, but remains the spectator only, is fascinated by the killing in (XVI.c.). She instructs Orin to simulate the effects of a burglary to escape detection in (XVI.d.). She then voices, what has been rankling deep inside her. "How could you love that vile old woman so?",
she asks, thus reiterating, Christine's contention in the micro-ensemble (VII.b.s.) in "Homecoming", that she has always coveted everything that Christine had. However, Lavinia prays for Brant's soul in (XVI.c.n.).

The micro-ensemble (XVI.f.n.) is composed of the realisation of "likeness" that Orin feels between himself and Brant, since he looks "like me" too and maybe, "I've committed suicide," he says. The proposition is not restricted to only physical likeness, for Orin also confesses that he would have behaved in "like" fashion for the love of Christine. Lavinia loathes the implication and orders him to "stop talking crazy". The kernel semanteme here, "crazy" will recur with renewed vigour in the last play.

The seventeenth signifying ensemble, brings the action back to the Mannon house. Christine is oblivious of her earlier premonition of not seeing Brant again, having come true. She is pacing outside in tension on a moonlit night. Hazel appears, looking a vision of goodness, in sharp contrast to Christine in (XVII.b.m.). Christine is unnaturally effusive in (XVII.b.n.) and confesses to being afraid to be "in the house". She also covets Hazel's peace of mind in the micro-ensemble (XVII.b.o.). "I was like you once", she says. They talk of Orin and Lavinia's trip, ostensibly to meet their cousins in (XVII.b.p.). Christine requests Hazel to sleep the night in the Mannon house as she is "afraid to be alone" in (XVII.b.q.). This is unlike Lavinia, who
consciously prefers to be alone finally, at the end of "The Haunted".

In the eighteenth signifying ensemble, Orin and Lavinia are shocked when they bump into Christine who asks after their visit in (XVIII.b.). With the next sub-ensemble, (XVIII.c.), we move very rapidly to the kernel theme of the second discourse when Orin confronts his mother with the truth. He unmasks her himself, thus inflicting a variation of the maternal defilement that the Greeks enumerate in their renditions. Christine’s horror at Brant’s murder and at being unmasked is seen in (XVIII.d.). Orin continues the maternal defilement in the next four sub-ensembles. He tells her that she has "lied enough" in (XVIII.e.). He admits to "murdering" Brant in the sub-ensemble (XVIII.f.) and the way he and Lavinia have covered it up in (XVIII.g. and h.)

In the nineteenth signifying ensemble, Lavinia moves in after the kill, as it were. Christine moans in "stricken anguish" in (XIX.a.) while Lavinia stands by with a "mask-like" face in (XIX.b.). It is significant that at the moment when Christine is completely unmasked, Lavinia assumes a masked visage. The generative process of the narrative continues till she too will be unmasked completely at the end of the trilogy.

In the micro-ensemble (XIX.c.m.), Orin is still recriminating about "the servant’s bastard" who "hypnotised" his mother. Christine continues moaning in (XIX.d.) making Orin resolve to make her "forget him" in (XIX.e.). His presumption
that he can retrace his steps back-wards to the "island" state is revealed in the same ensemble. Lavinia is scornful of him in (XIX.f.m.) and orders him to go into the house in (XIX.f.n.).

The twentieth signifying ensemble reconstitutes the generative process of the discourse from the mother and son to the daughter and mother combine. While warmth and forgiveness mark the first relationship, jealousy and revenge colours the other. The emotion that Orin still feels for his mother is diametrically opposed to the hate which Lavinia still harbours for her, as the twentieth signifying ensemble testifies.

In the sub-ensemble (XX.a.), Lavinia voices her condemnation of her mother and is satisfied that "true justice" has been carried out. This awakens Christine from her numbed shock in (XX.b.m.). In the micro-ensemble (XX.b.n.), she jumps up and stares at Lavinia with a fierce hatred and fear, making Lavinia recoil from her mother. After her father's death, it is now that Lavinia is shaken for the first time by the hatred she sees in her mother's eyes. The micro-ensemble encapsulates the significance of the relationship between the mother and daughter all along. While the mother is beyond forgiveness for her, Lavinia's condemnation of her mother is tempered with forgiveness. "You can live!", she tells Christine. Christine, however, is scornful of her benevolence, now that Lavinia's sense of revenge is assuaged, and rushes into the house in (XX.d.m. and n.).
With this signifying ensemble, Lavinia completely dominates the existential situation of a severe crisis of her life. When the first crisis occurred, with the murder of her father, she was only being acted upon by Christine. In a reversal now, Lavinia is in a position to "allow" Christine to live, after the jealousy and anger of the previous ensembles. Now that Christine is bereft, Lavinia is the benevolent daughter, even as she does not exist as a daughter to Christine any more, in the light of the actions of the previous ensembles. However, it is a moment of existential destabilisation for Lavinia, when Christine mocks at her, since she can no longer be blackmailed. On the other hand, Christine is being "acted" upon first by Orin and then by Lavinia, but when she rushes into the interior of the house, one of the three tragic spaces enumerated, she begins to dominate the existential situation and stabilise. Though we do not see her any more, she has decided to exist no more as the sub-ensemble (XXII.a.) signifies with the sharp report of a pistol shot. This de-existentialisation is a conscious act.

In the twenty-first signifying ensemble, Lavinia is seen convincing herself that "It is justice" in the micro-ensemble (XXI.a.n.). Alongside the mournful chanty, Shenandoah is heard in Seth's voice in (XXI.b.), setting the tone for the next event which rings out as a pistol shot in (XXII.a.). Lavinia knows the truth, but falters between belief and disbelief, conviction and doubt, within knowledge and in this case fore-knowledge as her reiteration that it was "justice" signifies. In fact she draws
strength by implicating her father in the act too. "It is your justice, Father!" she says in (XXII.b). In this sub-ensemble, Lavinia has assumed the attributes of Electra completely as she has avenged the honour of her dead father.

The sub-ensembles (XXII.c., d. and e.) depict Orin who is beginning to disintegrate as he is consumed with guilt. "I drove her to it," he cries. Lavinia, as usual, assumes command in the last signifying ensemble, (XXIII) of the play, by ordering Orin to be quiet in the micro-ensemble (XXIII.a.n.). Orin breaks down completely. "I murdered her", he cries in (XXIII.b.m.). This micro-ensemble links him to the Orestes of the Greeks even though Christine is not physically murdered by him. His conviction of his guilt in the whole episode looks forward to his Oresteian lineage in the third play.

The sub-ensembles (XXIII.c., d., e. and f.) show Lavinia covering up incriminating tracks as she instructs Seth to call the doctor to attend to her mother who she says, has shot herself in "a fit of insane grief over Father's death". Seth senses things are amiss but agrees to do her bidding. "Anything you say," he says, which pre-figures the bonding between them and flash-forwards to the ending of the third play, where he does her bidding once more, for the last time.

Problematics

Barthes disrupts conventional binary structures and seeks the term which transgresses the neat disposition of differences,
for he feels that it is in these oppositions that the key to the construction of meaning is to be found. As he says, "being the figure of opposition, the exasperated form of binarism, antithesis is the very spectacle of meaning." Oppositions of primitive versus civilized, neurotic opposed to the instinctual, antagonistic opposition of the sexes, puritan versus modern ethos, ignorance opposed to knowledge are all points of entry into the symbolic field of the text. We see that the most powerful antithesis in this text, is of the mother to the child. The structuration reveals how the love/hate dialectic with the maternal permeates the text. For the son, the maternal changes from a loved person to the rejection of the mother figure, while the internal focalization makes the daughter character a mask for the patriarchal viewpoint.

Who is Electra? It is a subconscious challenge, or psychoanalytically, a paraxis which indicates a repressed desire which has been kept secret and hidden from the self and is gradually dislocated from hallucinatory perception and replaced into a tangible context. Lavinia becomes Christine’s nemesis. Unlike his source, O’Neill reverses the roles of the children. Orestes avenges Agamemnon’s murder but Orin is made out to be too weak to shoulder the responsibility. Lavinia, therefore, becomes the dominant and central character. O’Neill’s earliest notes on the play reveal his feelings. "Why did the chain of fated crime - and retribution ignore her mother’s murderess? - a weakness in what remains to us of Greek tragedy that there is no play about
Electra’s life after Clytemnestra’s murder. Surely it possesses as imaginative tragic possibilities as any of their plots. O’Neill tried to correct this in the last part of the trilogy. In the earlier version, Lavinia refuses to live in the Mannon house after her father’s death. She goes to the Chappells’ house to tutor their daughter, secretly returning to her house so that the guilty can die on her father’s bed. She uses morphia and poison for Christine and Brant. However, the play is close to the original in the underscoring of the accountability for the matricide - both Lavinia, consciously, and Orin, unconsciously are guilty and responsible for it.

Act I of this part of the trilogy, tries to normalise matters after the horrific ending of the first part. As a result, the towns-folk’s gossip and comments about the family bring the outside world into the play. The arrival of Orin, is the highlight of the act. Act II continues the action with the scene shifting from the exterior to the interior of the house. The antithetical opposition between mother and daughter as they manoeuvre for control over Orin is significant.

Act III and Act IV are the most significant in the trilogy as Orin and Lavinia progress from ignorance to confirmed knowledge about their mother’s crime. What follows thereafter is the "purgative" action that has to take place in response. In what O’Neill in his work diary called the "centre of the whole work", the scene on Adam Brant’s ship, shows new elements and a new direction. As Bogard says, O’Neill returns to the mood and
manner of his early sea plays, but he created only a faded image. The scene reveals the clipper ship, "Flying Trades" and the chanty "Shenandoah" is heard in the background. The old, drunken chantyman is described in turns, reminiscent of O'Neill's former poet-hero. He has "a weak mouth, blue eyes ... dreamy and drunken ..." and he is "romantic" with a "queer troubadour - of - the - sea quality about him." The poet who was O'Neill's constant hero is now old and useless, an insignificant figure on the edge of tragedy. He prophesies that "Everything is dying! Abe Lincoln is dead. I used to ship on the Mannon packets an' I seed in the paper where Ezra Mannon was dead!" As Bogard states the exit of the chantyman singing "Hanging Johnny" is the last glimpse O'Neill gives of the protected children of the sea. Thereafter, as the "Calms of Capricorn" was to attest, the sea was for drowning. 14

Act V homes in on the theme of matricide. O'Neill consciously deviates from his sources and changes the thrust by having Christine commit suicide. However, he makes sure that neither Orin nor Lavinia are absolved of guilt, of inducing and provoking Christine to take the final step. The significance of the semes and symbols indicate the work of the unconscious that simultaneously conceals and gratifies desire.

The narrative can be retold in twenty three signifying ensembles through which the text is presented. A summary of the kernel semantemes shows that their propositional extensions are responsible for the syntagmatic progression of the dramatic
discourse. Recourse has been taken to more quotations from the

text here, since this play is more action oriented whereas the

previous one was more descriptive.

I.a. Act I: Exterior of the Mannon house - again sets the
tone, as in the first play. Funeral wreaths; moonlit

night, two days after Mannon's death.

I.b. Choric comment by characters - shows a different strata
of society from the chorus of the previous play but
perform the same role of providing a human background
to the drama of the Mannons.

I.c. The chorus comments on Christine - indicates her
unpopularity.

I.d. They compare Christine and Lavinia. Comments based on
face value as Lavinia "doesn't seem to feel as much

sorrow as she ought" (p.754)

I.e.m. Comment on Mannon's not being a given a public funeral
befitting "a great man". (p.755)

I.e.n. Contrasting comment on the Mannon curse and their
"sinful pride".

I.f. Doctor Blake gives his medical opinion of Mannon's
angina and his diagnosis that the physical reunion with
his wife precipitated it.

II.a. Christine enters, looking tense with "a mask - like

veneer." (p.757)

II.b. Hazel arrives, a complete contrast in looks, deamenour
and manner.
II.c.m. Christine tells Hazel that she herself has aged since the tragedy.

II.c.n. She is waiting expectantly for Orin and wants to stay pretty for him.

II.c.o. Hazel admits her love for Orin.

II.c.p. Christine conspires with her to monopolise Orin.

II.c.q. It is a desperate bid on Christine's part to minimise Lavinia's influence on Orin.

II.c.r. Hazel empathises with Lavinia's grief.

II.c.s. Christine envies Hazel her goodness of heart and covets the simple, uncomplicated life that Hazel leads.

III.a.m. Orin enters - striking resemblance to Mannon and Brant is stated. "Has a mask-like quality". Though only twenty, he looks thirty.

III.a.n. Orin comes looking for his mother, eager and boy-like, but disappointed at seeing that his mother is not there to receive him.

III.a.o. Lavinia sends Peter into the house so that she can be alone with Orin. III.a.p. Both of them comment on the house looking like a tomb.

III.b.m. Comment on Mannon's death. Orin becomes nostalgic. He can not get used to the idea of "his being dead." (p.761)

III.b.n. Lavinia comments on Orin's bravery in war and Orin makes light of it saying that Mannon had exaggerated the action. III.c.m. Talk of Lavinia's letter and
mention of Brant. III.c.n. Lavinia cautions Orin about Christine's molly-coddling of him.

III.c.o. Orin disbelieves Lavinia, attributing her attitude to the squabbling she and Christine are known for.

IV.a.m. Christine enters, angry at Peter, for not having told her earlier about Orin's arrival.

IV.a.n. Emotional reunion between mother and son. "My boy! my baby!" she says. (p.762) This comes close to the seduction scene in the Greeks where Clytemnestra tries to seduce Orestes to distract him.

IV.a.o. Orin senses a change in her and asks her.

IV.a.p. Christine cleverly deflects the attention on her.

IV.a.q. Lavinia, as though on guard, keeps Orin from succumbing to Christine's manipulations.

V.a.m. Christine sends Orin in and tries to corner Lavinia so that she can talk to her.

V.a.n. She begs her daughter to forget her "insane suspicions" (p.763)

V.a.o. For answer, Lavinia stares at her in stony silence.

V.a.p. Christine's rising hysteria. "What are you plotting? Tell me!" she says. (p.764)

V.q. Lavinia is silent.

VI.a. Act II: It is the sitting room of the Mannon house. "A bleak room without intimacy." (p.765)

VI.b. Hazel and Peter comment on Orin's "terrible homecoming." (p.766)
VI.c. Christine and Orin make much of each other in Lavinia’s absence.

VI.d. Orin comments on the change in the house now, apart from the change in Christine, himself and Lavinia with the exception of "Father. He's the same and always will be - here - the same!" (p.767)

VI.e. Orin wants women sent to the army so that they get "a taste of murder." (p.768)

VI.f. Orin is attracted to the "sweet and good" Hazel and her singing which "would rise above the screams of the dying in his mind while he was at war." (p.769)

VI.g.m. Lavinia enters and instructs Orin to go in and look at his father.

VI.g.n. Christine tries to avert it. "Stay with me a little longer," she says (p.769)

VI.g.o. Orin concedes to her desire over Lavinia's wish. "Of course, Mother! You come before everything," he says. (p.769)

VI.g.p. Peter and Hazel are uncomfortable in the palpable tension and leave.

VII.a.m. Christine braces herself for Orin’s inquisition.

VII.a.n. Orin’s comment on her sudden, forced bid to befriend Hazel.

VII.a.o. Christine cleverly side-steps to say that she was only match-making for him.
VII.a.p. Orin's comment on the measly two letters Christine wrote to him in the six months that he had been away.

VII.a.q. Christine lies to overcome the situation.

VII.b.m. The talk now veers to Brant.

VII.b.n. Christine's effort to alienate Lavinia and get closer to Orin so that she can manipulate him. "She's your father's! You are a part of me!" she says. (p. 771)

VII.b.o. Christine's comment on Lavinia's going crazy after the tragedy. "A moody and strange girl," he concludes. (p. 772)

VII.b.p. Christine's attempt to palm off the Brant episode in the same manner. "I'm no better than a prostitute in your sister's eyes!" (p. 774) and "Don't let her turn you against me", she pleads. (p. 775)

VII.c.m. Orin is horrified and feels Lavinia "ought to be put in an asylum!" (p. 774)

VII.c.n. He attempts to console his mother. "No matter what you ever did, I love you better than anything in the world," he says. (p. 775)

VII.d.m. But Orin qualifies the "anything", which frightens Christine. "I could forgive anything in my mother except that other - that about Brant ... I'd show you then I hadn't been taught to kill for nothing!" he says (p. 775).

VII.d.n. But Christine's clever manipulation distracts Orin.

VII.d.o. He wants to escape to the South Sea Islands with her.
VII.d.p. Christine associates the islands with peace and for Orin they signify the ecstasy of being safe inside the womb. "This was the most beautiful island in the world - as beautiful as you, Mother!" "You are my only girl," he vows. (p.776)

VII.d.q. Christine regrets the fact that Orin had to go away to the war. But she also feels that "It had to be." (p.776)

VIII.a.m. Lavinia enters and admonishes Orin for not having been in to see his father.

VIII.a.n. Orin complies as though it were a chore and leaves.

VIII.b. Christine warns Lavinia not to meddle with Orin.

VIII.c. Her defiance collapses in the face of Lavinia's implacable look.

VIII.d. Christine, then begs Lavinia to keep quiet as Orin has changed. "He's grown hard and cruel! All he thinks of is death! Don't tell him about Adam. He would kill him. I couldn't live then! I would kill myself!" she pleads (p.778).

VIII.e. Lavinia walks away stiffly like some "tragic mechanical doll." (p.778). The ensuing tragedy is prefigured in the last two ensembles here.

IX.a. Act III: Mannon's study with his body lying in full uniform. Orin, looking ahead is brooding with eyes full of suspicion. He is likened to "a sentinel at
attention" just as Lavinia, in the micro-ensemble XXI.a.m.

IX.b. Orin is thinking of Lavinia’s allegation. "Damn Vinnie! She must be crazy!" he says. (p.779)

IX.c. He talks to his dead father. "Death sits so naturally on you! Death becomes the Mannons!" he mocks. (p.780)

IX.d. Lavinia enters and startles Orin.

IX.e. She admonishes him for his mockery of everything.

IX.f. Orin says he uses the ploy as a defensive mechanism. "You have to learn to mock or go crazy," he says. (p.780)

IX.g. Orin is intent on demystifying his father to Lavinia and refers to his nickname in the army. "Old Stick - short for Stick-in-the Mud," he says. (p.780)

IX.h. Orin reveals the joke behind his so called "heroic deed". (p.781)

IX.i. Orin demystifies war and death too. "I had the queer feeling that war meant murdering the same man over and over, and that in the end I would discover the man was myself," he feels. (p.781)

IX.j.m. Talk now veers to Christine.

IX.j.n. Orin tries to avoid it, so Lavinia asks whether Christine has already brainwashed him.

IX.j.o. Lavinia is intent on a murder trial if Orin will not help her. "I accuse her of murder," she says. (p.783)
IX.j.p. Orin calls her a "damned lunatic" (p.783). "The whole thing is too insane", he says. (p.784)

IX.k.m. Lavinia is bitter at Orin's stance and calls him "a spoiled crybaby". (p.784) She now calculates on making him jealous by referring to Christine's "lover."

IX.k.n. Orin's anger is aroused and he wants proof. Then, "I'll kill that bastard!" he says. (p.785)

X.a. Christine is heard outside the locked door to be let in, calling in a terrified voice.

X.b. Lavinia quickly puts the little medicine box on Mannon's chest before she comes into the room.

X.c.m. Christine clings to Orin in fright and accuses Lavinia of feeding him "vile lies." She tells Orin that, "I know she's plotting."

X.c.n. Her fear of the police and a trial makes her beg Orin to stop Lavinia from taking any drastic action.

X.d. Christine then addresses Mannon, "You were always dead to me!" she says. (p.787)

X.e. Suddenly Christine spies the box, "stifles a scream and stares at it in guilty fear." (p.787)

XI.a.m. Orin is convinced of her guilt now. He is bitter and scornful, "You're my lost island, aren't you Mother?," he asks bitterly. (p.787).

XI.a.n. He then stumbles out of the room, blindly.

XI.b. Lavinia picks up the medicine box, thus releasing Christine from her hypnotised gaze.
XI.c. Lavinia accuses her of conniving with Brant in the murder of Mannon and leaves.

XI.d. Christine beseeches the dead man to save Brant from Lavinia as "I am the only guilty one". (p.788). She rushes out, distraught.

XII.a. Act IV: There is a change in the scenario. The stern section of a clipper ship in Boston, alongside the wharf is shown. It is night time of the day following the funeral. Snatches of "Shenandoah" can be heard on the wind as a drunken chantyman speaks.

XII.b. The chantyman comments on the bad quality of singing and attempts to sing it himself in a surprisingly good voice. He realizes that his pocket has been picked.

XII.c. Brant emerges on the poopdeck. He looks tense and is startled by the lurching chantyman. He draws his gun.

XII.d.m. The chantyman explains himself and Brant also introduces himself as the skipper who is also doing the watchman's duty just then.

XII.d.n. Talk of theft on some other ship as well.

XII.d.o. The chantyman introduces himself to be the best in his work but out of a job as he used to ship on the "Mannon's packets". He calls Mannon's heart," a dried turnip." (p.792)

XII.d.p. Brant offers him a job whenever he plans to sail and sends him on his way.

XII.d.q. The chantyman leaves, singing "Hanging Johnny."
XII.e. Brant calls the song, "sad as death! I've a foreboding I'll never take this ship to sea ---- The sea hates a coward." (p.794).

XIII.a. Christine enters in black clothes.

XIII.b. Brant and Christine reveal their fears to each other. "These last days have been hell!" (p.795)

XIII.c. Brant senses, "there's something gone wrong." (p.795)

XIII.d. Christine confesses that "Vinnie knows." (p.795)

XIII.e. Brant is paranoid now that he knows that Lavinia knows. He is worried about Orin's reaction also.

XIII.f. Christine confesses that "so many things have happened I couldn't foresee." (p.796)

XIII.g. Brant is cautious and takes Christine into his cabin as he is afraid of eavesdroppers.

XIV.a.m. Orin and Lavinia creep up stealthily on deck.

XIV.a.n. Lavinia is dressed in black.

XIV.b. Both of them position themselves over Brant's cabin where they can overhear the other pair's conversation.

XIV.c. Christine is recounting the sequence of the entire murder, down below to Adam Brant. "Something made things happen," she says. (p.797)

XIV.d.m. Brant is gratified to know that Mannon died with the knowledge of Brant's true identity.

XIV.d.n. He feels he has been avenged.
XIV.d.o. But he is also remorseful about his cowardly action. "I have my father's rotten coward blood in me," he says (p.798).

XIV.e. Christine feels guilty. "I've brought you nothing but misfortune," she says. (p.799)

XIV.f. They decide to abandon their plans of leaving on the 'Flying Trades' and want to get away as soon as possible on any ship available.

XIV.g. Brant then realizes that he has "to give up the sea... the sea hates a coward." (p.799)

XV.a. Christine then consoles him with talk of the Blessed Isles.

XV.b. Brant hopes for that elusive happiness on the Islands. "There's peace and forgetfulness for us there - if we can ever find those islands now!" he says. (p.799)

XV.c. Christine tears herself away from Brant to leave. "I feel so strange -- so sad -- as if I'd never see you again!" she says.

XV.d.m. Orin and Lavinia have been listening in on them, from above.

XV.d.n. Orin almost losing control, but for Lavinia's cautionary gestures.

XV.e.m. Brant goes to see off Christine up to the wharf.

XV.e.n. Lavinia and Orin creep into Brant's cabin.

XV.f.m. Lavinia plots the murder. She is in full control.

XV.f.n. She explains to the agitated Orin, that they must
simulate the actions of thieves to escape identification after the murder.

XV.g. Orin is seething at his mother's betrayal of his "island" secret, to that "skunk". (p.800)

XV.h. Lavinia commands Orin to leave the cabin so that he can creep up on Brant when he came back.

XVI.a. Brant returns full of remorse at having to leave his ship. "I wasn't man enough for you," he says. (p.801)

XVI.b. Orin creeps up just then, and shoots him from behind.

XVI.c. Lavinia is fascinated by the murder.

XVI.d. But she is also composed enough to instruct Orin to simulate the effects of a burglary.

XVI.d.m. She then addresses the dead Brant, "How could you love that vile old woman so?" she asks. (p.802)

XVI.d.n. She also prays for the peace of the departed soul.

XVI.f.m. Orin returns after strewing things around to give the impression of a burglary.

XVI.f.n. He is struck by Brant's family resemblance. "He looks like me, too! May be I've committed suicide!" he says. (p.803)

XVI.f.o. Orin confesses that he too would have behaved like Brant if he had the love of Christine.

XVI.g. Lavinia hustles him out and tells him "to stop talking crazy". (p.803)

XVII.a. Act V: Exterior of the Mannon house. It is the night of the next day. It is moonlit and the shadows caused by
the pine trees lend an eerie look. Christine is pacing back and forth as though waiting for someone.

XVII.b.m. Hazel appears, looking a complete contrast to Christine.

XVII.b.n. Christine is unnaturally effusive in her welcome. "I can’t bear it in the house," she says. (p.804).

XVII.b.o. She covets Hazel’s goodness and tension-free life. "I was like you once! I believed in heaven!" she says. (p.805)

XVII.b.p. They talk about the missing Orin and Lavinia who have ostensibly gone to visit their cousins. Christine says, "I urged them to go". (p.805)

XVII.b.q. Christine asks Hazel to sleep the night in the Mannon house as "I’m afraid to be alone". (p.806) This is unlike Lavinia who wants to be "alone" finally, in the same house.

XVII.c.m. Hazel leaves to take her mother’s permission.

XVII.c.n. Christine watches her go further down the driveway and meet up with Orin and Lavinia who have just returned from Boston.

XVIII.a. Orin and Lavinia bump into Christine and are shocked.

XVIII.b. Christine asks after their visit.

XVIII.c. Orin confesses the truth about their visit. "We met the train... And we followed you when you called on your lover in his cabin!" he says. (p.807) (He inflicts a variation of a maternal defilement, when he
unmasks her himself).

XVIII.d. Christine's growing horror at the revelation.

XVIII.e. Orin reveals the entire sequence of events and tells his mother to stop lying. "You've lied enough, Mother!" he says. (p.807)

XVIII.f. Orin confesses to the murder. "I killed him," he says. (p.807)

XVIII.g. He explains that the police in their report have attributed the murder to be the handiwork of thieves as "Brant wasn't important - except to you!" (p.808)

XVIII.h. He clarifies that "there's nothing to connect us with his death." (p.808)

XIX.a. Christine moans to herself in "stricken anguish." (p.808)

XIX.b. Lavinia stands by rigid and erect, her face mask-like.

XIX.c.m. Orin is still recriminating "that servant's bastard --- he hypnotised you." (p.808)

XIX.c.n. He expresses his sense of betrayal about the island.

XIX.d. Christine continues moaning in her stillness.

XIX.e. This unnerves Orin. "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," he promises. (p.808)

XIX.f.m. Lavinia is scornful at Orin's becoming Christine's "crybaby" again. (p.809)
XIX.f.n. She herself is implacable and orders Orin to "go into the house." (p.809)

XX.a. Lavinia is alone with Christine and condemns her. "It was the only way true justice could be done," she says. (p.809)

XX.b.m. Her words awaken Christine from her state of numbness.

XX.b.n. She jumps up and stares at Lavinia with hatred and fear.

XX.c. Lavinia recoils from the scorching hatred and is shaken inspite of herself. "Mother! What are you going to do? You can live!" she placates. (p.809)

XX.d.m. Christine is scornful and gesticulates as though she wants to blot out Lavinia from her vision completely.

XX.d.n. Christine rushes into the house.

XXI.a.m. Lavinia is left alone on the stage, looking like "a grim sentinel in black".

XXI.a.n. She reiterates, "It is justice." (p.810)

XXI.b. The chanty Shenandoah is heard in Seth's voice, off stage.

XXII.a. A sharp report of a pistol shot is heard.

XXII.b. Lavinia knows instinctively. "It is justice! It is your justice, Father!" she reiterates. (p.810)

XXII.c. Orin is heard asking, "What's that?" (p.810), followed by a horrified cry.

XXII.d. He rushes out, explaining that Christine has shot herself.
XXII.e. He realizes that it is too late to save her. "She's dead --- I drove her to it!" he cries. (p.810)

XXIII.a.m. Though shaken and frightened Lavinia is in control.

XXIII.a.n. She orders Orin to be quiet.

XXIII.b.m. Orin breaks down, losing complete control. "I murdered her! ---- I've got to make her forgive me," he cries. (p.811)

XXIII.b.n. He goes into the house sobbing.

XXIII.c. Seth appears singing his chanty and asks about the shot.

XXIII.d. Lavinia asks him to get Doctor Blake.

XXIII.e. She instructs Seth to tell the doctor that Christine has killed herself "in a fit of insane grief over Father's death." (p.811)

XXIII.f. Seth knows that something is not right but agrees to do her bidding. "Anything you say," he says. (p.811)

THE THIRD PLAY: THE HAUNTED

In the entire progression of "The Haunted," the third part of the trilogy, the action takes place in four acts. The first act has two scenes. A few more secondary actors are introduced. The action resumes after a year has elapsed from the point of the ending of the last play.

Act I, scene I shows the exterior of the Mannon house, on an evening of a clear day in summer. It is after sunset and there is a crimson light exuding on all things, notwithstanding the black
shadows. The shutters are closed and the front door is boarded up as the house is unoccupied. Playing the chorus this time, are five drunken men - Seth, Amos Ames, Abner Small, a clerk, Joe Silva, a Portuguese fishing captain and Ira Mackel a farmer. A jug of liquor is being passed around them. They joke amongst themselves and burst into snatches of singing, indicating innocent bonhomie.

The talk then veers to the house being haunted by "Ezra's woman." (p.816). Seth winks and adds that there's plenty of ghost company as "the graveyard's full of Mannons". (p.817) Their mirth then becomes forced as they start feeling uneasy about ghosts. To reassure himself and the others, Small says, "there ain't no such thing as ghosts!" (p.817) Seth is itching for some fun and therefore challenges Small to a wager. They lay a bet of ten dollars and challenge Small to spend the night in the house. Small looks ill but takes up the challenge. In the meanwhile, Seth mentions that Lavinia and Orin would "be back from Chiny afore long." Therefore he wants to open up the house for them. He pries open the board door and Small, seemingly non-chalant but tense all the same, goes into the house and is locked in. The others are amused but also relieved that they are not "in Abner's boots." (p.818)

The group outside now becomes serious and talk of the ghosts in other families with gory details. They cast uneasy glances around, as Seth comes out of the house after settling Small in. He forces a jocular tone and laughs about Small's state of
nerves. They wonder if the Mannon house is actually haunted and ask Seth about it. Seth makes light of the whole thing, but it is clear that he is affected too. Mackel is convinced that the house has to be haunted because Christine and Ezra had died in circumstances "that was durned queer!." (p.819) Seth remonstrates angrily and finds old men "with one foot in the grave," like them talking about ghosts queer. Mackel does not give up easily and says that if it were not for the Mannon's social standing the truth would have been out. Seth's loyalty to the Mannons is apparent when he starts shaking his fist angrily in Mackel's face. Silva tries to defuse the tension.

They stop talking when they hear Peter and Hazel coming up the drive. The jug is quickly hidden. The Niles are surprised to find the crowd. Seth explains that he was showing his friends around the grounds. Peter mentions that he has received a telegram about Orin and Lavinia's arrival in New York and that they were on their way to the house. He is, however, interrupted by "the muffled yell of terror" (p.820) from the house as Small comes hurtling out of it, terrified and ready to pay the ten dollars at having lost the bet. Peter demands an explanation. Seth is embarrassed and explains that it was only a joke. He asks his gang to leave, even as an indignant Small tells his friends that he is sure that the house is haunted. "I've had enough of this durned place!" he says. (p.821) Hazel is outraged and Seth explains that he was only trying to exorcise the house for the townsfolk, to put a stop to all the loose talk about it being
haunted. Peter appreciates the idea and calls it "a slick notion! Nothing like a joke to lay a ghost!" he says. (p.821)

Now that he is alone with the Niles, Seth voices his real feelings about the house. He asks Peter and Hazel to convince Orin and Lavinia not "to live in it" as he feels that the haunted bit is not "sech a joke as it sounds." (p.821) Peter is incredulous but Seth is sure that there is "sech a thing as evil spirit. An' I've felt it, goin' in there daytimes to see to things - like somethin' rottin' in the walls!" (p.822). He explains the history of the house. "It was first built in hate and it's kept growin' there ever since," he says. (p.822) Therefore he feels that Orin and Lavinia would be better off if they did not stay there. He feels relieved that he has got the worry off his chest and tells the Niles that only they are privy to his feelings about the house.

On hearing that the Mannon children would be back the next day, they decide to air the house out there and then. Seth leaves to get lanterns. Hazel is unnerved by Seth's talk and behaviour, and confesses to feeling the same way about the house as Seth does. "There's something queer about the house. I've always felt it, even before the General's death and her suicide," she shudders and says. (p.822) She recalls Christine and it is significant that she does not mention her by name but just by a pronoun. Hazel recalls Orin's condition at the funeral, "like someone in a trance" (p.823) and disapproves of Lavinia's rushing off on the trip to the East. Peter disagrees with her and brushes
aside her feeling of dread at setting foot in the house. Seth returns, whistling "to keep his courage up!" (p.823) and they set to work. They decide to start a fire in the kitchen and go in. In the pause that follows, the sound of Peter opening windows can be heard. In the ensuing silence, Lavinia enters from the drive and regards the house. She looks a spitting image of Christine, having filled out. Her movements are very reminiscent of her dead mother, specially since she is also wearing a green dress like her mother had worn earlier. She calls to Orin, who is hesitating, as though he were a child. Orin is being put to the test as he comes back to familiar surroundings. He moves with a "statue - like quality that was so marked in his father" and has a close-cropped beard. Lavinia coaxes him and he obeys her dully. She tells him to look at the house and not be afraid of it. She decides to go in, having seen the light burning inside. Orin sees a spot and stammers, "It was here - she - the last time I saw her alive -" (p.825). Lavinia tells him that it was all over, "the dead have forgotten us! We've forgotten them." (p.825)

In scene two of the same act, the sitting room of the house has a dead look as it has been shut up for a long time. The Mannon portraits on the wall "stare with a grim forbiddingness" as Lavinia appears in the door way. She looks "strikingly similar" to her mother in Act one of "Homecoming". There's a new femininity in her looks and a new maturity in her attitude. She looks at the portraits and tells them that she has done her duty by them and has avenged them. She is worried about Orin and calls
for him. She treats him like a child as he has "a dazed expression and his eyes have a wild, stricken look." (p.826) He stares at the Mannon portraits on the wall, claiming that the Mannon presence was everywhere. But the one person whom he wants forgiveness from is "gone forever. She'll never forgive me now!" he cries. (p.826) He denounces his relationship with his mother and claims allegiance to his father, "I'm Father's! I'm a Mannon!" he says. (p.826) Lavinia soothes him in his agitation, calling him "a good boy." Her hold on him is obvious, though she is also unsure of his moods.

Lavinia mentions Peter and Hazel in a bid to normalise the situation. "Their friendship and love will help us more than anything to forget," she says. (p.827) Orin is surprised that Lavinia is still referring to the incident as he had been quite sure that Lavinia had forgotten about it, unlike him, going by her behaviour in the previous year. He also feels that he is not entitled to love after what he has done. He mentions his mother and suddenly is struck by the similarity between Lavinia and Christine not only in the physical aspects but also "I mean the change in your soul, too -- as if you were stealing hers", he says. (p.827) Lavinia is alarmed at Orin's "morbid spells" and reminds him that this 'homecoming' was what she had wanted for if she had had her way she would "never have agreed to come home." (p.827) Orin explains it was to get her to leave the Islands, insinuating that she was involved with someone there. Lavinia is afraid of his "silly guilt about the past." (p.828).
She then starts tutoring him so that he has his answers clear about the murder and the suicide. Finally, she convinces him that "we protected her. She could have lived --- But she chose to kill herself of her own free will! It was an act of justice! You had nothing to do with it!" she reiterates. (p.829) But Orin is still susceptible to his "morbid imagination" and breaks down sobbing. Lavinia consoles him and then tries to distract him by removing the furniture covers briskly.

Peter enters the room from the rear. He is startled out of his wits when he sees Lavinia, suspecting her to be Christine’s ghost and exclaims in dread. She sees him and goes towards him eagerly. Peter stammers as realization dawns on him. But he is also struck by her resemblance to her mother. Lavinia explains that they had decided to return home sooner. Peter finds the change in her appearance and clothes "becoming." (p.830). He asks after Orin, who in the meanwhile is staring out of the window. "His pained surprise at Orin’s sickly appearance," is apparent. (p.831) Orin revives and tries to resume his old friendship with Peter. He then harasses Lavinia in Peter's presence. He calls her "the same old bossy fuss - buzzer .... always trying to teach me manners!" (p.831) He touches on sensitive issues much to Lavinia’s discomfort. He insinuates about her romantic proclivities on the Islands and about "why she stole Mother’s colours." He claims that the islands turned out to be "Vinnie’s islands, not mine ....I’m too much of a Mannon, after all to turn into a pagan." (p.831) Lavinia is indignant but also guilty at
the "disgusting fibs." (p.832). Orin mentions Avahanni, a native of the Islands much to Lavinia's anger. "What will Peter think?" she says, (p.832) and sends Orin to look for Hazel. She is irritated at Orin's "ramrod like stance, almost like a tin soldier!" (p.832) Orin slyly insinuates on his dissimilarity to the "romantic clipper captain" much to Lavinia's fear. He leaves the room, while Lavinia looks weak and scared.

Peter is shocked at the change in Orin. Lavinia attributes it to "what the war did to him and on top of that Father's death - and the shock of mother's suicide". (p.833) She changes the subject and confesses her love for Peter who is very happy at this turn of event. She confesses that everything honest and clean and "the natives on the Islands" reminded her of him. While Orin has "become a regular bigoted Mannon", she claims that she has done her duty by them. Peter is mystified but happy at the change in her. She talks some more about the Islands which "finished setting me free." (p.834) She then proceeds to make plans for their marriage and future with Peter, much to his delight. She is then reminded of Orin. "I can't leave him - until he's well again. I'd be afraid..." she says. (p.834) She explains the cause of Orin's problem to be the guilt he feels about "Mother killing herself," and attributes his "morbid spells" to that. Peter believes every word of hers and she is grateful for "his simple goodness." (p.835). As she had feared, Orin returns to break her plans. She views him with "eyes full of dread." (p.835)
Act II shows Mannon’s study. It is evening time, a month later. The windows are shut as Orin is seen writing something. Dressed in black, he has aged some more. He addresses the Mannon portraits. His resemblance to his father is uncanny. He tells the portraits that he has written the "whole truth". (p.836) Lavinia knocks on the door which is locked. Orin is furtive, he quickly locks away the manuscript and opens out a law book on the table to mislead her. Lavinia is suspicious and does not believe his statement that he is considering studying law. She admonishes him for sitting in a "stuffy room" and advises him to get some fresh air. Orin retorts that he hates the daylight as "it’s like an accusing eye -------.perpetual night - darkness of death in life -- that’s the fitting habitat for guilt. You believe you can escape that, but I’m not so foolish!" (p.837) He says he prefers man’s artificial light to God’s.

Lavinia opens the shutters and comments that the night is "black as pitch" with a single star. Orin alternates between somberness and a wicked urge to harass his sister, who is afraid of what he will say next. Orin asks her why she does not leave him alone with Hazel to whom he is now engaged. She confesses that she is scared of what he might say. Orin then laughs and says that he has no intention of carrying on with Hazel, inspite of Lavinia’s desperate attempts to matchmake, and even though he is "drawn to her purity" and longs to "confess", he also knows that she too is a "lost island" (p.839). He warns Lavinia that she should not hope for an escape from retribution, "confess and
atone to the full extent of the law," he says, since that is the "only way to wash the guilt of our mother's blood from our souls!" (p.839). Lavinia is alarmed at his open talk and taunts him. "Will you never lose your stupid guilty conscience! Don't you see how you torture me? You are becoming my guilty conscience, too!" she claims. She resents Orin's devotion to that "vile woman." (p.839).

Orin then threatens her with the manuscript he has been writing. "You'll damn soon stop your tricks when you know what I've been writing!" he says. Lavinia is tense while he gloats at her terror. "I've been writing the history of our family!", he says (p.840) and he finds her "the most interesting criminal of us all ---- as so many strange hidden things out of the Mannon past combine in you" (p.840). He taunts her further about the men she's been attracted to, assuming Christine's colours and "your pretence about Mother's murder being an act of justice was your jealous hatred --- You wanted Brant for yourself." (p.841) Lavinia denies the allegations fiercely but Orin continues mocking at her, and even calls her a "whore! I'll kill you!" (p.842). He is jealous of his sister's attraction to Avahanni and questions her about intimate details. Lavinia deliberately taunts to provoke him, just as Christine had done to Mannon in the first play. She even lies and admits that "something rose up in me - like an evil spirit!" (p.842).

Orin sees Lavinia's resemblance to Christine and attributes it to "ghosts". Lavinia pleads to him that they have to forget
and he must forgive her or else he would be responsible for the outcome. Orin is perceptive and asks her, "Why don’t you murder me?" (p.843) He knows that she is chained to him for life. Lavinia is horrified when he insists that "I’m now in father’s place and you’re Mother ....that’s the evil destiny out of the past ... " (p.843). Echoing her mother’s words in Act two of the first play, Lavinia warns Orin not to provoke her and to leave her alone. He threatens her with his manuscript again and she breaks down sobbing, "You’re like a devil torturing me!" she weeps. (p.843). He tells her, "Don’t cry, the damned don’t cry." (p.844). He orders her to leave him as he wants to be alone to finish "my work." Lavinia leaves, sobbing blindly and he resumes writing.

Act III depicts the sitting room of the house. Lavinia enters from the hall, having come from the study and she is in "a terrific state of tension."(p.845). Her actions recall Christine in the throes of anguish just before her suicide in the last act of the second play. Lavinia is remorseful and looks at the Mannon portraits for blessings. She prays that there should be no more deaths as "I couldn’t bear another death!" (p.845). Seth enters to say that Hannah the cook is agitated as she feels the house to be haunted. Lavinia goes with him to calm her down.

The bell rings and Seth receives Peter and Hazel. Peter is his easy-going self but Hazel seems uneasy. She shivers and says, "I hate this house now." She is worried about Orin who is "getting worse". She is convinced that Lavinia is the "bad
influence" on Orin. (p.846) Peter is upset at Hazel’s talk but agrees that Lavinia needs a "rest from him, too." (p.847). Hazel is curious about Peter’s real intentions regarding marrying Lavinia. Peter calls it "a fool question." They stop talking when Orin appears, looking for Lavinia furtively. He is pleased to see that she is missing. Peter excuses himself to go for a council meeting, leaving Orin and Hazel alone together. Orin has been looking for such a chance. He hands over the manuscript to Hazel, asking her to show it to no one "unless something happens to me," or Lavinia decides to marry Peter as "she can’t have happiness! She’s got to be punished". (p.848). Hazel is perplexed at his request but is more worried about his condition. Orin longs to confess to her "purity" and wants to leave the place "or something terrible will happen!" (p.849). However, Orin also knows that Lavinia will never let him do that. He gets carried away and plans to hoodwink Lavinia by hiding and have Hazel lie to Lavinia about his whereabouts. Hazel indignantly refuses to lie and mocks him for being so scared of his sister.

They hear Lavinia coming. Orin instructs Hazel to go home and hide the manuscript. The straightforward Hazel looks self-conscious, putting Lavinia on guard instantly. She is startled to find them alone and senses a conspiracy. "My, but you too look mysterious!" she tells them. (p.850) She senses something amiss and catches Hazel out. Orin fibs that he was going to Hazel’s house to stay with them for sometime. Lavinia overrules it. Hazel gets angry and says, "Orin is of age and can go where he
pleases". (p.851) Lavinia tells her to mind her own business. They argue bitterly and Orin tells Hazel to leave. Lavinia discovers the manuscript in Hazel’s hands. Hazel flushes as Lavinia turns on Orin and accuses him of being "a traitor! You coward!" (p.852) She orders Hazel to return it. Hazel refuses. Lavinia then beseeches Orin to think sanely for a moment. Orin refuses to comply. She then promises to do "anything you want me to!" Orin then bids goodbye to Hazel forever. He tells her that "the Orin you loved was killed in the war." (p.852) and what she saw now was only "his rotting ghost."

When Orin and Lavinia are alone, Orin wants his pound of flesh. He wants to secure her to him or otherwise he is sure that "you’ll always be plotting to break the promise". (p.853) He holds her to her word of doing anything and suggests an incestuous relationship with her so that, "you would be as damned as I am!" (p.853) Lavinia reacts with horrified revulsion at his idea. She tells him again that there is no need to feel guilty about "Mother’s murder" as "there was only justice!" (p.854). Orin turns around and tells the portraits on the wall that Lavinia Mannon will be "harder to break than me. You’ll have to haunt and hound her for a lifetime!" (p.854)

Lavinia’s control breaks and she turns on him with a vengeance. "You are too vile to live," she exclaims, thereby insinuating that the only way out for him was death. Orin is quick to see the direction she is pointing at. "Another act of justice, ... An eye for an eye, is that it?" he asks her. Then
as he thinks aloud, he gets more and more convinced that "Its the way to peace - to find her again - my lost island." (p.854) Lavinia pleads with him but Orin is convinced that "Mother's waiting." (p.855). He tells Peter who has just returned from his council meeting, looking for Hazel, that he is going in to clean his pistol. Peter is alarmed that Orin should be "monkeying" with a pistol in his state. Lavinia distracts Peter with voluble chatter and even makes a motion to cover her ears with her hands. "I can't bear waiting - waiting and waiting and waiting -!," she says disjointedly. (p.856) There is a muffled shot from the study. Peter rushes into the hall, exclaiming. Lavinia says weakly. "Orin! Forgive me!" she says in a trembling voice. Then she gathers her wits together, mechanically hides the envelope she had taken from Hazel and locks the drawer. She addresses the Mannon portraits and tells them, "I'm through with you forever now, do you hear? I'm Mother's daughter - not one of you! I'll live in spite of you!" (p.856) She then suddenly squares her shoulder with a return to her abrupt military manner.

Act IV focuses on the exterior of the house, on a late afternoon three days later. Golden sunlight imbues the scene. Seth appears ostensibly clipping at the plants and humming "Shenandoah". He mutters to himself on Lavinia's being in the garden plucking flowers "like her Maw used to," (p.858) and that every room was full of flowers inside. He comments on the town gossip where people were sceptical of a soldier shooting himself
accidentally. "A Mannon has come to mean sudden death to 'em," he says.

Lavinia enters with the ravages of the past three days showing on her face. She is dressed in black, in deep mourning. Her earlier sinuousness is missing and she has reverted back to her mask-like, rigid stance. She tells Seth that she is expecting Peter and that she wants the house to be "full of flowers." She sits on top of the steps as Seth offers to pull out a sofa for her to nap on, as he wonders whether she has been sleeping at all. Lavinia declines his offer and wonders "Why didn't you tell me to go in the house and lie down?" (p.858) Seth avoids her eyes and Lavinia answers for him. "You know there’s no rest in this house which Grandfather built as a temple of Hate and Death!" (p.859). Seth blurts out that she should marry Peter and "git clear" of the house. Lavinia agrees and plans to "close it up and leave it in the sun and rain to die." As for the Mannons she wants the portraits "to rot on the walls and the ghosts will fade back into death." She hopes to be Mrs Peter Niles soon. "Then they’re finished! Thank God!" (p.859).

Seth tells her that Hazel was coming up the drive. Lavinia jerks up from her stupor in alarm. She tells Seth to go and work at the rear. Seth leaves after acknowledging Hazel. Lavinia wants to know what she had come for. Hazel faces her resolutely and accuses her of Orin’s death. "I’m accusing you! You drove him to it!" she says, (p.860) as she had sensed "something that was driving Orin crazy." Lavinia is startled but reproaches her all
the same. However, Hazel is intent, and wants Lavinia to call off her marriage to Peter as "you’ll only drag him into this terrible thing - whatever it is - and make him share it." (p.860) She reveals the tension in the Niles household over the issue and how Peter had made his mother unhappy. He had changed from the "wonderful son before - and brother." (p.861) Lavinia refuses to listen to her. Hazel calls her "wicked" and leaves as Peter is heard coming.

Lavinia realises that she is fighting a losing battle and blames it on "the dead! Why can’t the dead die!" she despairs (p.862). She is affected by Hazel’s words but is defiant. "I’m not asking God or anybody for forgiveness. I forgive myself!" she says. (p.862) Peter enters, looking haggard and tormented. He comments on Lavinia’s looking "worn out," and looks forward to their marriage. Lavinia wants to be reassured that he would always love her and make her forget the trauma. Peter vows that he would. Lavinia mentions his quarrels at home. He is angry with Hazel for sneaking on him but admits the truth. He allays Lavinia’s fears and promises that all will be well after their marriage. Lavinia regrets that "You’re suffering! Your eyes have a hurt look! .... They look suspicious and afraid of life now!" (p.863) She blames herself for the change in Peter and wonders whether he suspects her of Orin’s death. He denies it but she wants him to absolve her of everything and not let "anyone" or "anything" come between them. Lavinia gets carried away and wants to get married immediately. Peter is shocked at the impropriety.
of such a hasty wedding. He asks her suspiciously as to why she was afraid of waiting. Lavinia reveals her dread and mentions "the dead coming between!" and convincing him of her guilt. (p.864) Peter is bewildered and wonders whether he should be made aware of anything. Lavinia tries to distract him desperately by talking of an immediate marriage and wanting a "moment of joy of love --- I want it now." (p.864) In her desperate passion, Lavinia kisses him, abandoning all control and tells him "Take me, Adam!" (p.865). She tries to cover up her blunder as soon as she realises it but then gives up hopelessly. "Always the dead between! It's no good trying any more!" she says. (p.865)

Peter is shocked but convinced that Lavinia has become hysterical. But she has made up her mind. "Go home," she tells him. "Love isn't permitted to me. The dead are too strong!" (p.865). Peter does not look convinced. So she gets rid of him by fabricating a liaison with a native on the islands as Orin had insinuated earlier. Peter is repulsed and hurries off blindly. Lavinia tries to explain feebly that she was lying but gives up. "Good bye, Peter," she says. (p.866). Seth returns humming "Shenandoah." Lavinia plays on the word "bound" in the chanty and tells him, "I'm bound here - to the Mannon dead!" (p.866). She turns as if to enter the house. Seth looks frightened and grabs her arm. "Don't go in there, Vinnie!" he says.(p.866) But she is grim in her determination. "I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! --- I'll never go out or see anyone! --- I'll live alone with the dead --- I know they will see to it I live
for a long time!" (p.867). She instructs Seth to close the shutters and nail them tight and to "tell Hannah to throw out all the flowers." Seth does her bidding, as she stares into the sunlight with "frozen eyes." When the last shutter is closed, Lavinia "pivots sharply on her heel and marches woodenly into the house closing the door behind her."(p.867)

Syntagmatics: The Third Play: The Haunted

With this play we enter the third and last sequence of the narrative. This play also revolves around a homecoming as the previous two plays had done. Lavinia and Orin are expected back from "Chiny", after a year long absence from the Mannon house. Their homecoming invokes the "haunted" theme of the narrative as Lavinia has appropriated her mother's personality completely. Infact, this sequence reiterates the cursed repetition of the destinies of the Mannons, where the cyclic events keep recurring with regard to different characters time and again. The preceding sequences serve to crystallise the kernel semanteme of the "hauntedness" of the Mannon legacy. While all the ensembles signify individually, they also are like solitary notes, arranged in a certain order to reach a climax. Their individual lexematic significance is submerged in the holistic signification of the discourse whose comprehensive proposition is located in the third sequence.

In the first signifying ensemble, O'Neill resorts to the same technique of choric comment to progress the play in the
first act's first scene. In the sub-ensemble (I.a.), the exterior of the Mannon house is shown. It is evening and there is the crimson glow of sunset all over. (I.b.) reveals the house, all boarded up as the inmates have been away for a year. In (I.c.) we have Seth with a group of four drinking companions, providing choric comments. The aspect of "hauntedness" is broached in the next three sub-ensembles, (I.d.;e; and f.). The jocular talk, leads on to a wager being made by the character Abner Small who agrees to spend the night in the house for ten dollars in (I.f.n.). The frivolity turns to seriousness in the micro-ensemble (I.f.o.) when Small is left in the house by Seth. (I.f.p.) reveals Seth's uneasiness. In (I.g.o.), the chorus comments on the unnatural deaths of the Mannons. Seth takes up for them but Ira Mackel suspects foul play in (I.g.o.). The group believes that if it were not for the Mannons' privileged social status, the truth would not have been so hushed up in (I.g.p.).

The second signifying ensemble effects a change in perspective, when Peter and Hazel arrive in (II.a.) and Seth is embarrassed at being caught out by them. In the sub-ensemble (II.b.), the Miles explain that they have come to air the house out since Lavinia and Orin were due to return the next day. In (II.c.) we have Small rushing out from the house in a petrified state. Peter wants an explanation for such behaviour in the micro-ensemble (II.d.m.). Seth explains that he wanted to exorcise the house and stop loose talk about it being haunted in

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(II.d.n.). Peter approves of it in (II.d.o.) but Hazel confesses to her feeling of uneasiness about the house in (II.d.p.). In (II.e.) they recall that Orin had been in a trance at his mother's funeral. In (II.f.m.) they set about airing the house out even though they sense a "cold grip" about it. In fact, even the nonchalant Seth whistles to keep his morale up as he goes about getting lanterns.

There is an underscoring of the "haunted" nature of the house and its surroundings in these two signifying ensembles. After the violent deaths of Mannon (which occurred in the Interior space), Brant (Exterior space) and Christine (Interior space) the house is prone to be inhabited by spirits. Not to mention the three deaths in the previous generation -- Abe, David and Marie -- which again were bitter and difficult deaths. As a result the Mannon portraits which signify ghostly presences within the house, further underline physical absences but supernatural presences, participating in the flow of events. The fact that even drunken men are rattled by the ambiance, sets the tone for the working out of the rest of the narrative.

The third signifying ensemble depicts the arrival of Lavinia, who enters the driveway looking at the house in (III.a.m.). Her inheritance of her mother's looks and demeanour is striking in (III.a.n.). She is talking to Orin all the while, in the micro-ensemble (III.a.o.). Orin follows her like a frightened child in (III.b.m.). He stammers and loses whatever little confidence he has left when he looks at the steps -- the
third tragic space of the narrative -- where he last saw his mother alive. The memory still sears his consciousness and he tries to avoid contact. Lavinia, however, reassures him that the past is over and done with and leads him into the house in (III.c.).

The fourth signifying ensemble begins in the second scene of the first act. The sub-ensemble (IV.a.) depicts the sitting room of the house. It has "a dead appearance" which is a kernel semanteme signifying towards a "haunted" ambiance, with Lavinia, looking like a reincarnation of her mother in the micro-ensemble (IV.b.m.) and making contact first with the Mannon portraits on her return in (IV.b.n.). The sense of the supernatural permeates the scene. She tells the "demanding" portraits that she has "done my duty by you!" This kernel propositional element recalls Christine's realization in the sub-ensemble (IV.c.) of "The Hunted" when she says, "something made things happen." Could it have been the presence implied by the Mannon portraits? The fact that Lavinia first reports to them indicates towards their participation in the action. Orin appears in a state of fear and agitation, which also unnerves Lavinia in (IV.c.m.). His dependence on her is revealed when he says, "You're all I have in the world", in the signifying micro-ensemble (IV.c.n.). Lavinia is reassured and approves in (IV.c.o.), calling him a "good boy", which again recalls Christine's endearment for him in (IV.a.n.) of "The Hunted". But Lavinia is also nervous of Orin's feeling
of remorse in (IV.d.m.) and tries to make him forget "his silly guilt about the past" in (IV.d.n.).

"Guilt" is a kernel semanteme which keeps growing in significance in this sequence. It makes its presence felt in Brant and Christine's consciousness before they die. Similarly, it has reared its head in Orin's sensibility. However, will it make its presence felt in Lavinia who is desperately reacting to Orin's guilt? Will she grapple with it to keep it down when the time comes or will she also succumb to it as the others have done? After the bone-chilling incidents of the previous two plays, Lavinia is fully recovered whereas Orin inhabits an "insane" level of existence. Significantly enough, Lavinia completely dominates the existential situation. After the jolt of her mother's suicide and Orin's capitulation to remorse, Lavinia now orders him around to suit her will.

However, even in his "crazy" state, Orin is aware of his hold on Lavinia and comments on the physical and spiritual change apparent in her in (IV.e.m.). Infact he voices her deepest secret thus unmasking her, in the micro-ensemble (IV.e.n.) when he claims that she has "stolen" her mother's role. Lavinia is paranoid about such "morbid" spells in Orin in (IV.f.m.). She tries to tutor him to mouth the right words in (IV.f.n.). "She could have lived" is her refrain about Christine, while absolving herself of guilt. Orin breaks down sobbing in the micro-ensemble (IV.f.o.).
The fifth signifying ensemble evolves out of this emotional tussle when Peter appears and is startled at what he thinks are apparitions in (V.a.m.). He then realises that Orin and Lavinia have arrived earlier than expected in (V.a.n.). He is quick to note, the change in Lavinia and finds it "becoming" her in (V.b.m.). "Becoming" is a kernel proposition that lends itself to both literal and figurative applications. While Lavinia’s simulation of her mother’s looks, dress, manners and stance is "becoming" to her, she is also "becoming" her own person and evolving into a determined being as the sequence progresses. In (V.b.n.), Lavinia revels in the compliment. Meanwhile Peter is shocked at the corresponding deterioration in Orin’s looks in (V.c.). Orin seems to be taking a perverse pleasure in harrassing Lavinia in (V.d.m.), prefiguring the hold he has on her. This recalls the similar stance taken by Lavinia with regard to Christine in "The Hunted". In (V.d.o.) Orin comments on Lavinia acquiring her mother’s colours. The micro-ensemble (V.d.o.) is significant for Orin reveals that the coveted islands they had visited the previous year, turned out to be "Vinnie’s islands, not mine", after all. For Orin, the phantasy of the islands have come to nought for the desire of the other that he had, was signified by his mother and after her death, the islands can no longer have the same significance as before. In (V.d.p.), Orin reveals Lavinia’s "pagan" enjoyment on the islands. Lavinia is disconcerted and accuses him of fabricating "disgusting fibs" in (V.e.m.). She castigates Orin and asks him not to be so
"ramrod" like "a tin soldier" in (V.e.n.). She then sends him off to Hazel in (V.e.o.).

In the sixth signifying ensemble, Lavinia gains a little respite from Orin's taunts, but it is very short-lived. In the micro-ensemble (VI.a.m.), she confesses her love to Peter, for whom it is a dream come true. He is very pleased in (VI.a.n.). They proceed to make marriage plans in (VI.b.m.), but Lavinia cannot help expressing her fears about Orin in (VI.b.n.). Peter, however promises to look after Orin and deal with his "morbid spells" in (VI.b.o.). Orin reappears and shows his jealous anger at the sight of Peter and Lavinia kissing. He behaves like "a regular bigoted Mannon". Lavinia views him with increasing dread, as she experiences a sense of "deja vu" as the wheels of destruction begin to churn again.

In the seventh signifying ensemble, the action picks up momentum. The second act of the play opens a month later and the sub-ensemble (VII.a.) reveals the Mannon study in the evening. In the sub-ensemble (VII.b.), Orin is seen writing in the closed study. (VII.c.) is significant, because he addresses the Mannon portraits and tells them that he has written the "whole truth", as though he requires their approval. This highlights the "haunted" ambiance of the sequence once again. Lavinia is heard knocking in (VII.d.), which is reminiscent of the sub-ensemble (X.a.) in "The Hunted" when Christine had felt shut out, similarly. Orin is furtive about his work in (VII.e.m.). He mocks at Lavinia's curiosity in (VII.e.n.). He prefers to be in
the dark and to keep things in the dark. In (VII.f.m.), Lavinia comments on the night being "black as pitch" as she has the same sense of foreboding which had assailed Mannon, Brant and Christine before their deaths.

Lavinia is aware of the hold Orin has on her and his lack of self-control worries her as she is afraid to leave him unchaperoned with even Hazel. The conceptual opposition moves from control to fear. Lavinia had presumed to have total control over Orin and monitor events but now she realises with increasing fear that Orin has the power to destabilise her. Orin's urge to "confess" to Hazel's "purity" further unnerves her, as Orin confesses to being "afraid of myself", indicating total lack of self-control. Lavinia tries her best to make him forget his sense of guilt in the sub-ensemble (VII.h.) but Orin is convinced that they cannot "escape retribution" in (VII.i.). Lavinia feels helpless at Orin's repetitive threat to reveal his "stupid guilty conscience" in the sub-ensemble (VII.j.).

In the eighth signifying ensemble, the conceptual opposition now moves from the fear felt by Orin to the power he exercises over Lavinia. He "becomes" the master of her destiny, as he holds the manuscript he has been working on as a threat over her in (VIII.a.m.). This again recalls Lavinia's similar stance with regard to Christine in the previous play. Orin means to publicise the manuscript if she dares to disregard him in (VIII.a.n.). He tells her that in his analysis, she has emerged as "the most interesting criminal of us all" in the micro-
ensemble (VIII.a.o.). This is a significant kernel theme as in this saga of "crime and punishment", Lavinia has upto now assumed the role of the avenger and law-giver with regard to Brant and Christine. She is obviously not as "just" as she believes herself to be. In this "unmasking" her interpretation of justice appears subjective, wherein she tries to dominate the situation with her authority. But now it is called in question by the one person she least expects it from. As Orin ascends in authority over her in (VIII.a.p.), Lavinia breaks down in the sub-ensemble (VIII.b.) saying that she "won't bear it much longer."

From a subjugation to Orin's will Lavinia turns defiant in (VIII.c.), trying to assert her own will. She claims her "right to love," which is reminiscent of Christine in "Homecoming". The jealous Orin threatens to kill her in (VIII.d.). He can also sense her hidden urge to "murder" him in (VIII.e.). This recalls his ironic question to his mother in the previous play, when he asks her whether she would have had him murdered if she had known about his conspiracy to unmask her. Similarly, in the next sub-ensemble (VIII.f.) Lavinia echoes her mother's exact words in "Homecoming". "You'll be responsible...." for the consequences, she says. The only difference in circumstances being the recipients of the threats. For Christine threatens Mannon as a result of Lavinia's harassment, whereas in this play Lavinia threatens Orin because of his harassment. Orin is not deterred and continues to harass her in (VIII.g.). Lavinia breaks down
in the next sub-ensemble (VIII.h.). Orin tells her to go away in (VIII.i.) and resumes writing his manuscript.

In the ninth signifying ensemble, we have the third act commencing in the sitting room, in continuation from the previous act. In (IX.a.) Lavinia is seen leaving the study on Orin’s command. She is in a terribly disturbed state, highly reminiscent of Christine, after Mannon’s murder. It is clear that Lavinia has imbibed not only her mother’s physical but psychic characteristics as well. The sub-ensemble (IX.b.) depicts Lavinia’s dread of Orin’s threat. In (IX.c.) she voices her remorse and insinuates about another death. Her physical being is influenced by her psychic compunction. The images of the previous deaths "haunt" her, just as Orin is in a "haunted" state. She is fighting an uphill task, to negate the inner urges by external determination, but she is losing the battle.

To deflect the tension, the next micro-ensemble (IX.d.m.) reveals Seth who reports that Hannah the cook is agitated over the house being "haunted". Lavinia goes to pacify her in (IX.d.n.). Peter and Hazel enter in the next micro-ensemble (IX.e.m.). Peter is calm but Hazel betrays her feeling of uneasiness about the house. She voices it in (IX.e.n.). In the next micro-ensemble, (IX.e.o.), she voices her worry about Orin and Lavinia’s bad influence on Peter, who takes umbrage at her statement. He defends Lavinia in (IX.e.p.). Hazel carries on regardless in (IX.e.q.), hoping that Peter would never marry Lavinia. Peter tells her off. They are interrupted by an
excited Orin in the next micro-ensemble, (IX.e.r). He enters the room furtively. He is glad to see that Lavinia is missing from the room in (IX.e.s.). Peter leaves for a council meeting in (IX.f.m.), thus leaving Orin alone with Hazel in (IX.f.n.).

The next proposition leads to the situation where Hazel is the recipient of Orin’s trust, because he furtively hands the manuscript over to her for safe-keeping in (X.a.m and n.). Hazel is intrigued but more concerned about Orin’s deteriorating situation in (X.b.m.). So she invites him to stay with her family for a few days in (X.b.n.). Orin longs to confess to her "purity" in (X.c.m.) and go away from the house or "something terrible will happen" in (X.c.n.). This is a significant kernel theme, which is developed in the next ensemble. Orin is also aware that Lavinia will never let him out of her sight in the micro ensemble (X.c.o).

A major transformation takes place in the eleventh signifying ensemble where the characters take irretrievable positions. Lavinia enters in (XI.a.) to find Orin and Hazel together. She senses a conspiracy just as Christine had sensed one between Lavinia and Orin in "The Hunted". Hazel asks Lavinia to allow Orin to go with her in (XI.b.m.) but Lavinia refuses to do so in (XI.b.n.). This leads to the first confrontation between Lavinia and Hazel in the sub-ensemble (XI.c.) Hazel’s bitterness transforms her from the pleasant girl she is to someone who cannot help voicing her disquiet. Lavinia discovers the manuscript in Hazel’s hands in (XI.d.m.) and accuses Orin of
betraying her trust in (XI.d.n.). Orin, however is transformed into a tyrant, intent on harassing Lavinia who ultimately succumbs and beseeches him. This is a transformation from her earlier stance of controlling him. In her desperation, Lavinia offers to do "anything" for Orin to get the manuscript back from Hazel. The "offer" is irresistible to Orin who now bids farewell to Hazel as the "hero" she loves is "dead" and what remained was only his "rotting ghost". The kernel proposition of "ghost" reiterates the theme of "hauntedness" of this sequence. When Orin takes this final position, he cuts his links with all that Hazel represents for him -- light, sweet music, goodness and purity.

In the twelveth signifying ensemble, this transformation is carried to its logical end. Orin takes up the "anything" of Lavinia's offer and suggests an incestuous relationship with Lavinia. She is horrified and calls him "insane" in (XII.b.) which links up with his "crazy" talk, referred to earlier. In (XII.c.) Orin shows that he is not that "insane" after all as there is a rationale behind his request. "You would be as damned as I am", he says. He then addresses his ancestors again, saying that Lavinia would be a very hard proposition for them to break in (XII.d.). The memory of the past is still very fresh in Orin's mind, as he envies Lavinia her self-control and ability to rise above the events in (XII.e.). In the next sub-ensemble (XII.f.) Lavinia realises that Orin's lack of self-control can
only lead to one thing -- suicide. She insinuates the idea and assists him to draw his own conclusions.

In the thirteenth signifying ensemble, there is a major transformation in Orin. From the dithering, bullying and agitated wreck, he suddenly sees the light at the end of the tunnel. The space of reflection and remorse is over for him. His attempts to break Lavinia and "damn" her come to nought. He loses balance, but regains it once again, as he prepares for the most determined step he can take. In the sub-ensemble (XIII.a.), he suddenly realizes that Lavinia has indicated towards suicide. He accuses her of committing another murder. Lavinia denies it in (XIII.b.). Orin is convinced that he can be reunited with his mother after death in (XIII.c.). Peter enters in (XIII.d.) looking for Hazel.

The next sub-ensemble (XIII.e.) is significant because Orin now leaves the room to commit the last act of his destiny. On the pretext of cleaning his pistol he leaves Lavinia and Peter. In the sub-ensemble (XIII.f.) Peter expresses his concern about his "monkeying" with a pistol, but Lavinia drown's it in affectionate chatter in (XIV.a.). The fact that she is waiting for the fateful shot is seen in her involuntary attempt to cover her ears. In (XIV.c.), the expected shot is heard and Peter runs towards the study in (XIV.d.). The next sub-ensemble, (XIV.e.) is significant for Lavinia sags weakly, asking Orin for forgiveness, thus giving the lie to her denial of committing another murder in the sub-ensemble (XIII.b.). This further
corroborates what Orin had said in the micro-ensemble (VII.a.o.) that he found her "the most interesting criminal of us all."

In the next sub-ensemble (XIV.f.), Lavinia does a complete volte-face. It is significant that the Mannon portraits, which she had viewed as a substitute for the paternal absence, now become symbols who she abjicts. She defies and cuts her umbilical cord from them, owning to being her "mother's daughpter" only. This realisation is both instinctive, unconscious and conscious. But, as though the weight of the Mannon legacy is too heavy for her to overthrow, Lavinia resumes her father's military posture and stiff deportment involuntarily, even as she renounces her lineage in (XIV.g.). Thus the face had surfaced for a split second as it were, but is again subsumed by the mask.

The fifteenth signifying ensemble is located in the last act of the trilogy, three days later. It is the exterior space that is depicted, imbued with golden sunshine. In the micro-ensemble, (XV.b.m.), Seth is seen working in the garden and humming "Shenandoah". In (XV.b.n.), he comments on Lavinia plucking flowers and filling the house with them like her "Maw". Lavinia enters, stiff and wooden with a mask-like face in (XV.c.). She tells Seth to fill the house with more flowers in (XV.d.m.). Then she sits on the top of the steps -- the second tragic space here -- in (XV.d.n.). Seth comments on her sleepless look in (XV.e.m.) and offers to pull out a sofa for her to relax on (XV.e.n.). Lavinia is struck by the offer in (XV.f.) and wonders
why he did not suggest her going into the interior of the house to rest.

Seth tells her to leave the house for her own good in (XV.g.). Lavinia reveals her plans to do so, after marrying Peter in (XV.h.). She has elaborate plans to destroy the house, to leave it "in the sun and rain to die" and for the Mannon portraits "to rot on the wall". Her plans to destroy the supernatural presences in the house, thus rebound on her finally as we see this kernel theme being enacted not in relation to the portraits but to herself, at the end. Seth's concern for her in (XV.j.) is directly contrasted with Hazel's allegations in the sixteenth signifying ensemble. Hazel accuses Lavinia of killing Orin in (XVI.b.). "You drove him to it," she cries. Lavinia reproaches her but Hazel wants her to release Peter, as she fears for her brother's future too in (XVI.d.). She also reveals the unhappiness in the Niles' house over the issue in (XVI.e.). Lavinia is concerned but gets offensive in (XVI.j.), threatening to kill Hazel with "Orin's pistol."

Peter is seen coming in the seventeenth signifying ensemble, as Hazel makes a hasty exit. Lavinia curses the dead for dogging her still even though, "I forgive myself," in (XVII.b.). She wishes that her forgiving herself should suffice for them too. She looks to Peter for reassurance in (XVII.c.) Peter comments on her ravaged looks in (XVII.d.). Christine's looks had also deteriorated similarly in "The Hunted". Lavinia hopes to "forget the dead" in (XVII.e.). She mentions Hazel's visit in (XVII.f.)
and Peter is angry at his sister in (XVII.g.). However, Lavinia confesses to her doubts about Peter as he no longer seems "pure" but "suspicious and afraid of life now" in (XVII.h.). She wonders in (XVII.i.), whether her legacy has touched him too, as Hazel had feared in (XVI.d. and e.).

There is a sudden streak of desperation in Lavinia in the eighteenth signifying ensemble. Almost like a last effort at survival, Lavinia reaches out to Peter in defiance of the destiny closing in on her. She suggests an instant marriage to Peter in (XVIII.a.). He, in turn, is shocked at the impropriety of it in (XVIII.b.). However, Lavinia feels "the dead coming between". Peter is intrigued just as Hazel had been when Orin had given her the manuscript and wonders whether there is anything else he should know. Lavinia in her desperation to hold on to her escape route in (XVIII.e.) loses her balance and suggests "a moment of joy -- of love", only to be rebuffed by Peter in (XVIII.f.).

The nineteenth signifying ensemble is highly significant because it is here that all the solitary notes reach a crescendo. In her abandonment, Lavinia addresses Peter as Adam thus betraying her innermost secrets herself. Her dream of the islands and desire for Brant finally merge in Peter, by default, to his shock and her own sense of self-disgust. Peter is convinced that she is suffering from hysteria and therefore, the delusions in (XIX.b.).

However, Lavinia has realised that "love isn't permitted to me" and the dead have come in between in (XIX.c.). Just like
Orin had wilfully broken his ties with Hazel, Lavinia now does the same with Peter in (XIX.d.). She even fabricates an affair with a native on the island to convince him to break off their liason. Peter leaves disillusioned and broken in (XIX.e.). Lavinia tries to tell him that she had been lying but gives up in (XIX.f.). The force of her destiny sweeps all resistance away. Lavinia has tried to resist succumbing but she finally realises the power of the "dead" and the sway the "haunted" house has on her future. The plans she had revealed to Seth in (XV.i.) that she planned to leave the house for it to "die" and the Mannon portraits to "rot on the wall" come full circle, to incorporate her too in the action plan. She can never hope to walk away. From this state of existential dilemma, as Lavinia abjures her escape route out, she has "become" a highly determined being as the last two ensembles attest.

In the twentieth signifying ensemble, Lavinia is resolute and purposeful as she has finally come to grips with her destiny. This is not a transformation in her, from one state to another but from the original state to an evolution that the state of "becoming" indicates. At the manifest level, Lavinia faces defeat at the hands of the "dead". At the immanent level, the generative process leads Lavinia to another life, another birth, the birth of a truly determined being. As she tells Seth, who appears singing "Shenandoah" that she is "bound" to the "Mannon dead" in (XX.c.m. and n.).

In the last signifying ensemble, as soon as Lavinia has
realised the choice she has to make she tells Seth to board up the house once more in (XXI.a.). Seth tries to prevent her from taking the decision in (XXI.b.) but Lavinia wants even the flowers to be "thrown out" in (XXI.c.). She knows that she is the "last Mannon" and will have "to punish myself" in (XXI.d.). With that she turns back and marches into the house, closing the door after her.

In the last act, Lavinia traverses the three tragic spaces enumerated earlier. She is first seen in the Exterior, plucking flowers. The Steps where she begins to truly exercise her will is the second space she inhabits. Finally when she cloisters herself in the house, the Interior space becomes her habitat. The tremendous physical effort in consciously traversing the three spaces is paralleled on the psychic plane. It is with the supreme effort of stepping into the realm of the "haunted", which is a deliberate and conscious act on the part of Lavinia, that she finally becomes the mistress of her own destiny.

Problematics

It is obvious that the central enigma surrounding the fate of Electra along with the force of the myth behind it, is not allowed to be diluted in the narrative. On the contrary while "Homecoming" had a preponderance of description over action, "The Hunted" had all action with very little description while "The Haunted" elaborates psychic states over the plotting of events. Mannon/Lavinia and Marie/Christine can be seen as oppositional forces, the former representing the destructive negation and a
spirit of rejection while the latter symbolise the deep impulses of life. However at another level, the latter reveal a destructiveness where outraged sons, Adam/Orin abjure the object which is simultaneously most desired and most feared - the mother. In this structuration, the son’s/lover’s unfulfilled desire of the maternal even as she is restored to her full phallic potency, is repeatedly deferred and neurotically displaced. A fuller psychoanalytic study of the text’s unconscious will reveal later, that the threadwork of semes open up its symbolic field by decoding the latent content of the symbolic codes. What emerges is an underscoring of the power of a maternal life-force which is both revered and dreaded.

The trilogy comes full circle in the final act. Lavinia "becomes" a modern day Electra at the end, when she takes the decision to immure herself in the Mannon house. Thus the process of the "becoming" of her being reaches a conclusion, after the cyclic nature of the events before. The family resemblance highlights the inner family legacy. Of the many guilt ridden sons in O’Neill’s canon, Orin is the most pathetic, while Lavinia is considered his most developed female character.

Act I of the play sets the tone of its title with the choric characters fear of ghosts. Lavinia’s simulation of her Dionysian parent Christine is short - lived inspite of her revelling in the change and its "becoming" her. Act II and III build up the theme of the avenging furies which O’Neill internalises in the characters. Their inner compunctions drive Orin to madness and --
death and Lavinia to despair and penance. Act IV elaborates on Lavinia assuming her Apollonian heritage from her father and details the working out of her destiny. The psychical intensity that the play generates, situates the reader as a subject between the text and O'Neill's assumption that literature embodies truths of lived experience. Barthes described such a reading as, "The mastery of meaning, a veritable semiurgism, is a divine attribute, once this meaning is defined as the discharge, the emanation, the spiritual effluvium overflowing from the signified towards the signifier: the author is a god (his place of origin is the signified) as for the critic, he is the priest whose task is to decipher the writing of the god."15

The presentation of the third part of the trilogy, "The Haunted," can be arranged into twenty-one signifying ensembles through which the discourse progresses. A summary of the kernel semantemes whose propositional extensions are responsible for their syntagmatic progression follows.

I.a. Act I, scene I -- a year has passed. The exterior of the Mannon house is shown. It is evening time, after sunset. There is a crimson glow on the front portico of the house, while the columns cast black shadows on the wall behind them.

I.b. The house is boarded up; the shutters are closed and it is unoccupied.

I.c. Seth is seen with four friends who form the choric group in this play.
They joke about their drinking spree.

Choric talk veers to the subject of ghosts and the house being haunted.

Talk leads to a wager being made about the house being haunted or not.

Abner Small agrees to spend the night inside the house for ten dollars.

The group becomes serious when Seth leaves Small inside the house.

Seth’s uneasiness is also apparent.

He mentions the imminent return of Lavinia and Orin from 'Chiny'.

Choric talk about the unnaturalness of the Mannon deaths.

Seth’s attempt to play it down which leads to an argument with Ira Mackel who insists he has a "right to my opinions," since it is a "free country."

The group is convinced that the Mannon family’s social status has kept the truth from prevailing.

Peter and Hazel arrive, much to Seth’s embarrassment at being caught entertaining friends on the Mannon grounds.

Peter and Hazel explain that they have come to air the house out since they have received a telegram about Orin and Lavinia’s arrival the next day.

They are interrupted by the howling Small as he runs out of the house in terror, fully convinced that it is
haunted.

II.d.m. Peter wants an explanation as the chorus leaves.

II.d.n. Seth explains that he wanted to exorcise the house and stop loose talk.

II.d.o. Peter approves of his plan.

II.d.p. Hazel confesses to her feeling of uneasiness about the house all along.

II.e. They recall Orin's being in a "trance" (p.823) at the funeral.

II.f.m. They set about airing the house out, even though they sense "a cold grip" (p.823) in it.

II.f.n. Even the non-chalant Seth whistles to himself to overcome his nervousness.

III.a.m. Lavinia enters the driveway, looking at the house.

III.a.n. She looks a carbon copy of her mother, having filled out and wearing similar clothes to the ones her mother used to wear.

III.a.o. She is talking to Orin who is following her.

III.b.m. Orin is still in a trance and behaves like a child.

III.b.n. He stammers when he sees the spot where he last saw his mother alive.

III.c. Lavinia takes him into the house, reassuring him that the past is over and done with.

IV.a. Scene two of the act depicts the sitting room of the house. It has "a dead appearance" (p.825) and shows signs of having been shut up for long.
IV.b.m. Lavinia appears and the change in her is striking.
IV.b.n. She talks to the Mannon portraits on the wall, saying she has "done my duty by you!" (p.826)
IV.c.m. Orin appears with a wild, stricken look, frightening Lavinia.
IV.c.n. He tells her "You're all I have in the world." (p. 826)
IV.c.o. She calls him "a good boy." (p.826) (This networks with Christine's calling him similarly in the second play.)
IV.d.m. Orin is full of remorse.
IV.d.n. Lavinia tries to make him forget "his silly guilt about the past." (p.828)
IV.e.m. Orin comments on the change in Lavinia's physical and spiritual make-up.
IV.e.n. He is convinced that she has stolen her mother's role.
IV.f.m. Lavinia is worried about Orin's "morbid spells". (p.827).
IV.f.n. She tutors him to say that their mother died of her own volition. "She could have lived, couldn't she?" she asks. (p.829)
IV.f.o. Orin breaks down sobbing.
V.a.m. Peter walks in and is startled at the apparitions.
V.a.n. He then realises that Orin and Lavinia have arrived earlier than expected.
V.b.m. He comments on her changed but "becoming" looks like her mother's. (p.830) (She is also "becoming" a new person.)
Lavinia is pleased at the compliment.

Peter is shocked at the deterioration in Orin's appearance.

Orin is intent on harassing Lavinia, the "fuss-buzzer --- always trying to teach me manners!" (p.831)

He comments on her coveting what were their mother's colours.

He mentions the islands which "turned out to be Vinnie's islands, not mine." (p.831)

He reveals Lavinia's "pagan" enjoyment on the islands.

Lavinia accuses him of fabricating "disgusting fibs." (p.832)

She tries to control Orin and tells him not to be so "ramrod" and like "a tin-soldier." (p.832)

She sends him off to Hazel.

Lavinia confesses her love to Peter.

Peter is very pleased at the turn of events.

They make marriage plans.

Lavinia is worried about Orin.

Peter promises to look after Orin and deal with his "morbid spells." (p.835)

Orin reappears, shows anger when he sees Peter and Lavinia kissing and behaves like "a regular bigoted Mannon." (p.833)

Lavinia looks at Orin with dread and a sense of "deja vu", seeing the cycle of destruction begin to churn
again, as it were.

VII.a. Act II: shows Mannon's study. It is evening, a month later.

VII.b. Orin is writing in the closed study.

VII.c. He tells the Mannon portraits that he has put down the "whole truth." (p.836)

VII.d. Lavinia knocks and is curious about the locked door.

VII.e.m. Orin is furtive about his work and misleads her.

VII.e.n. He mocks at Lavinia's curiosity and says he prefers locked rooms to the sunlight, "artificial man's light" to God's light. (p.837)

VII.f.m. Lavinia comments on 'the black as pitch" night and her sense of foreboding, just as the characters in the previous two plays.

VII.f.n. She is worried about Orin's lack of control and her need to constantly chaperone him, even when he is with his fiancee Hazel, lest he talk.

VII.g. Orin confesses to being "afraid of myself" and being drawn to Hazel's "purity" which makes him long to "confess." (p.839)

VII.h. Lavinia tries to convince him that he must forget the past.

VII.i. Orin is convinced that they cannot "escape retribution." (p.839)

VII.j. Lavinia is exasperated at his "stupid guilty conscience." (p.839)
VIII.a.m. Orin holds the manuscript as a threat over her, just as Lavinia had black-mailed Christine earlier.

VIII.a.n. He means to publicise it if she misbehaves.

VIII.a.o. He finds her "the most interesting criminal of us all." (p. 840)

VIII.a.p. He can now see the entire family history in perspective and nails Lavinia down to her guilt. (Her "unmasking" begins.)

VIII.b. Lavinia breaks down. "I won't bear it much longer!" she says.

VIII.c. Then she turns defiant and says, "I have a right to love." (p. 842)

VIII.d. Orin threatens to kill her.

VIII.e. He perceives her hidden urge to "murder" him. (p. 843)

VIII.f. Lavinia echoes her mother's words. "You'll be responsible if ---" (p. 843)

VIII.g. Orin blackmails her with the manuscript.

VIII.h. Lavinia breaks down.

VIII.i. Orin tells her to go away as he resumes writing his manuscripts.

IX.a. Act III shows the sitting room with two burning candles. Lavinia enters agitated from the study into the room. Her condition is similar to Christine's after Mannon's death.

IX.b. She dreads Orin's deterioration.

IX.c. She is remorseful and is afraid of another death.
Seth appears, to say that Hannah the cook is agitated over the house being haunted.

Lavinia goes to calm her down.

Peter and Hazel enter. While Peter is still easy going, Hazel looks uneasy.

Hazel says she hates coming to the house.

She is worried about Orin, and the bad influence Lavinia has on him.

Peter is upset by her talk and defends Lavinia.

Hazel hopes that he will not marry Lavinia to which Peter answers sharply.

Orin enters looking furtive and excited.

He is glad to see that Lavinia is not in the room.

Peter leaves for his council meeting.

Orin and Hazel are left alone.

Orin hands the manuscript to Hazel.

He asks her to keep it safely until something happens to him or Lavinia marries Peter.

Hazel is intrigued but she is concerned about Orin.

Hazel invites him to stay with her family for a change.

Orin longs to confess to her purity.

He wants to go away from the house or "something terrible will happen." (p.849)

Orin is also aware that Lavinia will never let him go.

Lavinia enters and senses a conspiracy between Orin and Hazel just as Christine had sensed one between Lavinia
and Orin in "The Hunted".

XI.b.m. Hazel asks Lavinia to allow Orin to go and spend some time with the Niles.

XI.b.n. Lavinia refuses to let him go.

XI.c. Hazel and Lavinia exchange bitter words as a result.

XI.d.m. Lavinia discovers the manuscript in Hazel's hands.

XI.d.n. She accuses Orin of betrayal.

XI.e. Orin harasses her till she beseeches him.

XI.f. She offers to do "anything" for him to have the manuscript.

XI.g. Orin takes her up on her offer.

XI.h. He bids farewell to Hazel forever, telling her that her hero is "dead." (p.852) and what she saw was only his "rotting ghost!"

XII.a. Orin now suggests an incestuous relationship with Lavinia.

XII.b. She is repulsed and exclaims, "You're insane!" (p.853) (This networks with the other comments on Orin's "crazy" talk.)

XII.c. Orin rationalises his request by saying that, "You would be as damned as I am." (p.853)

XII.d. Orin addresses his ancestors and tells them that his sister will be very difficult for them to break. (This underlines the accountability that the portraits demand.)

XII.e. He envies Lavinia her control.
XII.f. Lavinia now insinuates that the only way out for Orin is suicide.

XIII.a. Orin also suddenly realises her point. He accuses her of committing another murder.

XIII.b. Lavinia denies the accusation.

XIII.c. Orin realises that if he killed himself he would find "Mother will be waiting for me there." (p.854)

XIII.d. Peter returns from his meeting, looking for Hazel.

XIII.e. Orin tells him that he is going in to clean his pistol.

XIII.f. Peter expresses concern at Orin's "monkeying" with a pistol in his condition.

XIV.a. Lavinia overwhelms Peter with affectionate talk and gestures.

XIV.b. Her involuntary dread of what will happen is revealed when she covers her ears with her hands.

XIV.c. A muffled shot rings out from the study.

XIV.d. Peter runs towards the study.

XIV.e. Lavinia sags weakly, her energy spent. "Orin! Forgive me!" she says. (p.856) (She has now committed her last murder.)

XIV.f. She then defies the Mannon portraits, claiming that she has disowned them as she is only "Mother's daughter." (p.856)

XIV.g. Strangely enough, even as she renounces the Mannons, her posture returns to the military deportment of her father.
Act IV. Occurs three days later. The exterior of the Mannon house on a late afternoon is shown. Golden sunlight suffuses everything.

Seth is trimming plants and humming "Shenandoah."

He comments on Lavinia, like her "Maw", plucking flowers and filling the house with them.

Lavinia enters wooden like a stick, with a mask-like face. The ravages of the previous three days show on her.

She tells Seth to fill up the house with more flowers.

She goes and sits on the top of the stairs - the second tragic space here.

Seth comments on her sleepless look.

He offers to pull out a sofa for her to nap on.

Lavinia is struck by his offer of rest outside the house.

Seth tells her to leave the house for good.

Lavinia plans to leave soon after marriage to Peter.

She plans "to leave it in the sun and rain to die." and for the Mannon portraits "to rot on the wall." (p.859).

Seth is concerned about her state.

Hazel is seen coming, looking mournful but resolute.

Lavinia asks Seth to leave.

Hazel accuses Lavinia of killing Orin. "You drove him to it!" she says (p.860)

Lavinia reproaches her for attacking her.
XVI.d. Hazel now wants Lavinia to release Peter and not marry him as she fears for her brother's happiness.

XVI.e. She mentions the unhappiness in the Niles' home over the issue and how Peter had changed from a dutiful son and brother.

XVI.f. Lavinia is defiant and threatens to kill Hazel with "Orin's pistol" (p.861) if she continues.

XVII.a. Peter is seen arriving and Hazel leaves hastily.

XVII.b. Lavinia curses the dead for dogging her still, since "I forgive myself." (p.862)

XVII.c. She wants to be reassured of Peter's love for her.

XVII.d. Peter comments on her ravaged looks.

XVII.e. Lavinia hopes to "forget the dead." (p.863)

XVII.f. She mentions the points raised by Hazel.

XVII.g. Peter is angry at his sister's actions.

XVII.h. Lavinia confesses to the change she sees in Peter who is no longer "pure" but "suspicious and afraid of life now." (p.863)

XVII.i. She wonders whether it is due to his association with her.

XVIII.a. As though to escape her sense of premonition, Lavinia suggests an instant marriage to Peter.

XVIII.b. Peter is shocked and feels that it would be misconstrued, so soon as it would be after Orin's death.

XVIII.c. Lavinia feels "the dead coming between" and her losing Peter's love. (p.864)
XVIII.d. Peter wonders whether there is anything he needs to know more about.

XVIII.e. Lavinia gets carried away and wants "a moment of joy - of love" and flings herself at him. (p.864)

XVIII.f. Peter is repulsed at her action.

XIX.a. Meanwhile, Lavinia in her frantic abandonment calls him Adam. "Want me! take me, Adam!" she says and is immediately brought back to reality. (p.865)

XIX.b. Peter is convinced that she has become hysterical.

XIX.c. Lavinia decides that, "Love isn't permitted to me." (p.865)

XIX.d. She bids Peter goodbye by concocting a tale, about an affair with a native on the islands.

XIX.e. Peter leaves disillusioned and broken at her infidelity.

XIX.f. Lavinia tries to tell him that she was lying but gives up.

XX.a. Lavinia is resolute and purposeful now as she has come to grips with her destiny.

XX.b. Seth appears, singing "Shenandoah."

XX.c.m. Lavinia plays on the word "bound" in the chanty.

XX.c.n. She says that she is bound to the "Mannon dead." (p.866)

XXI.a. Lavinia tells Seth to shutter up the windows and nail them down.
XXI.b. Seth tries to prevent her from going into the house. He warns her.

XXI.c. Lavinia asks him "to tell Hannah to throw out all the flowers." (p.867)

XXI.d. "I'm the last Mannon," she says. So she intends to bear the cross by isolating herself and living alone with the "Mannon dead," in the Mannon house "to punish myself." (p.866)

XXI.e. She is last seen marching into the house and closing the door behind her.

NOTES


5. Ibid, p.139.


10. Ibid.


