EUGENE O'NEILL'S LAST STATELY MANSION

by

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Eugene O'Neill's Last Stately Mansion

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Abstract

Out of Eugene O'Neill's thirty years of writing, and his more than thirty plays, recurrent themes and images developed, and grew in strength and profundity over the years. His earliest dramas were of the sea, representations of his own experiences of adventure and hardship as a young man. Subsequent plays evoked the tragedy of unfulfilled ideals and torturous relationships in a harsh world. But by the mid-point of his career, with Desire Under the Elms and Mourning Becomes Electra, the essentials of O'Neill's vision had become clarified: they were the family tragically destined, and the suffering of the helpless child trapped in the conflicts and antagonisms that grip the family. The children in these dramas are always grown-up, prepared for independence, yet unable to escape the prolonged and menacing influence of parents, and family destiny.

In the last four major plays O'Neill wrote, this vision becomes more autobiographically significant than it was in earlier plays. With increasing personal commitment to these themes, O'Neill developed their implications and explored the fantasies that had determined his world-view. In Long Day's Journey into Night the ill-fated family is O'Neill's own, and the helpless child his himself. And O'Neill begins to explore his sense of his own genius in this play, drawing the picture of the tormented, consumptive Edmund, hesitant on the verge of an artistic career. Con Melody and Simon Harford in A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions extend the portrait of genius, and the exploration of

archaic family influences on adult life and adult relationships. In More Stately Mansions uncontrollable regressive impulses, driving Simon Harford back to the scene of his childhood, threaten him with insanity and nearly destroy his marriage and the "touch of the poet," the potential genius within him. A Moon for the Misbegotten was O'Neill's last major play, and it, like its immediate predecessors, is retrospective in direction and an investigation of the power of childhood experiences over adult life. But the myth of the tragically destined family, still operative in More Stately Mansions, is abandoned in Misbegotten and Jim Tyrone is alone the determinant of his miserable fate, and haunted not by ancestral ghosts but by the obsessive enactment of his own fantasies. In Misbegotten another poet, Josie Hogan, emerges, but she is of decidedly different aspect from her artistic antecedents.

O'Neill made the decision to become a dramatist at twenty-five, while he was a patient at Gaylord tuberculosis sanitorium. He was committed to his decision, and for the next thirty years his writing suffered only brief and temporary interruptions. O'Neill demanded, for his work, a rigidly structured milieu and he saw any interruptions of his routine as a threat to his art. His marriage to Agnes Boulton, which lasted nearly ten years, initially satisfied his needs for peace and protection from undesirable interruptions, but parenthood and increasing domestic responsibilities finally destroyed the marriage and made writing almost impossible for him. Carlotta Monterey, O'Neill's third wife and an independent, competent woman, took on the role of protector and help-mate to the great dramatist and continued in this

role to the end of his life. When the last four plays were written, Carlotta and O'Neill were living in a secluded mansion in California and Carlotta exerted every effort to promote the conditions necessary for her husband's contentment and creativity. O'Neill was by this time a virtual invalid, susceptible to a wide variety of physical afflictions, in particular a degenerative disease of the motor cells of the brain which crippled his hands. He had always carried on his writing in longhand, and now found great difficulty in controlling a pencil. Yet the last four dramas, among them O'Neill's greatest, were written under this burdensome affliction.

O'Neill's career came to an abrupt end in 1943, with the writing of A Moon for the Misbegotten. He was to live another ten years, suffering an impregnable despair and varying degrees of poor health. His physical afflictions are not a wholly plausible justification for the termination of his career, because, until 1950, he carried on an active social life in New York and it was only in the last months of his life that he was wholly incapacitated. Misbegotten, in its piercing honesty and profound emotion, had exposed unconscious assumptions that had determined his life and his work. And the play had expressed a vision of art that contradicted earlier fantasies of genius. O'Neill's inability to confront again the revelations of Misbegotten left him creatively impotent and condemned him to a desparate wait for death.

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Preface

From 1939 to 1943 Eugene O'Neill worked with the five plays that climaxed his long career as a dramatist. The chronology of these plays is not precisely determinable, but thematic preoccupations tie four of them together into a discreet group. The Iceman Cometh (1939) reverts to techniqes and attitudes more typical of O'Neill's earlier work than of this late period and, for this reason, I have excluded it from my study. O'Neill worked on the four other plays in, roughly, this order: Long Day's Journey into Night, A Touch of the Poet, More Stately Mansions, A Moon for the Misbegotten. I have followed this sequence in my discussion, more in the interests of describing a thematic continuity than for the sake of chronological accuracy.

O'Neill criticism is not particularly extensive, and no doubt its modest volume is partly due to the decline his reputation suffered in the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties. There are a number of conventional studies of style, structure, image, and the "philosophical" content of the plays has been examined by some critics. Psychoanalytic studies of O'Neill are not numerous, probably because the application of strict psychoanalytic theory to O'Neill's art inevitably encounters an obstacle. The difficulty, as with the study of many post-Freudian writers, is that the artist's "insights" isolated by this method are not really insights at all. Rather, they represent no more than the use of cultural symbols and, as such, are not necessarily more significant than the influence on O'Neill of Irish Catholicism,

Nietszche or the glamour of Broadway. Perhaps this is one of the reasons O'Neill murmurred denials when critics applied Freudian interpretation explicitly and all-encompassingly to Mourning Becomes Electra. He knew, himself, that this kind of interpretation left important material in the play untouched. Similarly, the Oedipal configuration which is so easily discernible in many O'Neill plays, and which has been identified by a number of critics, is as much an artistic convention, or evocative dramatic symbol as a profound personal insight or fundamental percpetion.

There are two book-length studies of O'Neill that employ explicitly psychological critical techniques. They are Irwin Jay Koplik's Jung's Psychology in the Plays of O'Neill and Doris Falk's Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension. Doris Falk's sensitive, well-written discussion of the plays uses Jung's theories to impose a system of meaning on O'Neill's work, citing, as partial justification for her method, O'Neill's own statement of his interest in Jung's work.[1] Falk's study is informative when she applies Karen Horney's theories of neurosis, but Jung sets the tone of the discussion and remains in control. The result is an emphasis on universalization of the plights of O'Neill's tortured, ill-fated heroes. The struggles of these heroes are rendered significant insofar as they participate in the collective unconscious and respond to archetypal patterns and figures. Falk firmly dismisses A Touch of the Poet and A Moon for the Misbegotten as poor failures of the great dramatist. Curiously, her rigorous criticism of these two late

1 Falk quotes an O'Neill letter to Barrett Clark: " . . . of all the books written by Freud, Jung, etc., I have read only four, and Jung is the only one in the whole lot who interests me. Some of his suggestions I find extraordinaly illuminating in the light of my own experience with hidden human motives." (Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension, p. 66)

plays is far more evaluative than is her interpretation of very early plays which are burdened with much more obvious and severe faults.

There is only one lengthy work, of which I am aware, that deals extensively and exclusively with the last plays, and this is Rolf Scheibler's monograph, The Late Plays of Eugene O'Neill. Scheibler included The Iceman Cometh, which I have excluded, and deals with More Stately Mansions only in a lengthy footnote, justifying the omission on the grounds that the extant version of Mansions is incomplete and abridged. Late Plays is a careful and detailed study of image and structure, directed towards exegesis of O'Neill's philosophical perspective. Scheibler places what may be undue emphasis on the illusion-versus-reality theme, a preoccupation which is more significant in early plays than in O'Neill's later work. And the monograph offers few correlations between the playwright's art and his experience. It is my intention to emphasize the relation between O'Neill's life and his art.

Biographical data has an important role in my own study of O'Neill's art, and for such information I have relied chiefly on four sources: Agnes Boulton's Part of a Long Story, Doris Alexander's The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill, Louis Sheaffer's O'Neill: Son and Playwright, and Arthur and Barbara Gelb's O'Neill. Agnes Boulton was O'Neill's second wife, and her book is useful both in understanding her own personality and its influence on her husband, and in filling in a period of the playwright's life when he was frequently isolated from the friends whose recollections have reconstructed other areas of his history. But her memoirs conclude with the birth of Shane O'Neill in 1919. Doris Alexander's book focuses, as the title implies, on O'Neill's early years

and ends with the death of O'Neill's father in 1920. Louis Sheaffer's Son and Playwright is an impressive work of scholarship, securely founded on exhaustive research and meticulous documentation. Where there has been a conflict of fact, I have relied on Sheaffer more often than I have on other sources, but Son and Playwright is only the first of two projected volumes, the second of which has yet to appear. Unfortunately, the Gelbs' book is the only one among these four which deals with the last thirty years of O'Neill's life, and I have had to rely on their massive accumulation of anecdotes, details and the memories of O'Neill intimates and acquaintances for information about this period. O'Neill is fascinating reading, but the Gelbs' scholarship is not as thorough as it might be and they often fail to distinguish between fact and legend. In the absence of reliable information regarding the playwright's later years, I have attempted to discover, in the late plays, persistent attitudes and patterns of response which can help to sketch in the gaps left by the meagre biographical information available.

My method in the investigation of these plays is shaped by the intention of discovering recurrent, coherent patterns, both in dramatic situations and in the personalities who people the plays. In this motive I am not unique among O'Neill critics, but I have pursued, as well, two further goals. One aim was to trace the evolution of these patterns through the four plays (a task complicated, perhaps, by the tentative nature of the chronology I have used). The second and concomitant aim was to measure the varying degree of O'Neill's unconscious participation in the actions and attitudes of his characters. To these ends I have sought sources in O'Neill's experience for the mythical sequences and recurrent figures discernible in the plays, but I have attempted to

give these sources, once identified, significance beyond the casual mating of parental habits and adult neurosis, or childhood trauma and later creative activity. Biographical information, in concert with an investigation of these four plays, has, I believe, helped to illuminate the nature of O'Neill's creativity, its influence on his life, and the character of its response to his experience.

I have proceeded on the premise that the boundary between the artist's conscious and unconscious is more flexible and fluid than some Freudians might admit, and that the successful artist works in the area of that perilous frontier, employing resources from both sides of the border. I have been much abetted in my study of O'Neill by contemporary theories of ego-psychology, particularly the work of Paul Federn's intellectual descendant, Eric Berne. The model of ego-states on which Federn's theory of neurosis is based is adaptable to a functional concept of the artist's personality.[1] On the conscious side of the frontier in the artist's mind are his rational, perceptive faculties--his ability to think logically, to see and understand sequences of cause and effect, and to express himself efficiently and effectively. On the other side of the boundary is a vast reservoir of powerful images and mythical experience--seductive, threatening, and compellingly emotive. Perhaps this reservoir of sensation and stimulus can be identified as the real source of art, but without the intervention of

1 Berne's Transactional Analysis in Psychotherapy (Grove, 1961) offers a persuasive explanation of the ego-state model. In adapting Berne's theories to my own purposes, I have reduced the three-part model (Parent, or extero-psyche, Adult, or neo-psyche, and Child, or archaeo-psyche) to the simpler and more commonplace division between conscious and unconscious processes.

a strong and virile conscious mind (Berne would refer to such an agent as the Adult ego-state) its utterances are no more significant than the incoherent ramblings of a psychotic. When the artist has access simultaneously to both conscious and unconscious material he produces successful art. The health and strength of the conscious mind is important: it affords the artist the confidence required to relax repressive mechanisms and confront otherwise threatening unconscious material. It allows him to test the validity of images both threatening and attractive and to express their power in an appropriate, effective context. Hopefully criticism that respects the conscious operations involved in creative activity and is attentive to the process of translation of unconscious material into art will avoid the reductive aspects of coupling childhood experience with adult creative modes.

The first chapter of this study of O'Neill is, as far as possible, a concise record of what I see to be salient aspects of his history, and episodes that are revelatory of the playwright's personality. At this stage I have avoided interpretation of these events and attitudes, and I have identified only broad and generalized connections between drama and experience.

The four subsequent chapters are each an analysis of one of the four plays under scrutiny. Particular emphasis is placed on recurring fantasy patterns, and the development and evolution of certain typical scenes and personalities. The sixth and final chapter focuses on the translation of experience into art, exploiting both the information recorded in the first chapter and the results of investigation carried on in the intervening chapters.

A Lifetime's Journey

Agnes Boulton, Eugene O'Neill's second wife, has published her recollections of their first years together. Among her memories is O'Neill's detailed description of an imaginary "estate" which held within its walls all the requisites for unalienable security and ideal comfort. In spite of its drunken tone, the description was powerful enough to warrant its place in Agnes' memoirs, and she records it, acknowledging that time and her own feelings may have to some degree distorted it:

> . . . the image remains and I have wondered about it, particularly as some years later he said the same thing when he was very sober and in an imaginative and self-revealing mood, perhaps a mood of self-confession. . . . There is a place, an estate, as it were, of great extent (and this must be entirely in my mind, for I am sure if he described it at all, he described it as being of great beauty but I see it, this estate, as being dark, with somber trees). It contained within it everything necessary for his happiness and his comfort, and it was enclosed all around with a great fence, through which no one could enter; and the gates were barred and guarded. But the thing which even now I don't quite understand was that within this province and outside of it too, as though he possessed or dominated the world, he was the wielder of immense and unlimited power: over things; over people and their ways of life, not only of his own life, but of all those with whom he came in contact in any way. And all this was a thing of this world; a domain on this earth, where it was he did not say, but not in any foreign or distant country, and not an empire of the spirit. . . . It depended on material things--cars and service and luxury and personal power--some of this he described. I don't remember any specific mention of human beings to whom he was related in this place--a woman or women, lovers or friends--although there were people there, all of whom must have been in an unusual relationship to him, for over them (and this was very clear) this power of his was complete.[1]

The report of this fantasy of insular security and unthreatened authority and omnipotence is significant on two counts. First, images of the

1 Agnes Boulton, Part of a Long Story (New York: Doubleday, 1958; rpt. Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms, 1968), P. 153.

manorial home, estranged from the world and enclosed by real or imaginary boundaries are scattered throughout O'Neill's plays. The Melodys of A Touch of the Poet are exiles from the fuedal world of Castle Melody. When Sara and Simon Harford, in More Stately Mansions, find neither happiness nor security in their urban mansion with its walled gardens, Sara spends hours planning and designing an opulent residence that will perfectly fulfill their needs and dreams. In Mourning Becomes Electra, the Mannon estate, seat of power and so distinctly separate from the mundane lives of the New England villagers, betrays its denizens and offers them not the peace and security of the dream estate but, rather, torturous conflict and tormenting guilt. And the Monte Cristo Cottage of Long Day's Journey into Night, enclosed by the thick New London fog, incarcerates the four Tyrones with their hopeless longing for just such a world as O'Neill described to Agnes. Secondly, the search for the fantastical estate formed the pattern of O'Neill's life. The shape of his experience was first moulded in his earliest years when he travelled across the continent with his parents, suffering the insecurity and deprivations of the child of an itinerant theatrical family. He enjoyed only brief respite from this rootless existence when the family summered at New London in the Monte Cristo Cottage. At the age of seven he was exiled from the meagre security offered by the company of his parents, and his first years at boarding school intensified his sense of loss and helplessness. As a young man he took to the sea, finding, perhaps, an evanescent feeling of belonging among his fellow seamen and the destitute bums who haunted the wharves of Buenos Aires. With Agnes he sought his ideal milieu in Provincetown,

in New Jersey, at Peaked Hill Bar, on Brook Farm, in Nantucket, in Bermuda. Each residence seemed at first to offer him what he needed, and then somehow soured and became as grim a prison as the Mannon mansion, or the Monte Cristo Cottage in Long Day's Journey. But in the twenty-five years he spent with his third wife, Carlotta Monterey, his search became the desperate journey of a haunted, defeated man. His elopement with Carlotta began a three-year exile from the United States. They travelled across Europe, to the far east, and back to France. They lived in an enormous and picturesque chateau, Le Plessis, in the Tourraine district of France for two years, but even in its luxury and isolation O'Neill did not find his fantastical estate. Most of the rest of O'Neill's life can be charted in terms of the various "ideal" residences Carlotta planned for him, and their subsequent rejection of each--Casa Genotta in Georgia, Tao House in California, Marblehead in Massachussetts, as well as other accomodations interspersed with these, on Long Island, in Seattle, in New York. The desperate journey, its goal never achieved, finally ended in a hotel room in Boston where O'Neill died on November 27, 1953.

The journey began in another hotel room. Eugene O'Neill was born in Barrett House, New York, on October 16, 1888, to James O'Neill and Ella Quinlan O'Neill. James O'Neill was at the time a matinee idol of considerable fame in America, an Irish-born boy who, through hard work, talent and ambition, had achieved notable artistic success and even more financial success. Throughout his career in the theatre James won critical praise, but fame accrued to him through his performances in the title role of the popular melodrama, Count of Monte Cristo.

He became identified with the role, and eventually his audiences would accept him only as the dashing, romantic nobleman who heroically conquers all tribulation. He continued to play in Monte Cristo through a quarter of a century, into his mid-sixties. James was an energetic, resilient figure of erect posture and sonorous voice, a gregarious, sociable man, generous and well-liked. His wife, Ella, was shy and delicately beautiful, the daughter of a prosperous Cleveland merchant, and convent-bred in Indiana.[1] Recent biographies of O'Neill dispell earlier reports of the "legendary" happiness of James' and Ella's marriage. Nevertheless, their union seems to have been a relatively stable one. James was devoted, in his own way, to Ella's comfort and welfare; he found her a particularly attractive ornament to his life and couldn't bear to see her exert herself over household chores or other mundane duties.

Ella had borne two sons before Eugene arrived. Jamie was born in 1878, Edmund in 1883. The care of two small children on road tours eventually became too much for her, and she settled the boys in the O'Neills' New York apartment. Prolonged separations from James, however, were painful for both her and her husband, and in 1885 she succumbed to his desire for her company, and her own longing for him, leaving her sons in the care of her mother. While she was absent, Jamie contracted measles and communicated the disease to his infant brother, in spite of warnings to stay away from the baby. Edmund died

1 Arthur and Barbara Gelb's O'Neill (New York: Harper, 1960) records accounts of James' popularity and generosity, accounts substantiated by Louis Sheaffer's "Actor and Peasant," Son and Playwright (Boston: Little, 1968). Sheaffer's "Apprehensive Mother" in the same volume describes young Ella's gentle, pious dismay at the colourful theatre life in which she was implicated as James' wife.

before Ella could get back to him. The loss of her son distressed her deeply, but her own feelings of guilt were her chief torment. She clung to Jamie with intense maternal solicitude during her suffering. For many years she continued to mourn the loss of her baby through what she perceived as her own unforgivable neglect.

Ella's depression and melancholy became chronic, unalleviated by all James' well-meaning attempts to lift her spirits. In 1887 she underwent breast surgery for the removal of a cancer, and shortly thereafter her mother died. Her physical and emotional suffering was acute; her doctors prescribed morphine. Such treatment was not an irregular medical practice at the time, and the signs of addiction were not so carefully scrutinized as they are now. Ella became dependent on narcotics and remained an addict for more than thirty years. In 1888 Eugene O'Neill was born to a frightened, lonely woman tormented by guilt over the loss of her second son and cursed by drug addiction.[1]

The infant Eugene travelled constantly, living in hotel rooms, sometimes finding a bed in a dresser drawer. He was an easily disturbed, sensitive, unhealthy baby, obsessively watched over for signs of illness by Ella. He has been described as an obedient, quiet

1 Doris Alexander, in The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Harcourt, 1962), p. 14, may be alone among O'Neill biographers in having recorded Ella's breast surgery and her life-long deformity as a result of the operation. And Alexander dates Ella's first prescriptions of morphine before the birth of Eugene. Sheaffer and the Gelbs, on the other hand, seem to have accepted O'Neill's own explanation of his mother's addiction in Long Day's Journey, that is, that morphine was first prescribed following the birth of her third son. All three biographers remark on the intense feelings of guilt Ella experienced after Edmund's death.

little boy, withdrawn and compliant. At seven he was sent to a boarding school operated by the Sisters of Charity in Riverdale, New York. He longed to return to his mother, and was reluctant to join in the games and community of the other boys at the school.[1] When he was twelve he became a day student at De La Salle Military Institute in New York, and for two years enjoyed closer contact with his family. He did not excell as a student, however, and James, who foresaw for his son a career as a lawyer, enrolled him in Betts Academy in Connecticut. Betts was an institution which specialized in transforming the sons of wealthy families from idifferent, difficult students into hard-working athletes and scholars. Eugene was no longer the obedient little boy he once was, and largely resisted the efforts of the faculty of Betts to fit him into the mould. But he was, at the same time, becoming intellectually curious and aware, reading voraciously outside the prescribed curriculum. He graduated from Betts and entered Princeton in 1906. Again he did not distinguish himself as a student, but he continued the private study he had begun at Betts. In the spring of 1907, before he had completed his freshman year, he indulged in a boyish prank (somewhat aggrandized by legend, but apparently involving not more than a few broken glass insulators on telegraph poles) which won him a two-week suspension. Eugene did not accept his re-instatement, and left Princeton.

1 Doris Alexander and the Gelbs offer information regarding little Eugene's poor health, and his withdrawn, compliant behaviour in his early years. Louis Sheaffer has gathered a great deal of specific information that is evidence of Eugene's loneliness, and later rebelliousness, at school, and is presented in "Eugene in Exile" in Son and Playwright. .

Eugene was not yet nineteen, but he was already initiated into the ways of the world by his brother Jamie. Jamie, ten years Eugene's senior, was a confirmed citizen of Broadway, cynical, alcoholic, self-destructive. He offered a pattern of the glamorous life to his younger brother and Eugene accepted it eagerly. Even while he was an adolescent at Betts, Eugene spent his weekens with Jamie in New York, drinking and whoring. Except for sporadic employment in the theatre, procured for him by his father, Jamie had no direction to his life, no career other than that of the charming, well-dressed escort of chorus girls. Fresh from an unfruitful year at Princeton, Eugene had no more ambition than Jamie. James gave up his dream of seeing his younger son a successful lawyer, and found him a clerical job with a mail-order company in which he had a financial interest. The job itself was of little substance, but it provided Eugene with enough pocket money to keep up with Jamie on Broadway. In the summer of 1909 O'Neill met Kathleen Jenkins, well-bred, attractive daughter of a prominent but impoverished family. In October of the same year O'Neill and Kathleen were married. The details of the romance, the marriage, and the rather sordid events that followed it are hazy. O'Neill's more charitable biographers attribute the marriage to O'Neill's fulfilment of his "duty" and sense of honour, although even they cannot offer justification for his irresponsible behaviour after the marriage. Kathleen was apparently in love with O'Neill; his own state of mind at the time of the wedding has not been determined. A son, Eugene Jr., was born in May 1910, little more than seven months later, but the fact of Kathleen's pregnancy at the time of the wedding seems to have been

studiously ignored by O'Neills and biographers alike.[1] James and Ella were no more delighted with the situation than was their son, and James (either when the wedding was imminent or immediately after it--reports differ) found a place for his wayward son on a gold prospecting expedition to Honduras. Eugene willingly let himself be spirited away from his new responsibilities as a husband, and on his twenty-first birthday he was on a ship headed for Honduras. The expedition was a failure, and few months later O'Neill arrived back in New York, despondent, ill with malaria, and with no apparent intention of ever seeing Kathleen again. He toured briefly with his father's road company, but soon shipped out a second time, for Buenos Aires aboard one of the last square-rigged barques, the "Charles Racine." In Buenos Aires he was employed in a variety of jobs, none for very long, and his chief occupation was drunken dissipation. In later years O'Neill took immense pride in his sea-faring experiences, in his life as a tough sailor and a destitute bum. By way of embellishment of his adventures, he claimed to have sailed to Durban from Buenos Aires aboard a cattle steamer, but there is no evidence to support this.[2] After a year in Argentine he returned to New York as an ordinary seaman aboard a British steamer. He found lodgings at Jimmy the Priest's, a dreary waterfront dive where the room rent was $3.00 a month. Kathleen petitioned for divorce on the grounds of

1 Even Louis Sheaffer, the most reliable biographer of O'Neill's early years, writes of Kathleen's deep love for O'Neill, and his inability to disappoint her romantic expectations of him. It is just possible--but unlikely--that only Kathleen knew she was nearly two months pregnant when she and O'Neill were married.

2 Sheaffer, p. 183.

adultery in December 1911.

Years after, O'Neill told Agnes the story of his first marriage, his flight to Honduras, and his experiences in Buenos Aires (Boulton, pp. 196-105). Agnes had been unaware of her husband's previous marriage, but the focus of his tale was not on his desertion of Kathleen or his escape from his responsibilities; he mentioned the fact that Kathleen was pregnant when he left her and that a son had been born only as an afterthought of little significance. The emphasis of the story he told Agnes was on his own suffering and hardship, and the climax came when he attempted suicide after Kathleen's lawyers arranged an encounter between O'Neill and a prostitute to secure grounds for divorce. Although he received a small but adequate allowance from his father, O'Neill was always impressively destitute while he lived at Jimmy the Priest's, subsisting on free lunches and whatever liquor his remittance could buy him and his friends. His suicide attempt occurred when James was out of town with Ella and Jamie, and the weekly cheque was somehow delayed. The details of the incident are obscure: some accounts find O'Neill saved by an insufficient dosage of the veronal tablets he took to end his life; other stories recall the tragi-comic efforts of his drunken fellow-lodgers to save their buddy. In any case, when O'Neill recovered he fled to New Orleans, where his parents and brother were on tour. He later described his encounter with his family there after his suicide attempt as "coincidence," but he knew their itinerary beforehand, and it seems more likely that he was deliberately seeking their sympathy and concern. Records of this period contradict one another. Sometime during 1911-12 he shipped from New York to Liverpool and back again as an able seaman

aboard a passenger liner. The most recent scholarship places his trans-Atlantic trip before his suicide attempt (Sheaffer, p. 197); after his recuperation he toured for a few months with the Monte Cristo company and demonstrated to many audiences his lack of acting ability.

For the summer of 1912 O'Neill lived with his family at New London and worked for a while as a journalist with the New London Telegraph. He was not a success as a reporter--most of his articles were notable for their opulent prose rather than concise statement of the facts of the news item. He did, however, publish some modestly competent poetry in the newspaper.

O'Neill worked on the Telegraph until November, when developing tuberculosis forced his resignation. Christmas Eve 1912 he entered Gaylord Farm tuberculosis sanitorium and remained there five months. Gaylord was a progressive, highly respectable institution, specializing in the treatment of patients whose prognoses indicated good chances for complete recovery. O'Neill blossomed under the communal atmosphere and spartan routine of Gaylord. It was there that he formulated a direction for his life and made the decision to become a playwright. He was discharged in May 1913 as an arressted case, and returned to New London.

James O'Neill was still on tour, and could not offer his son the permanent home his health and new vocation demanded. Lodging was arranged for Eugene at Mrs. Rippin's New London boarding house, only a short distance from the Monte Cristo Cottage. In the convivial, sympathetic atmosphere of the Rippin home, O'Neill set to work writing

plays, reading the work of other dramatists, and attempting film scenarios. He tried to maintain the regimen of hard work and physical exercise he established there through the rest of his life, abandoning it only at times of pressing distractions and in the few years before his death. The Rippin family watched with a fond but somewhat perplexed eye as Eugene produced his first dramas, the most significant of which was Bound East For Cardiff, a one-act play of the sea.

O'Neill had now clearly announced his intentions: he was to dedicate himself whole-heartedly to the drama. In August 1914 his first volume of plays (all of them at the time unproduced) was privately printed. The $1,000 printing bill for THIRST and Other One Act Plays was paid by James, a fact which O'Neill rarely acknowleged. A family friend, Clayton Hamilton, was the only critic to review the publication, and, although his remarks were sympathetic and encouraging, the edition met with no success. Hamilton persuaded O'Neill to apply for admission to George Pierce Baker's dramatic composition class at Harvard. O'Neill was accepted and spent a year under Baker's tuition, learning from him, but producing nothing of real value. He declined an invitation to spend another year in a more advanced class and left for New York, finding a home in a Greenwich Village tavern known as "The Hell Hole."

While Eugene was at Gaylord, his father had formed a friendship with a young Irish actor, Brandon Tynan. Tynan was the kind of son James should have had: he was hard-working, ambitious, successful, devoutly Catholic, high-principled, and, above all, devoted

to James. The relationship grew and developed, and by the time Eugene was living at the Hell Hole, Tynan had emerged as a playwright as well as an actor and James was playing the role of a blind beggar in Tynan's Broadway comedy, The Melody of Youth. Eugene had reason to be resentful of the liaison--not only had Tynan assumed a position as a surrogate son to James, but as well he was enjoying the kind of success as a playwright that Eugene as yet showed no prospect of achieving. His life at the Hell Hole, dringing with gangsters and radicals and other aliens from society, and making no effort to support himself on the small allowance given him by his father, clearly asserted his position as the rejected son. And so did his devotion to Terry Carlin, radical, "philosophical anarchist," Nietzschian. Carlin was a unique and compelling man, and O'Neill adopted his system of thought with filial ardour, finding in it what he believed to be clear expression and legitimate affirmation of his own confused feelings. O'Neill maintained his commitment to Carlin, supporting him financially until his death many years later.

In Greenwich Village O'Neill was initiated into the community of free-thinkers and political radicals that had gathered there. He was surrounded by vivid personalities whose behaviour and ideas essentially contradicted the principles his father held in esteem. Yet O'Neill contined to pursue a vocation that would bind him irrevocably to his father's world, the theatre. In the summer of 1916 he accompanied Carlin to Provincetown, Massachusetts, a summer refuge for artists and intellectuals. There he found a theatre in embryo, headed by George Cram Cook and his wife, Susan Glaspell. The

Provincetown Players auditioned Bound East for Cardiff and accepted it with enthusiasm. The play was successfully staged at the makeshift Wharf Playhouse in Provincetown.

The following autumn O'Neill returned, with the Provincetown Players, to Greenwich Village. During the season Bound East for Cardiff was produced again, along with three other one-act O'Neill dramas: Before Breakfast, Fog, and The Sniper. O'Neill was by now a figure of some importance in the Greenwich Village community. He had a wide circle of interesting friends who encouraged him in his work, and drank and caroused with him. During the summer he had become acquainted with radical journalist Jack Reed, a Bolshevist who was to write Ten Days that Shook the World, and with his lover (later his wife) Louise Bryant, herself a left-wing journalist. Reed took a fatherly interest in O'Neill, promoting his career with sound advice and useful contacts. While O'Neill was filially devoted to Reed, he found himself deeply involved with Louise in a passionate love affair. Guilt and dissimulation made the relationship torturous for O'Neill, until Reed and Louise finally married and left for Russia to observe the progress of the revolution. While recovering from the injuries inflicted by his guilt and feelings of rejection, O'Neill met Agnes Boulton, in the autumn of 1917. Agnes is reported to have at that time borne significant physical resemblance to Louise, and O'Neill's friends interpreted his attraction to Agnes as a yearning for the absent Louise. Photographs reveal certain

similarities of appearance: both women were dark-haired and wide-eyed.[1] But the resemblances are not striking and O'Neill's attachment to Agnes, whatever its original impulse, was too strong to have been long dependent on such an insubstantial basis.

Agnes Boulton, when O'Neill met her, was a twenty-four year old widow, a writer of pulp fiction, a sometime dairy farmer, and mother of a small daughter. She had grown up in a large, charming, slightly eccentric family, and was an independent, intelligent, sensitive woman. Her life with O'Neill was at times orderly and peaceful, at other times chaotic and bitterly unhappy. The first week of their acquaintance offers an interesting insight into O'Neill's attitude toward her. He met her at the Hell Hole, through a mutual friend. He was immediately attracted to her, although he knew little about her, and professed his feeling for her at their first meeting, declaring that he wanted to spend every night of the rest of his life with her. The budding relationship seemed to Agnes however to have come to an abrupt end when she didn't see O'Neill again for several days. When they finally did meet again, at a Village party, he ostentatiously treated her with cruel, drunken indifference. Behind this sudden reversal was O'Neill's learning that Agnes was a widow, a mother, and a woman with a full life of her own. O'Neill had received this information as if it were a personal rejection of him, and he had retaliated. When he finally overcame his irrational

1 Photographs of both women are included in Sheaffer's Son and Playwright, Bryant on pp. 368 and 369, Boulton on p. 414.

resentment, he sent Agnes a copy of one of his plays, The Moon of the Caribees, as an invitation to renew their friendship. And he asked for her sympathy and understanding, explaining the motives underlying his behaviour:

"A dream came back to me that night when I first met you. It was a dream of my childhood--when I had to dream that I was not alone. There was me and one other in this dream. I dreamed it often--and during the day sometimes this other seemed to be with me and then I was a happy little boy . . . . After I learned about you I felt that the dream was impossible. You had seemed to me alone and virginal and somehow--with nothing but yourself. I wanted you alone . . . in an aloneness broken by nothing. Not even by children of our own. I don't understand children, they make me uneasy, and I don't know how to act with them." (Boulton, Part of a Long Story, pp. 67-8)

Agnes was duly responsive to this subtle, poignant appeal, and she offered unspoken acceptance of her position in the boyhood dream.

After Christmas O'Neill returned to Provincetown and Agnes accompanied him. They lived a peaceful, frugal life of strict routine in the quiet town, now deserted of its summer inhabitants. Supported by an uninterrupted regimen of work, O'Neill wrote Beyond the Horizon, a three-act drama of unattainable ideals and tragic misalliance. Agnes wrote, too, and did everything she could to promote the sober isolation and quiet Eugene needed to write. They were married in April 1918 and their conjugal happiness was broken only by brief trips to New York, usually undertaken reluctantly. There O'Neill would succumb to drink and spend insensible days in their hotel room with Jamie, reminiscing and consuming astonishing amounts of alcohol. Agnes apparently did nothing to inhibit these binges, and when they returned to Provincetown she would patiently nurse her husband through the painful, remorseful convalescence that

always followed prolonged indulgence in alcohol. When the last drop from the last bottle was gone, their domestic routine would be established again and O'Neill would resume writing.

They stayed in Provincetown through the summer and autumn, O'Neill working on Chris, the play that was to become, after many revisions, Anna Christie. Agnes had still not met her in-laws but she remembers that O'Neill spoke of his parents with insistent pride, and wrote them long, affectionate letters describing his happiness with his new wife. When they returned to New York, leaving Provincetown for the winter, a meeting was arranged for one November morning. The night before the impending reunion, O'Neill attacked Agnes in a fit of jealous, drunken rage, striking her in front of a group of their friends. The next morning he was too ill and incapacitated with drink to keep their appointment with his parents. The meeting was postponed till evening, when O'Neill was finally able to overcome the strange trauma that made the encounter so difficult.

O'Neill and Agnes spent the winter in a big old house in rural New Jersey that Agnes owned. Her family lived nearby (in fact, they had been evicted from the house in order to give O'Neill the isolation he demanded for his work) but, under Agnes' orders, they stayed away from the young couple. There had been between Agnes and Eugene a kind of pre-marital contract which called upon both partners to keep their respective families at a distance in order to preserve that special "aloneness" of the boyhood dream. The agreement was certainly initiated by O'Neill, for he exhibited an irritable sullenness whenever family matters demanded Agnes' attention. Agnes

complied easily, however, even to the extent of estranging herself from her daughter:

> As for my little girl, he was sure she was happy with my mother. I knew this was true; and so great was my feeling for Gene, and so preposterous whould have been the idea of my poet-genius with a child around that I don't think the idea ever occurred to me. (Boulton, Part of a Long Story, pp. 171-72.)

When Agnes' sisters finally did arrive at the house one day, uninvited, O'Neill hid in a closet to avoid meeting them.

During the months he spent in New Jersey, O'Neill worked on Chris, and wrote The Straw, a play inspired by his experiences at Gaylord sanitorium. And, while they were living at the Old House, Agnes became pregnant. O'Neill's first reaction to the news was that the doctor had made an error; his second reaction was silence.

The elder O'Neills were delighted at the news that they were to be grandparents. (They scarcely acknowledged the fact that the birth of Kathleen's son, Eugene Jr., had already made them grandparents.) James made a not uncharacteristic gesture of magnanimity upon hearing of Agnes' pregnancy; he knew of Eugene's interest in an abandoned life guard station near Provincetown that had been converted into a residence. Peaked Hill Bar, as it was called, was now up for sale, and James bought it for his son. Peaked Hill clung to a sandy shore on the edge of the stormy Atlantic, and could be approached only by trekking, on foot or on horseback, across several miles of wind-swept dunes. O'Neill was proud of his isolated retreat, yet he rarely mentioned that it had been a gift from his father. He and Agnes spent a healthy, happy summer there, working and swimming. On October 30, 1919, Shane O'Neill was born in Provincetown.

O'Neill's reputation was growing, and there were some

financial rewards in his success. Since the spring of 1918 he had been financially independent (with some help from the occasional cheques Agnes received for her magazine fiction), no longer requiring a weekly allowance from James. In February 1920 Beyond the Horizon began a Broadway run of 111 performances, and in June the play won for O'Neill his first Pulitzer Prize. The play made an abrupt departure from the conventions of the commercial American stage. Its unyielding realism and bleak tragedy perplexed the elder O'Neill, whose career as a master craftsman of the melodrama epitomized the history of the American theatre; yet he could express a grudging admiration of his son's work. Beyond the Horizon was the only play of Eugene's that James ever saw; he died of cancer in August of that year.

Provincetown remained the home of the young O'Neill family; summers were spent at Peaked Hill Bar, and a rented house in town provided accomodation during the bitter winter weather. But the intimate companionship of the first year or two of marriage was threatened. O'Neill--who formerly was so reluctant to interrupt domestic routine with a journey to New York--was spending more time in the city attending rehearsals and drinking with friends, and less time with his family. Shane was an attractive, charming child, but his father showed little interest in him. When he was at home with his family O'Neill worked hard, finishing Anna Christie and writing Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape. Early in 1922 he had what was probably his first meeting with his son Eugene Jr., then twelve, and committed himself to providing for the boy's education. A year and a half after the death of his father, O'Neill lost his mother: Ella ·

succumbed to a stroke, in San Francisco, on February 22, 1922. In November 1923 the fruitless, tortured life of Jamie O'Neill came to an end. Jamie mourned the loss of his mother bitterly, and after her death embarked on a course of certain self-destruction. At forty-five he was an old man, physically decimated and nearly blind. His last months were spent in a sanitorium and he died there, alone, unattended by family or friends.

The discord in Eugene's and Agnes' marriage seems to have grown from the gradual encroachment of parenthood, social life and growing reputation on that original boyish dream O'Neill described to Agnes during the first days of their courtship. The aloneness and solitude of the exclusive relationship he had then desired had become either impossible or insupportable. The outbursts of violent rage that occasionally marred the early days of their relationship became more frequent. An incident remembered by friends recalls O'Neill reacting wildly and angrily when Agnes dressed for a costume party in a black lace mantilla that had belonged to Ella. He ripped the lace from her head, and later in the evening he grabbed her by the hair and tried to drag her home across the dunes.

In the fall of 1922 O'Neill purchased Brook Farm, a large estate in Ridgefield, Connecticut. Although he had recently received his second Pulitzer Prize, for Anna Christie, and was earning weekly royalties of $850, the purchase was unwise and financial difficulties were added to domestic problems. O'Neill was drinking more heavily than he had at any time since Broadway days with Jamie. One of the chief points of contention between him and Agnes seems to

have been the number of guests who visited them, whom he accused her of encouraging. The proliferation of house-guests meant interrupted work, an increase in the flow of liquor, and occasions for irrational explosions of jealous, possessive temper between Eugene and Agnes. O'Neill confided to a friend that he was under constant strain, "unable even to write a letter." Occasionally he would sleep in the barn as a form of protest.

The O'Neills lived off and on at Brook Farm for four years, using Peaked Hill as a summer residence. But Provincetown social life had become demanding and Nantucket and the Maine Lakes were chosen as alternate summer retreats during these years. As tensions multiplied, O'Neill visited his doctor, complaining of ill health. The doctor recommended a change of climate, and suggested Bermuda. So another locale was added to the growing list of O'Neill residences. A daughter, Oona, was born to Agnes and Eugene in May 1925, in Bermuda.

Bermuda seemed to offer what O'Neill wanted--a degree of isolation, the sea, and a comfortable climate. Instilled with a new confidence, the O'Neills invested in an eighteenth century, thirteen acre waterfront estate, Spithead, and began renovations. But O'Neill's optimism was short-lived. Agnes, whether through her own initiative or not, soon involved them in the Bermuda cocktail-circuit, and O'Neill's growing family made demands on his time and attention that he was unwilling to meet. His nervous disorders were accompanied by an increasing susceptibility to illness, and visitors to Spithead discovered an atmosphere of domestic chaos and marital tension. One

report describes Agnes as herself suffering emotional disturbances that rendered her incapable of organizing domestic affairs and assuming responsibility for the protection of her husband's peace and welfare. In any case, O'Neill found himself increasingly unable to work, and withdrew further and further from his family. Letters to his friends in New York complained obsessively of emotional strain and difficult external circumstances.

As his marriage faltered, O'Neill found writing a source of stress, yet he continued to work and produced several plays of significance. One of these plays, however, is more important for its exposure of his preoccupations at the time rather than for its artistic success. In 1921, two years after the birth of his second son, he wrote The First Man, a drama about an anthropologist who wanders the world searching for romance and the fulfilment of his ideals. His wife is his devoted helpmate, steadfastly dedicated to his work. Their exclusive relationship was cemented ten years earlier by the seemingly fortuitous death of their two children. The peace of the marital relationship is disrupted, however, by the wife's pregnancy--a kind of gruesome affliction which ends in her death and the survival of the unwanted son. Desire Under the Elms was written during this period of domestic turmoil, too, and it as well deals with the death of an infant son. Desire is a far more profound and creatively successful drama, and in it the woman's love for her mate is emotionally consumated through the murder of their progeny. In Bermuda, around the time Oona was born, O'Neill was working on Strange Interlude. Part of the complex dramatic action of that play is dependent on the

heroine's submission to abortion during her first pregnancy. As his family grew, and the exclusive companionship of the first years of his marriage was threatened, O'Neill seems to have been more and more concerned with the powerful feelings parenthood stimulated within him.

In the summer of 1926, the O'Neills rented a cottage at the Belgrade Lakes in Maine. There were temporary additions to the family during the summer--both Eugene Jr. and Agnes' daughter Barbara spent their holidays with them. But amidst the proliferation of familial commitments, O'Neill found time to develop a friendship with Carlotta Monterey, a glamorous actress who had appeared in The Hairy Ape. Carlotta had been several times married and divorced and was now independently wealthy and unattached. She had recently been married to Ralph Barton, a dashing playboy artist and caricaturist for The New Yorker. Barton was ostentatiously unfaithful to Carlotta, and suffered severe and chronic mental disorders. When, in 1931, he ended his own life, his suicide note revealed his remorse over failing to benefit from certain valuable qualities Carlotta possessed:

"In particular, my remorse is bitter over my failure to appreciate my beautifuly lost angel, Carlotta, the only woman I ever loved and whom I respect and admire above all the rest of the human race. She is the one person who could have saved me had I been savable. She did her best. No one ever had a more devoted or more understanding wife. I do hope she will understand what my malady was and forgive me a little." (Quoted by the Gelbs, in O'Neill, p. 737.)

When O'Neill met Carlotta in Maine in 1926 her angelic qualities, her devotion and understanding were then without object. O'Neill, beset by marital difficulties and domestic responsibilities he found intolerable, was ripe for the kind of relationship Carlotta could

offer him. When the family returned to Bermuda for the winter, O'Neill went with them, but soon returned to New York for rehearsals of Marco Millions and Strange Interlude. Carlotta was in New York, too, and O'Neill apparently felt unrestrained in exploiting her sympathies. He couldn't write in Bermuda, he told her. He was sick. He needed someone to organize his life. His love-making to Carlotta took the form of appeals for maternal concern, subtle expressions of helplessness. Carlotta remembers their long conversations, which were chiefly a recounting of the many deprivations O'Neill had suffered through childhood, adulthood, and now in marriage. Carlotta was spontaneously receptive:

> "I thought it was terrible that of all people to be so stricken, it should be this man, who had talent and had worked hard. . . . my maternal instinct came out--this man must be looked after, I thought. He broke my heart. I couldn't bear that this child I had adopted should have suffered these things." (Quoted by the Gelbs in O'Neill, p. 623.)

When Agnes refused to come to New York and fight for her conjugal rights, O'Neill decided not to return to his family. In February 1928 he left for Europe with Carlotta.

O'Neill's divorce from Agnes was ugly and difficult. Apparently overlooking the fact that it was he who had deserted his family, O'Neill revelled in self-pity over the problems involved in severing connections with Agnes and evolving a fair settlement for her and the children. He and Carlotta were temporarily settled in France when separation proceedings were initiated. O'Neill had for several years avoided drink, but under the stress of the situation he broke his abstinence and thereafter suffered what Carlotta called

a "bad nervous breakdown." She sent regular reports of his health to his friends in America, and begged them, in the interests of his well-being, to keep from his sensitive ears any news concerning Agnes' activities. Friends who proved themselves "disloyal" by maintaining their association with Agnes were cut off. Visitors and correspondents were vigilantly screened and old acquaintances complained then, and throught O'Neill's life with Carlotta, of what they saw as Carlotta's tyranny over his personal relationships. But O'Neill himself did nothing to hinder her or discourage her in her efforts to protect him from what they must both have understood as threats to his tenuous peace of mind.

O'Neill's treatment of Agnes throughout the divorce proceedings and their aftermath was less than honourable. He must have thoroughly erased from his memory all recollection of the early years of intimate companionship and marital contentment. His bitterness is overwhelming in a remark in a letter to a friend: "Believe me, . . . once I'm free of that baby I'm going to arrange my life and affairs so I'll make her pay for this!" (Quoted by the Gelbs, p. 679.) In july 1929 Agnes was granted a Reno divorce on grounds of desertion. Included in the settlement was a proviso that Agnes never write of her marriage or of O'Neill. Part of a Long Story was published in 1958, five years after O'Neill's death.

Carlotta and O'Neill were married in Paris three weeks after the divorce was final. They had only a few months earlier returned from an extended journey that led them across Europe and

Asia to Shanghai and back to France. Upon their return they settled at Le Plessis, a magnificent chateau in the Touraine district. Carlotta efficiently organized life in the forty-five room mansion down to the last detail, plainly stating herself to be the woman Agnes was not, and there was a certain amount of self-righteousness in her assertion.

"I made him very comfortable. I bought him a long bed, and it was the first time in his life he was able to sleep stretched out; I thought it was disgraceful that he'd never had a proper bed before." (Quoted by the Gelbs, p. 693.)

The O'Neills had a thirteen year lease on Le Plessis, yet they stayed only two years. They lived in relative seclusion, and Carlotta fulfilled her husband's every requirement with grace, good taste and authority. In the grandiose isolation of Le Plessis, O'Neill involved himself in the stark drama and intimate sorrow of another far-away mansion and wrote Mourning Becomes Electra.

Carlotta's and Eugene's confidence that Le Plessis would splendidly satisfy their needs and dreams is witnessed by the length of the lease they signed. But the wet, dismal spring of 1931 dampened their emthusiasm for the place and they returned to New York in May. They spent the summer in a rented mansion on Long Island, the winter in a Park Avenue apartment. In the meantime they purchased property on Sea Island, Georgia, and Carlotta supervised construction of a large Spanish-style mansion they called Casa Genotta. They moved in in the summer of 1932 and lived there four years. Every detail of the house was planned to contribute to their comfort and their style of life. Carlotta designed and furnished the study, where

her husband was to do his writing, to resemble a ship's cabin and to capitalize on its uninhibited view of the open sea. After curious sightseers threatened to interrupt their privacy, a high stone wall was built, encircling the grounds and obscuring the house from outside eyes. Only very few friends and acquaintances were honoured with invitations to visit the estate. O'Neill's first meeting with Sherwood Anderson took place at Casa Genotta, and Anderson wrote to a friend of the visit:

"O'Neill is a very very sweet man but I did feel death in his big expensive house. He has drawn himself away, lives in that solitary place, seeing practically no one. He needs his fellow men. I felt him clinging to me rather pitifully." (Quoted by the Gelbs, p. 794.)

The gist of Anderson's perceptions is supported by the impressions of another distinguished visitor, Somerset Maugham:

"The house he lived in was by the sea, and far from any other habitation. I didn't see another soul while I was there, but he constantly complained and said he must leave the island because it was so thronged with people." (Quoted by the Gelbs, p. 798.)

At the same time, other members of the select group who received invitations to the estate remembered an atmosphere of peaceful contentment and well-ordered, ritualized happiness, authoritatively orchestrated by Carlotta. In any case, Sea Island failed to preserve its edenic character in the O'Neills' view, and they left the house in the fall of 1936, not to return.

The two plays O'Neill completed while living at Casa Genotta were Days Without End and Ah! Wilderness--dramas which, though different in tone and subject, O'Neill recognized as springing from the same impulse. Personal spiritual anxiety is the subject of Days, an artistically unsuccessful attempt to come to terms with the Catholicism of his parents. The second play is a light-hearted, amused

look at adolescence and youthful sexual problems. Both plays were for O'Neill a superficial reconciliation of the conflicts involved in his relationship to his mother and father. Nearly all the creative work of the rest of his life would develop these same themes, but with greater profundity and increasing honesty.

Casa Genotta was up for sale, and the O'Neills were living in a rented house in Seattle, Washington, when O'Neill was awarded the Nobel Prize in November 1936. The notoriety that accompanied the honour both pleased and dismayed him. His health and energy had deteriorated during the four years in Georgia, and he was unable to make the trip to Sweden to accept the award. He and Carlotta left for Oakland in December, having decided to look for a permanent home in California. O'Neill was hospitalized at Christmas and underwent an appendectomy. But even after the treatment of his appendicitis, he was less than healthy. Multiple afflictions beset him: he suffered a kidney disorder, a prostate condition, and neuritis. But the most serious of O'Neill's afflictions was a nervous tremour, chiefly manifested in his hands. The condition was similar to Parkinson's disease, and mistakenly diagnosed as such; in fact, it was a rarer condition, a degenerative disorder which affected the motor cells of the brain. Both his mother and brother suffered tremours of the hands, and the disease may have been hereditary, although there is no conclusive evidence to this effect. Over the years, the tremour grew increasingly more severe, finally overwhelming his whole body in the last months of his life. Some of his doctors

believed that the form of the disease, that is, the affliction to his hands, was psychologically determined. One physician who treated him off and on in the year or two before his death felt that O'Neill's inability to hold a pencil and write legibly could be overcome through a concerted force of will. O'Neill was partially responsive to this doctor's devoted and insistent care, but the remission was only temporary and he was generally helpless in the face of the merciless progress of this debilitating illness which made him an old, sick man and a virtual invalid while he was still in middle-age.

O'Neill was released from hospital in March, and he and Carlotta lived in a rented house near San Francisco while a home was built for them on 158 acres they had purchased in a mountainous area thirty-five miles out of the city. The house was not as large as Casa Genotta, but was as isolated, as carefully planned and as meticulously decorated, this time in a Chinese style. The mansion was named Tao House; the O'Neills moved in at the end of 1937 and lived there until 1944.

The most significant effect of O'Neill's crippling disease was the difficulty he encountered in holding and using a pencil. His handwriting, which had always been small and tight, became cramped and miniscule to the point of illegibility. During his last years of creative work only Carlotta could decipher his manuscripts. He could not adjust to any writing method other than longhand, although he tried typewriters and dictating machines. Yet during the years at Tao House he produced, through superhuman effort, what must be his finest plays. At Casa Genotta he had begun work on an astonishingly ambitious cycle

of five, then eight, and finally nine plays. This masterwork underwent numerous revisions of concept, structure, title, direction. What finally emerged were two dramas, A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions, and scenarios, scene descriptions, and even second and third drafts of other plays that were all collected under the heading of A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed. O'Neill's perspective was fixed in the past during these years; although the cycle was to have spanned a century and more, the two extant plays had as a temporal setting the first half of the nineteenth century. The Iceman Cometh, written in 1939, dealt both with the derelicts he had lived with years before at Jimmy the Priest's and with the personalities who had influenced him during his Greenwich Village days. O'Neill spent two torturous years writing Long Day's Journey into Night, which is, in a way, a sequel to Iceman, for it concerns his own experiences subsequent to the months he spent as a lodger at Jimmy the Priest's. Long Day's Journey was completed in 1941; A Moon for the Misbegotten, O'Neill's last major play, was finished by the middle of 1943. The two completed cycle plays re-iterate the focus of O'Neill's vision in his last years, for both of them deal with the young adult's attempts at emotional emancipation from a prison of family conflicts. The last full-length plays all comb through a period of his life when he achieved independence of his family and established his direction as an artist. A Moon for the Misbegotten deals ostensibly with the last months of Jamie O'Neill's life, yet the fulcrum of the play is Jim Tyrone's reaction to his mother's death. And part of this--the uncertain, unanchored emotion upon

seeing his mother in her coffin--was O'Neill's own response as he described it at the time. Carlotta remembers the terrible strain and nightmare of tension engendered by the writing of the two dramas in which the real personalities of her husband's family emerged undisguised. O'Neill was totally involved in the re-awakened sensations and conflicts of this earlier period of his life. She recounted, for the Gelbs (pp. 848-49), an incident which suggested the degree of that involvement. One night, after some hours of work on A Moon for the Misbegotten, Eugene came into Carlotta's bedroom, and listened with her to a broadcast of one of Hitler's speeches. O'Neill seemed particularly upset and distressed by the horror of the dictator's words, and Carlotta, lying on the bed beside him, tried to soothe and comfort him. Her touch stimulated a violent response: he sprang from the bed and shouted at her, "Goddam whore!" before he ran from the room. The words were, of course, Jim Tyrone's to Josie Hogan in Misbegotten.

The isolation and security of Tao House was even more strictly controlled than that of Casa Genotta. Yet writing did not become any the less difficult. O'Neill suffered increasingly frequent attacks of anxiety and nervousness. While finishing Long Day's Journey he wrote to a friend, complaining of

" . . . recurrent spells when suddenly, at the least strain, I fold up and have to go to bed and am no good for anything--even out here where I live the simplest kind of life." (Quoted by the Gelbs, p. 841.)

And, a few months later, to another confidante, he wrote:

"This winter has been hell. I haven't written a line hardly. It isn't war jitters, either, although I suppose subconsciously they helped to

make bad physical matters worse, along with personal stuff that got my goat." (Quoted by the Gelbs, p. 842.)

Among the irritating "personal stuff" that was getting in the way of O'Neill's work was Oona's behaviour. She had finished school, and was enjoying the New York social whirl and gaining the kind of notoriety her father had always sought to avoid. She was voted "New York's Number One Debutante" and her activities and public remarks were reported in gossip columns. In July 1943, at the age of eighteen, she became Charlie Chaplin's fourth wife. Chaplin was the same age as O'Neill, fifty-four. O'Neill's displeasure was so intense that he thereafter never mentioned his daughter's name, nor suffered her to be discussed in his presence. His response to the marriage was particularly extravagant in that since his divorce from Agnes he had almost totally neglected the welfare of Oona and her brother, and shown not the slightest interest in their lives. A Touch of the Poet, a play which probably underwent final revision only a year or so before Oona's marriage, describes another father's jealous, resentful reaction to his daughter's sexual relationship to another man.

During the last years of the war the O'Neills could not find adequate domestic help. Carlotta was suffering from arthritis and overwork. Finally she and her husband confronted the fact that they could no longer maintain their isolated household under these difficult circumstances, intensified by the steady decline of O'Neill's health. Tao House was sold and they moved to a San Francisco apartment. When the war ended, O'Neill judged the theatre-going public to be ready for more of his drama, and he and Carlotta left for New

York late in 1945 to arrange for productions of The Iceman Cometh and A Moon for the Misbegotten.

After years of isolation and somewhat embittered estrangement from old friends, New York must have seemed a tempting outlet for strangled energies, for O'Neill entered into a busy social life, renewing old friendships and embarking on new relationships. Some years before he had confided to a friend that when he stopped drinking he began to avoid parties, feeling the pressures of social intercourse too intensely without the lubricating effect of alcohol. Perhaps fame and stature eased those tensions; in any case, O'Neill blossomed during the three years he and Carlotta lived in New York. Yet he remained completely dependent on Carlotta's care. She organized his daily routine, steered him through difficult social encounters, and was constantly at his side, guiding conversations in favourable directions, refusing invitations she thought would involve too much strain. O'Neill's affection for Eugene Jr. grew during this period. Eugene had become a classics scholar of some repute, academically and intellectually successful, and his father enjoyed their friendship and showed a certain pride in his son's accomplishments. Carlotta, however, was less than enthusiastic about this sudden display of paternal feeling. She became antagonistic towards Eugene, although she had previously shown him kindness and even affection. She felt that he had somehow "changed:" that his political philosophy was reprehensibly radical and that he drank too much beer.

Neither was Carlotta pleased with her husband's social activities. She felt they were an intolerable strain on his health,

and her feelings were to a degree justified, for it was she who had to nurse him through the effects of too much conviviality. He became less compliant, occasionally ignoring her directives and going out on his own. Early in 1948 she left him. Her departure was apparently prompted by a long evening of gleeful reminiscing with Saxe Commins, an old friend who had known O'Neill since Provincetown and New London days. His self-indulgent retreat to a past of which she was no part was finally too much for Carlotta, and her departure shattered O'Neill. He sent her a whining plea of helplessness which was both an entreaty and a threat:

"Darling: For the love of God, forgive and come back. You are all I have in life. I am sick and I will surely die without you. You do not want to murder me, I know, and a curse will be on you for your remaining days.
I love you and I will! Please, Darling!" (Quoted by the Gelbs, p. 889.)

Carlotta did not respond immediately, and a week later O'Neill fell in the apartment and fractured his shoulder. His helplessness and his need for her was clearly demonstrated and a few months later they were reunited.

Carlotta refused to remain in New York. She and O'Neill left for Boston and in July bought a small house in Marblehead Neck, outside Boston. The house, in a way reminiscent of Peaked Hill Bar, was perched on a cliff, overlooking the Atlantic. After more than thirty years of nearly incessant creative activity, O'Neill's writing days were over. The depression that had overwhelmed him during the last months at Tao House met him at Marblehead, and the two years there seem to have been spent in brooding despair. In September 1950 news of Eugene Jr.'s suicide shook him profoundly.

Life at Marblehead was for O'Neill and Carlotta difficult and bleak. O'Neill continued to tenderly inscribe manuscripts and publications to Carlotta, expressing deep sentiment and hopes for renewed happiness. But his inactivity and illness were an insupportable strain on the relationship. Early in the volatile tensions that beseiged the lonely household finally reached a climax. O'Neill was found lying in the snow outside the house, apparently in a posture of aborted escape, or, it has been speculated, suicide.[1] His leg was broken and Carlotta was in a state of delirium, suffering a toxic reaction to a bromide medication. Both husband and wife were hospitalized, and what followed, during the next four months, was a sorrowful, pathetic drama.

O'Neill spent two months in hospital in Salem, Massachusetts. Carlotta's problem was not immediately diagnosed, and she was placed in a mental hospital. The differences between the pair seemed at this point irreconcilable: while Carlotta formally charged O'Neill with "cruel and abusive treatment," he signed a petition attesting to his wife's mental incapacity and requesting that she be placed under legal guardianship. Many of O'Neill's old friends who had years before been snubbed by Carlotta gathered around his sick bed, and, probably with his encouragement, fuelled his resentment of his wife. It was soon discovered, however, that Carlotta's problems had a physical source, and she was released from hospital. In the meantime O'Neill was trasferred to Doctors Hospital in New York. He was a popular, co-operative patient, and received dozens of visitors.

1 See the Gelbs discussion of the incident, pp. 908-9.

But O'Neill was playing a subtle game: while he received generous sympathy from old friends who themselves had received unpleasant treatment at Carlotta's hands, he was inwardly preparing himself for reconciliation with his wife. The differences which had enforced such a bitter and dramatically public separation were either forgotten or resolved, and by April the petition against Carlotta had been dropped, and she had retracted her charges. In May O'Neill was released from hospital and joined Carlotta in Boston.

From May 1951 until his death O'Neill lived in a suite at the Hotel Shelton in Boston. One of his first actions upon his quiet surrender, and his return to Carlotta was to author a will disinheriting Shane and Oona and their issue, and entrusting to Carlotta and her progeny his estate.[1] One night by the fireside he destroyed all his uncompleted work, and virtually all of the Dispossessed cycle. Whether More Stately Mansions was saved from the fire by design or accident is a matter for speculation.

O'Neill's health steadily declinec. There was no joy in life for him; a stubborn despair darkened his last days. He became so incapacitated by his tremour that he could no longer light a cigarette, or turn himself over in bed. In November 1953 he contracted pneumonia and succumbed to a coma. Thirty-six hours later he was dead.

In the last years O'Neill's private life was a vacuum, emptied of significance and direction by the numbing despair that

1 When O'Neill and Carlotta eloped to Europe, Carlotta left behind an eleven year old daughter Cynthia who lived with her grandmother on the west coast. Like Agnes, Carlotta apparently felt no strict compulsion to fulfil her maternal responsibilities by finding a place for her child in her new life. At the time of the promulgation of the insanity petition against her mother, Cynthia was contacted by lawyers and declared herself to be nearly destitute, the sole supporter of a son and invalid husband, and incapable of assuming guardianship of her wealthy and glamorous mother.

brought an abrupt and early end to his career. The final four years of creative activity, beginning in 1940 with Long Day's Journey, ending with A Moon for the Misbegotten in 1943, and including work on the two cycle plays, A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions, evolved a confrontation with paralyzing psychological conflicts that made further writing impossible. Long Day's Journey may have initially promised a resolution of those conflicts which had originated in his earliest experience. On their twelfth wedding anniversary, O'Neill presented Carlotta with the original manuscript of Long Day's Journey. In the message which accompanied the manuscript he wrote that the gift was

> . . . a tribute to your love and tenderness which gave me the faith in love that enabled me to face my dead at last and write this play --write it with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones.

But the Tyrones, dramatic representatives of the four O'Neills, would not be laid to rest so easily, and their ghosts continued to torment the playwright until his own death.

A View of Origins

The lives of the Tyrones, as they are presented in Long Day's Journey into Night, are joyless and wasted by pain. The play deals with alcoholism, morphine addiction, and old age embittered by unrealized dreams, and these powerful subjects are formulated within the highly-charged atmosphere at a family's heart. All four of the characters endure conditions which elicit responses of sympathy, compassion or disgust. But, finally, the play's most forceful statement is of the horribly destructive, malignant nature of the afflictions that gnaw at the lives of the Tyrones, and of the family's absolute impotence to cure themselves of the diseases that torture them.

In this play O'Neill deliberately presents a detailed picture of his own family at a time of crisis, and their experience of living together. Of all O'Neill's plays, Long Day's Journey is the drama most publicly and avowedly autobiographical, offering specific information about the playwright's perspective on the radical, elemental relationships in his life. Long Day's Journey is important in understanding O'Neill's approach to his art and his own life-experience, but, with its determinedly assertive, self-revelatory tone, the play is difficult to come to terms with. The key to the play should by Edmund, O'Neill's surrogate, but his character is nearly innundated by the flow of powerful personalities and conflicts that emanate from the other characters. To what degree these personalities are projections of the central, authorial consciousness of the play, and to what degree the myths of the family's experience control the

drama are subjects of critical investigation.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that O'Neill was a post-Freudian dramatist, and was acquainted with then-current theories of personality and behaviour, both through his own experience in psychoanalysis and through reading the work of European psychoanalytic theorists.[1] Patterns of early experience and their control of the characters' destinies are a carefully constructed backdrop to the dramatic action of the play. O'Neill's eclectic use of psychological explanations for the aspects of personality that typify each Tyrone in effect seems to justify and legitimize the powerful fantasies that determine the playwright's handling of these dramatic representatives of his own family. The system is nearly impregnable and those fantasies, so efficiently legitimized, are difficult to isolate and test.

Finally, the play is fraught with the playwright's ambiguous images of himself. He is the son of the shanty Irishman, and of the dashing matinee idol; his is the son of the gentle, celibate convent girl, and of the desperate morphine addict. At twenty-three

1 Through 1923 to 1925, a period when his marital problems were intense, O'Neill paid irregular visits to Dr. Smith Ely Jeliffe, a New York psychiatrist who was popular with theatre people and those connected with arty social circles. The Gelbs suggest that Jeliffe's popularity may have been due to his willingness to adjust his methods of treatment to his patients' demands. In any case, it appears that O'Neill's treatment did not follow an arduous course, and that the playwright enjoyed his visits to Dr. Jeliffe as gratifying social encounters.

Malcolm Cowley, in "A Weekend with Eugene O'Neill," The Reporter, September 1957, rpt. in O'Neill and his Plays, ed. Cargill, Fagin, Fisher (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 41-49, recalls a visit with the O'Neills when they were living at Brook Farm. O'Neill showed Cowley a volume of Wilhelm Stekel's work on sexual aberrations and cited the case of an only son who succumbed to insanity after being seduced by his mother. Although the incident Cowley remembers gives no indication of the extent of O'Neill's study of psychoanalytic theory, it does suggest that he may have been somewhat eclectic in what he chose to assimilate. The above case history is, of course, closely parallel to the dramatic situation of More Stately Mansions.

his own identity is still enveloped in the family cosmos: he is the tortured victim of conflict, the tubercular invalid, neglected by those responsible for his welfare. And he is the poet, sailing, flying, unanchored, estranged from the fog-shrouded house.

Within this drama O'Neill has attempted to consolidate and organize in their original form the pattern of his family life and the themes that dominate his creative work. Yet his assault on the sources of his art and consciousness must have left some areas unconquered, for the plays that are contemporaneous to this one--A Touch of the Poet, More Stately Mansions, A Moon for the Misbegotten--reiterate and recast the familial figures of Long Day's Journey, and require of the playwright further, even deeper exploration of their significance. The Tyrones, and the patterns their relationships create, recurr throughout the products of O'Neill's last creative period: they have close kinship to the nineteenth century Melody family of A Touch of the Poet, and the lives of the Tyrone gain terrible and mythical significance in the surreal world of the Harford family in More Stately Mansions. If these subsequent dramas replay the scenes of Long Day's Journey, then the full meaning of the Tyrones' lives as they are herein presented will be revealed only through seeing the four last plays as comprising a continuum of creative experience and exploration, finally culminating in the figures of Josie Hogan and Jim Tyrone in A Moon for the Misbegotten.

The principal structural dynamic of Long Day's Journey is the progressive constriction, the increasing narrowness of time and space.[1] All the events, or non-events, of the plot occur within

1 Of these four plays, three operate within the classical twenty-four

sixteen hours and within one room, and there is no recourse to the diversions of the world outside. In spite of their aborted attempts at escape, the Tyrones are virtually locked in, imprisoned with ghosts of the past. Except for the brief appearances of the maid Kathleen, only the four family members are presented, and as the play progresses even vague allusions to the routine of life outside the family home and unconnected with life within are increasingly infrequent. O'Neill mercilessly strips away the cosmetic pastimes of life (even the card game in the last act cannot develop beyond three or four plays) until he, and the characters, and the reader, must confront the naked face of actuality, unattractive as it is at this juncture. In fact, the ruthless exposure of the aberrations and secrets of the Tyrone family carries an atmosphere of near-sensationalism, an overwhelming frankness that suggests wholesale recognition of the conflicts that rage in the bosom of the family, which in turn seems to imply resolution of conflict on the part of the playwright. And, from his post-Freudian perspective, O'Neill offers interpretation of the tortured relationships within the family, interrupting the dramatic process of the play with sometimes awkward explanatory dialogue. Indeed, he sometimes seems to offer such a neat package of cause and effect that critics have been tempted to simply re-state O'Neill's dramatic presentation in analytic prose. But I would contend that O'Neill's daring exploration of this reflected image of his own family uncovers radical influences in the lives of himself and

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hour compass, and within the spatial boundaries of a single stage set. Only More Stately Mansions departs from these fruitful restrictions, and suffers a loose-knit, sometimes repetitive structure as a consequence.

his family which, at this stage, remain beyond his full control or understanding, and this contention is supported by the fact that Long Day's Journey was followed by three more major attacks on the same themes.

The raw material of the play is the family's confrontation with the reality and poverty of their lives at a time of crisis. Within the tightly drawn boundaries of the drama, the pressures of life on the four Tyrones become so intense that archaically-determined, obsessive patterns ultimately control their behaviour. Perception, reason, and sensitivity to the immediate exigencies of life crumple under crucial stresses, and capitulate to compulsive forms of behaviour that derive their logic from long-past experience and ancient conflicts still unresolved. In each character the operation of such archaic influences is largely unconscious, and the intended direction of the drama is towards discovery and exposure of these subterranean determinants of behaviour. But to what extent is the playwright himself controled by the power of unconscious fantasy and conflict? By exposing Mary's fantasy of virginal genius or James' deep-rooted insecurity does O'Neill come to terms with the influence of these feelings on his own consciousness? Not through Edmund, the author's agent in the play, does O'Neill do so. Edmund is clearly the victim of the catastrophic effects of family conflict, and is saved, by his passive position, from the kind of arduous confrontation with private nightmares that the other characters must undergo.

The web of familial relationship among the characters

is one which clearly identifies parents and children and these classifications inevitably and obviously involve expectations of behaviour: parents should act like parents, children like children. But such expectations are undermined by two sets of subversive circumstances. First, in spite of the prolonged dependence of the sons on their parents for financial and emotional sustenance, Edmund and Jamie are adults, and their ages, abilities and resources make totally inappropriate their positions in the family. This inappropriateness is expressed in the disturbing collisions between the child-like patterns of behaviour reawakened by their dependent positions, and their mature, adult faculties of understanding. Secondly, Mary and Tyrone are, and always have been, uncomfortable in the performance of truly parental functions, and are unable and unwilling to fulfill the demands their overgrown children make on them, and at the same time incapable of liberating their children from the strangehold the family has on them. The constellation of the family, as it exists in August 1912, consists of a father approaching old age, a middle-aged mother, and two adult sons, but underlying this clear external shape are contradictory family schema, rooted in the past and in fantasy, each one powerfully influencing the behaviour of the Tyrone who perceives it. The tools of drama are stimulus and response, and O'Neill has so manipulated the operative stimuli of the play, its matrix of factual reality, that each Tyrone is presented under conditons of acute stress which recall earlier experiences of trauma and their accompanying sensations. And as the tensions of confrontation multiply and grow, the real family shape described above is rejected by each

character in favour of a private, archaic pattern of relationships moulded by long-ago experiences. The motion of the play is essentially regressive, backwards into an unquiet past.

The most useful format for investigation of the play should be an examination of each character in confrontation with the facts O'Neill so ruthlessly exposes, and the kinds of response evoked by the confrontation. Such an examination will reveal the archaic determinants of behaviour in each Tyrone, when and how they are expressed, and, hopefully, will illuminate the pattern behind the apparent chaos of relationships in the Tyrone household. Before proceeding, one further note should be made: confession--in the form of explanation and self-justification--is an exercise in which all the characters of the play indulge, and their several revelations are directly influenced in tone and posture by the nature of their own archaic, fantastic perceptions of their positions in the family. The intimate correlation of the facts of the drama with O'Neill's own history lends the whole play an air of confession, and implicates him in the distortions of fantasy and self-justification. As the characters of the play recount their private dramas with a constant eye to the profits of defending and supporting their fantastic positions, O'Neill is similarly aware, if unconsciously, of the benefits accruing to recognition and defeat of specific threats to his self-image and to defense of his notion of the position he held in the family. The autobiographical factor of Long Day's Journey is actively involved in the presentation not only of Edmund, but of all the characters. I don't want to suggest that O'Neill's treatment of these collisions of family personalities is

deliberately deceptive or exploitative, but rather that his commitment to reality may be at certain points undercut by an unconscious need to satisfy the requirements of personal fantasies which are not isolated or examined within the compass of this play.

As the camouflage of amicable, early-morning pleasantries is dissolved, the first act states the themes and patterns that will dominate the play. Its clearest and most ominous revelation is the evidence of Mary's relapse, and the impotence of the rest of the family to offer her attractive alternatives to morphine and fantasies. Mary is cursed by twenty years of drug addiction, and her family is immediately suspicious of any elements in her behaviour which they recognize as repetitive of old scenes of surrender to morphine. Her rejection of current reality is clearly identifiable, for the morphine doses have the effect of facilitating regression to experiences and sensations of her youth that represent to her gratification of fantasy needs. The drug helps her to maintain an unseeing indifference to an unsympathetic world, and to eliminate from her consciousness the pressures and tensions engendered by her present environment. The morphine fog silences and invalidates the unacceptable and intolerable demands of her real position in the family: her husband asks that she be plump, healthy, cheerful--consumately matronly and wifely. Her sons, with their special infirmities of alcoholism and tuberculosis, have large filial claims on her that call for wholesale commitment to a maternal role. The legitimacy of these demands is essentially suspect, in spite of O'Neill's attempts to justify them within the context of the drama. James' wish that Mary be consistently cheerful and responsive to his needs is in large measure an

attempt to impose on his wife conformity to his notion of marital happiness. Edmund and Jamie are old enough to take care of themselves. But Mary hasn't the strength to refute the demands and piteous appeals of her husband and sons, and, instead, retreats hysterically into an adolescent world in which their voices are silenced.

Mary Tyrone, middle-aged mother and wife of thirty-five years, harbours within her an adolescent girl, daughter of an indulgent father and adored protege of convent nuns. At times of most severe stress, when reality makes its most persistent and unwelcome demands on Mary, it is this girl-child who determines and controls Mary's behaviour, completely overwhelming her adult faculties of judgment and perception. The girl-child, freed by morphine from the restrictive terms of reality, lives in an insular world of narcissistic gratification. Mary's remembered childhood dreams of nunhood and a career as a concert pianist are representative facets of the fantasy that fulfilled the desires of the young daughter Mary and now continues to determine the needs of the middle-aged mother and wife Mary Tyrone. When Mary retreats from her immediate environment and is enveloped in the revitalized sensations of archaic experience, her husband and sons are effectively excluded from her consciousness, or function only as fantasized agents in that long past life. Until morphine has wholly supplied her means of escape from crisis and stress, Mary exploits the concern of her sons and husband for her health, and their own needs for her affection, and elicits from them the stimuli required for perpetration of her fantasies by reshaping them into parental figures of the past that offer her gratification.

The most powerful figures in the girl's world are, of course, parental. Her father has tangible and potent presence in her consciousness as a figure of beneficence, offering her special recognition as a unique and beautiful child. The close relationship between Mary and her father is regarded with a stern eye by a watchful mother. In the charming, simplistic language of a schoolgirl, Mary describes her father's indulgence and her mother's reaction:

"I'm afraid he spoiled me dreadfully. My mother didn't. She was very pious and strict. I think she was a little jealous. She didn't approve of my marrying--especially an actor. I think she hoped I would become a nun. She used to scold my father."[1]

Mary's close association of her mother's disapproval of the intimate liaison between father and daughter with notions of marriage and celibacy suggests the erotic nature of the child's attraction to her father. That the most powerful maternal emblem in Mary's mind is a Virgin Mary whose chief attribute is the forgiveness she will offer for crimes committed, underscores the guilt feelings that accompany Mary's sexual attraction to her father and reveals her fear of maternal disapprobation. Her fantasy of religiously-inspired celibacy fulfills the girl's need for the protection and approval of a strong feminine parental figure who can forgive her her erotic feelings for her father, and protect her from fresh arousal of those feelings. Her hunger for recognition and applause as a special and perfect child is gratified by the fantasy of achieving distinction as a pianist and, indeed, the applause is received as an erotic gift, an acceptable substitute for sexual response from her father. Mary's marriage to Tyrone is an

1 Eugene O'Neill, Long Day's Journey into Night (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1956) p. 114. All subsequent references to this play will pertain to this edition.

extension of this same fantasy-cluster. Mary's memories of her wedding day are as clear and meticulous in detail as if she were watching herself in a mirror, seeing the world reflect her own sense of her virginal, unspoiled beauty and affirming her privileged position. The costumed nobleman inspired romantic dreams, and Tyrone's age enhanced his potential as a surrogate father, a father who was a more acceptable stimulus to sexual feelings, and who willingly offered appreciation of her adoring, child-like femininity. Even after thirty-five years of marriage, Mary's vision of Tyrone still suffers impairment from her adolescent fantasy. Her continual comparison of Tyrone to her father, her criticisms of his stinginess and her delight in remembering her father's generosity cruelly deny Tyrone significance independent of his role in his wife's adolescent dream world.

The world-view of the daughter pampered by an attractive father and frightened by a disapproving mother have withstood the years, and they continue to influence the behaviour and perceptions of the middle-aged woman. She senses a similarity between the sound of Tyrone's snores and the message of the foghorn calling her back from her golden dream world to the perils and conflicts of waking reality; her move to the silence of the spare room is a retreat from reminders of the actuality of her sexual relationship to Tyrone, because that relationship is one which inflicts painful guilt. From the little girl's perspective, Tyrone is father, jealously guarded by a stern mother. Even her son Edmund's maleness presents a threat to the child Mary's peace. In the last scene of the play, when Edmund grabs her arm and pleads his helplessness and his need for her care, she replies:

"You must not try to touch me. You must not try to hold me. It isn't right, when I am hoping to be a nun." (Act IV, p. 174)

A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions develop the theme of incestuous feeling between parent and child, but in this play the mother's continued and persistent rejection of her son and stubborn denial of the seriousness of his illness, has its deepest roots in another ground.[1] Mary's chief gratification lies in eliciting an affirmative parental response from those around her, legitimizing her position as adored and protected child. Jamie, with his charming, alcoholic incompetence, and Edmund, with symptoms of serious infirmity, are rivals threatening her child-like position, and making intense demands that she assume maternal functions that offer her no gratification. Mary ~~seems~~ concern over Edmund's illness as a subtraction from concern for her own ever-precarious health and the sum of attention paid her, and stamps her foot in frustration, indulges in explosions of temper or tremulous tearfulness to assert her archaic needs. Behind Mary's nervous hyperactivity lies a consuming fear of loss of parental affirmation and protection. This child-like fear leads her to uncontrollable and irrational behaviour that frustrates her husband and sons in their attempts to approach her as husband and sons.

O'Neill's honest, public treatment of the painful subject of his mother's addiction tends to overshadow equally important aspects

1 In A Touch of the Poet there is a significant shift in the emphasis of this scene--a scene which recurrs in all these last plays. Essentially, the image presented in all four plays is of the ailing child demanding maternal ministrations from a parental figure. In the three plays that follow Long Day's Journey the scene is powerfully erotic, and the sexual significance of the filial appeal and the mother's response is clearly established as emanating from both mother and child. In

of her characterization in Long Day's Journey, aspects which relate both directly and indirectly to O'Neill's own experience and contribute to the fundamental myths which influenced his art and consciousness. First, there is Mary's position in the family as the inadequate wife and ineffectual mother, and the implicit suggestion that her very weakness betrays the men of the family, sending all the Tyrones into a torturous re-enactment of a traumatic past. Such suggestions of betrayal are not fully explored in Long Day's Journey. O'Neill, at this point, may have been unwilling to confront the implications of his portrait of his mother. More Stately Mansions, with its powerful, treacherous feminine personalities, reaches deeper into this area of O'Neill's consciousness.

Secondly, there are elements in Mary Tyrone's personality which reflect the playwright's own experience. Morphine functions in Mary's life as alcohol did in O'Neill's. The drug is a vehicle for Mary's escape from disturbing facets of her relationship with her husband: the point at which she leaves the conjugal bed and retreats to the celibate, adolescent atmosphere of the spare bedroom and the moment at which the need for morphine becomes intolerable co-incide. O'Neill, too, had difficulty sustaining intimate physical and emotional relationships with his sexual partners, and drunkenness offered him an easy escape from personal commitment. And Mary's

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A Touch of the Poet Sara's motherly visit to the bed-ridden Simon culminates in sexual intercourse. In Long Day's Journey, however, Mary's frigid response to Edmund's apparently innocuous touch is inappropriate, and nowhere in the play does O'Neill suggest that her retreat from Edmund's offer of intimacy has any motivation beyond her own involvement in adolescent notions of purity.

fantasy of genius and the applause of an approving audience is one in which O'Neill participates. Apart from the obvious parallel of the stage and audience being involved in both Mary's fantasy and O'Neill's real vocation, there is another analogy that can be identified. Mary's image of her own genius and triumph focuses on her ability as a pianist and in the last scene of the play she returns to the piano. But her hands have long been crippled by arthritis (the severity of the condition is dubious, because it becomes a facile excuse for the continued prescriptions of morphine) and her awkward fingers cannot respond to her inward dream of virtuosity. She plays "with a forgetful, stiff-fingered groping, as if an awkward schoolgirl were practising the piece for the first time" (Act IV, p. 170). O'Neill's hands were important to his genius, too, for he had discovered early in his career that the only method of composition that worked for him was writing out his plays in longhand. Perhaps the tragic disparity between Mary's fantasy of her triumphant performance at the piano and the reality of her awkward playing was one which O'Neill feared in his own life: the crippled, impotent fingers must have been an evocative symbol for the playwright, for, while he wrote Long Day's Journey, his own hands were afflicted with the increasingly severe tremours that made it difficult even to control a pencil. In any case, the play reserves the tragedy for Mary. Edmund is allowed real poetic talent while his mother must suffer the emptiness of her dreams.

Tyrone is eager for Mary's recovery, but is incapable of responding to his wife and evidence of her affliction with straightforward, uninhibited sympathy. He approaches the subject of her

addiction with extreme hesitation, always sidestepping it as if it were some exotic virus, the cause of which is incomprehensible to the layman. He is similarly unable to respond freely and appropriately to his sons and their needs. He is aware of his failures to provide for his family's needs either emotionally or materially; he is stung and defenceless in the face of Mary's repeated accusations of his inadequacy; he can appreciate the ludicrousness of his choice of sanitorium for Edmund, yet he is helpless to alter his position. Why is a man of such impressive strength and resilience unable to honestly confront and command his life?

Again the answer lies in the shape of radical experiences of early life. Like Mary, Tyrone is under the demonstrable influence of a ghost of childhood in situations of acute stress. Permanently fixed and powerfully operative in his consciousness are the sensations and experiences of a ten year old boy deserted by his father and evicted from the security of his home. He was forced, in the interests of survival, to become his mother's mate and his siblings' father overnight.

"Twice we were evicted from the miserable hovel we called home, with my mother's few sticks of furniture thrown out in the street, and my mother and sisters crying. I cried, too, though I tried hard not to, because I was the man of the family. At ten years old! There was no more school for me. I worked twelve hours a day in a machine shop . . . ." (Act IV, p. 148)

Tyrone has maintained this original commitment, along with its accompanying values of ambition, thrift, energy, throughout his life. The fearful vulnerability of the dispossessed boy is a persistent, nagging threat to the peace of the grown up Tyrone and he compensates, as the small boy compensated, by firmly aligning himself with

established principles of order and belief (God, Irish Catholicism, optimism) in an effort to achieve control over a hostile environment, and approval from a world that seemed indifferent to his needs. The agents of dispossession were potently active in the ten year old's world, and are still at work in the world of the aged actor. Mary's relapse, her withdrawal from affectionate companionship into bitterness and accusing hostility, is a warning signal to Tyrone, portending a repeat of that early scene of deprivation. Even the sounds of Edmund's and Jamie's talk and laughter offstage in the first act arouse inordinate suspicion and resentment, only scantily clothed in good humour.

"It's a secret confab they don't want me to hear, I suppose. I'll bet they're cooking up some new scheme to touch the Old Man." (Act I, p. 15)

Tyrone's relationship to his sons is largely founded on these archaic feelings of distrust and suspicion, created by childhood experiences of privation. An unreliable father, a mother whose chief concern was getting food on the table, offered little emotional sustenance to a boy hungry for attention and security. Eviction, exile from the safety of home, was a real and constant threat in young Tyrone's life, and persists as a still powerful fear in old age. His life, even at sixty-five and in prosperity, is peopled by rivals for the little security there is available, those subversive agents who seek to separate him from his guarded treasures. Mary, Edmund and Jamie all accuse Tyrone of having jealously interrupted the natural formation of bonds between the mother and her young children in order to reserve Mary wholly for himself. Even in light of the vindictive tone of some of these indictments, there is an element of credibility in them, and

a suggestion that the admiration and devotion of Tyrone's young wife were too precious and too necessary to hazard sharing them with anyone else.

The expressions of insecurity and suspicion in O'Neill's own life reflect some of Tyrone's feelings. When his second marriage faltered, O'Neill was irrationally, vindictively suspicious of Agnes' attempts to achieve for herself and their children a fair financial settlement. Schemes to "touch the Old Man" were something O'Neill feared as much as Tyrone did. And throughout his relationship with Agnes, O'Neill had been extravagantly jealous of Agnes' attachment to her family, and unable to find room in the marriage for its progeny, Shane and Oona. Indeed, the portrait of Tyrone seems, in some aspects, to be more of a self-portrait than a characterization of James O'Neill, for there is no real evidence to support the descriptions of Tyrone's stingy, ungenerous attitude towards his sons. Rather, the elder O'Neill appears to have treated Jamie and Eugene fairly, even magnanimously, in money matters. And the image of James dragging Mary away from her young sons is a product of the myth of James' selfish possessiveness--a myth possibly initiated by Ella to ease her guilt over the death of Edmund, and certainly perpetrated by Eugene. Whatever degree of truth the myth held in relation to James O'Neill, it was equally relevant to Eugene's own behaviour as a parent.

Tyrone's image of his mother endures in his mind: "A fine, brave, sweet woman. There never was a braver or finer." And this enduring portrait may offer some indirect clue to Tyrone's reluctance to refer openly and specifically to Mary's addiction, or even to drug addiction in anyone else. (In Act IV, p. 135, Tyrone includes

Rossetti in an angry attack on the authors in Edmund's library. A "dope fiend," he calls him, and even this distant allusion arouses immediate guilt in his mind, for he has, by some interior, private logic, linked Mary to a world of "morbidness and filth.") When Tyrone married, he married a young girl innocently coquettish and blushingly pure. Drug addiction is a nasty, intolerable smear on the image of woman in Tyrone's life--an insult to the giddy admiring schoolgirl who became Tyrone's wife, and to her predecessor, the strong, sweet woman who became the little boy's mate when father left. Finally, the resistance of these fantasized images of feminine partners to the contamination of reality deprive Mary of her husband's understanding and support as she wages her lonely battle. In Tyrone's eyes, open and honest reference to his wife's addiction seems to implicate her in the exposure of something foul and impure, an illicit sexual advance, and incurs the risk of arousing her disapproval, and suffering the loss of her devotion. O'Neill's own public attitude towards his mother was not dissimilar to Tyrone's towards Mary. Agnes Boulton remembers that before she met her mother-in-law, O'Neill offered her charming descriptions of Ella, characterizing her as kind, gentle, delicate, devoted to her family, and obviously avoiding the deeper feelings he harboured towards the remote, neurotic mother who inspired feminine figures in his later plays.

The young Tyrone's choice of the stage as a vocation is emblematic of the boy's ungratified hunger for attention and affirmation. In "real life" the boy achieved satisfying feelings of omnipotence and authority over an untrustworthy world by assuming a parental role and probably was praised for his precocious efforts.

The talented young actor, holding centre stage as his own unalienable property was living the boy's dream of omnipotence and special privilege. The sensations nurtured by the applause of an approving audience are similar in kind to the narcissistic advantages Mary achieves through perpetrating her fantasy of the child protege winning distinction as a concert pianist. Tyrone's verified record of Edwin Booth's praise of his talent is carefully preserved as a memento of potential genius, and is surely tucked away in the same attic trunk that stores Mary's wedding dress. Both the dress and the slip of paper are signals of superiority and special rights; both are external mirrors that reflect interior feelings of grandness and power. Tyrone's persuasive confession and justification of his life's secrets in Act Four is a subtle encore, calling for an echo of the old applause. Edmund responds with grudging but satisfactory admiration, leaving Tyrone's guarded fantasy of unrealized genius intact.[1]

Jamie and Edmund, too, have their own ego-ideals of special distinction; each perceives in himself the germ of great literary genius. Jamie's alcoholism has arrested his career at the level of publications in the school newspaper and conveniently relieved him of the responsibility of testing and realizing his self-image. In fact, all four Tyrones have suffered severe interruptions in the development of their special talents, and those interruptions have shielded the

1 Edmund himself, in spite of the hostility he frequently expresses towards his father, may win some measure of satisfaction from feeling his father's projected image of distinction affirmed. The relationship between Sara and Con in A Touch of the Poet is in part an exploration of the degree of the child's participation in the parent's fantasy world of genius or heroism. And, in More Stately Mansions, Simon finds gratification in the notion that his mother is somehow different, uncommon, possessor of a poet's soul. With the parent's special position legitimized, the child shares in its benefits.

interior visions of genius and omnipotence from the critical eyes of a world so often unwilling to affirm the grand virtues of a self-portrait. The starved bud of genius, unopened but potentially brilliant, is a resonant theme in these last O'Neill plays, a theme which receives its fullest treatment in A Touch of the Poet and its sequel, More Stately Mansions.

Years of dissipation and self-destructive cynicism have wasted Jamie's life. A profound and malignant distrust of the world and of himself has long since sapped him of the energy needed to confront the pressing, discordant facts of his life and the lives of those around him. His mother's addiction and relapse are deeply disturbing to him, yet he is incapable of the kind of unguarded, intimately affectionate response to Mary that would be supportive and encouraging in her struggle. His love for his brother is real, but Edmund's illness provokes an ambivalent, uncertain reaction from Jamie. There is a marked duplicity of feeling in his attitude towards his brother and appropriate concern for Edmund's health is darkly shadowed by hostility and irrational guilt. The sum of these feelings is an inability to communicate any real feeling to Edmund in his time of need; Broadway slang, clumsy optimism and cruel cynicism are his only routes to a subject that demands friendship and sensitivity. Jamie is locked in a rigid posture of careless indifference hiding desperate feelings of guilt and hostility that originated in experiences far removed from the immediate reality of the play. The crises of this present day awaken past situations of conflict which Jamie compulsively relives, unable to break away from exaggerated, self-destructive patterns of perception and behaviour that make impossible a free and

honest commitment to the people around him.

Jamie's world view has never developed beyond that of the abandoned, hungry, injured child; it has never incorporated attitudes outside this narrow range of feeling. His continue adherence to this perspective is manifest in all the relations of his adult life. As a child he suffered an early exile from his mother's care when Mary returned to Tyrone, and the short time he did spend with his mother was played against an impermanent, constantly changing backdrop of one-night stands on theatrical tours. The arrival of brother Eugene, and later of brother Edmund, made competition keen for the little maternal attention that was available from a mother who preferred to be a child and the scant security offered by the life of the intinerant family. Rivalry with infant Eugene, and the baby's subsequent death, left a scar of guilt on Jamie's mind that festers under his self-castigation and his feelings of his own worthlessness. The boy Jamie tried for a time in childhood to win back the approval and protection of his parents which that fantasy of his crime and guilt told him he had lost through his own misdeeds. He worked hard at boarding school and was well-liked by his teachers, but his exile was not terminated, and his hunger for re-instatement and recognition became all the more intense and enduring for its lack of fulfilment. And his mother's insistent recollections of the loss of her second son could only aggravate and re-inforce the guilt Jamie felt over his infant brother's death.

Even at thirty-three, Jamie still perceives the males in his environment as rivals for maternal love, as the small boy's

jealous father and sickly infant brothers were rivals. It is with real and reawakened hatred that Jamie spits out "Mama's baby, Papa's pet!" at Edmund, whose illness is a primary catalyst in redrawing the picture of the unhealthy, helpless baby doted on by mother, to the disadvantage of the boy Jamie. His vicious accusations of his father's stinginess are obsessive and endless ("What a bastard to have for a father!"), comprising nearly the whole of communication between himself and Tyrone, even in the face of the much more pressing circumstances of the present, Mary's relapse and Edmund's tuberculosis. The antagonism between Jamie and Tyrone, the perpetual battle of wits, is based on an old rivalry now stimulated on each side by Mary's withdrawal from family life and the fact of Edmund's illness.

Jamie wears failure like a badge of distinction, ostentatiously exhibiting his incompetence. The display of helplessness and dissipation is calculated to evoke recognition--concern or condemnation--from those around him. Liquor loosens his tongue and gives it license to express deep-rooted hostilities and aggressiveness. These cruel attacks in effect betray their perpetrator, for Jamie suffers horrible remorse, replaying the early chapter in his life when the rivalry of father and baby brother inspired unacceptable thoughts of hatred and aggression, which seemed to him to culminate in the baby's death and his mother's grief and withdrawal. The hostility Jamie feels towards Mary is that of a rejected, abandoned child towards an unresponsive mother who is steadfastly and frustratingly indifferent to his display of helplessness. When evidence of Mary's relapse has accumulated, Jamie pays a visit to Mamie Burns' brothel, where he finds a piano-playing whore (whose musical inclin-

ations lend her subtle kinship to aspiring pianist Mary) to take a role in his re-enactment of archaic conflicts. Fat Violet's obesity, and the absence of rivals for her attention, offer pounds of yielding, sympathetic maternal flesh, and opportunity for the fulfilment of previously denied infantile erotic needs.[1] Her profession offers a fine and stinging vengeance on Mary's indifference to his demands. Unfortunately, Fat Violet cannot conform wholly to Jamie's script, for she has needs of her own. Sexual intercourse destroys Jamie's fantasy of the sympathetic mother comforting the aggrieved child, and he accepts the whore's invitation with cynical, superior indifference.

Edmund and Jamie share the same parents, and Edmund's early history is not dissimilar to Jamie's. O'Neill has loaned his Christian name to the dead brother Eugene and this affords O'Neill-Edmund a kind of participation in the recreated scenes of childhood which involve the infant. Eugene was abandoned as Jamie was abandoned, deserted in his illness as Edmund, the intended agent of O'Neill's consciousness in the play, is now sick and denied maternal care. These implicit analogues are persuasive, engendering the complexities of sensations and relationships associated with the original incidents. Memories of baby Eugene's helplessness inspire in Mary the very feelings of anxiety and remorse over unfulfilled maternal responsibilities that Edmund, with his present infirmity, seeks but fails to

1 In A Moon for the Misbegotten, Jim Tyrone re-enacts this same scene, finally achieving the gratification he seeks in Long Day's Journey. He successfully casts Josie Hogan in the role he wants Fat Violet to assume. The two women, whore and farmgirl, share at least one identifiable attribute which makes each of them suitable mother candidates: neither of them are in demand sexually, i.e. there are no male rivals on the scene in the form of father or brother representatives to interfere

elicit from her. O'Neill has invoked the ghost of the dead infant who bears his name, and shares his own and Edmund's early experiences of maternal indifference and male rivalry and insecurity. Baby Eugene's fate seems to be both a catalyst to renewal of archaic conflicts involving the whole family, and a sensationally dramatic statement of the seriousness of Edmund's present condition. Indeed, O'Neill had a penchant for dramatic statements of his needs. In the short letter to Carlotta quoted in Chapter One, he appeals for her immediate return and threatens her with horrible remorse if she does not recognize and respond to his needs. "I am sick and I will surely die without you," he wrote.

Edmund is as anxious as the rest of the family for Mary's recovery, yet he can offer her no effective encouragement in her contest with morphine and powerful fantasies. His fixed and unbending posture of helplessness throughout the play is his legacy from the rejcted child who is both the deceased Eugene and the infant Edmund deserted by an unhealthy mother and left to the care of a hired nurse. The legacy demands the single-targeted but ineffectual pressure that Edmund constantly exerts on his mother. The compulsive nature of his relationship to Mary disallows the kind of intimacy which would be sensitive to the causes of her misery and would perhaps be ultimately ameliorative.

Like his father, Edmund is reluctant to confront the fact of Mary's addiction, and he is stubbornly defiant in the face of

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with Jamie-Jim's erotic fulfilment. Indeed, Josie's father, who has paternal signigicance for Jim, even works to promote the relationship between his friend and his daughter.

evidence of her relapse. His present defiance is clearly a repetition of his childhood reaction to positive information concerning his mother's affliction. He recalls that scene for Mary:

"Papa and Jamie decided they couldn't hide it from me any more. Jamie told me. I called him a liar! I tried to punch him in the nose." (Act III, p. 118)

This violent rejection of unwelcome reality protected the boy from fears of insecurity, from the threat of absolute loss of control over his mother and the recognition and acceptance she could give him. Acknowledgement of this truth, which his own perceptions must have validated, would have contradicted the boy's gratifying fantasy of infantile omnipotence, and would have introduced a dangerous and hostile element into his notion of his relationship to his mother. But Edmund's denial of his mother's condition--a condition which is painfully visible to the other members of the family--is perhaps not fully justified by the information supplied in the play. An unwillingness to face the first evidence of her relapse is understandable, but his determined refusal to confront the mounting evidence of her surrender to morphine becomes almost a curious eccentricity. The only conclusion the reader can draw is that Edmund sees in Mary's addiction more to be feared than O'Neill will allow to be fully expressed. Only when Simon Harford in More Stately Mansions is faced with his mother's desperate retreat into a nightmarish, fairy-tale world of terrible and powerful sexuality are some of the implications for Edmund of Mary's addiction revealed. There is a surfeit of intense emotion generated by Edmund's confrontation with his mother's relapse that is not fully accountable in the sketchily-drawn character of Edmund. In any case, the adult Edmund's persistent

appeals for Mary's sympathy and his refusal to acknowledge the fact of her relapse are delivered in the voice of the boy trying to maintain belief in his authority over sources of sustenance. In Scene ii of Act II, when Mary's relapse is undeniably real, when her mindless chattiness and extravagant irrationality are positive witnesses to the morphine's control, Edmund steadfastly refuses to recognize her true condition: "She can still stop. I'll talk to her" (Act II, p. 78). He continues to hold an unjustifiable belief in his own power to win her back, to make her Mother again. The belief is unjustifiable because his only mode of approach is that of the neglected child, reproachful and demanding, and Mary can only respond with defiance to such an attack. The context of the play gives Edmund's needs a privileged aura of undeniable merit. Edmund effects a legitimate regression to child-like helplessness--legitimate because the terms of the drama offer him the unalienable rights of the infirm. No such objective, factual support is given to Mary's attempts to return to a more satisfying period of life through her charming, schoolgirl behaviour and projection of youthful innocence. Neither can Jamie's lovable, alcoholic incompetence and helplessness win for him the real claims on the world's attention and concern Edmund has. But these regressive tendencies in all three characters flow together at one level where they join the thematic current of fantastic genius in the play. The dream of literary excellence that Edmund sustains within gains for him the same narcissistic advantages that Mary achieves through her fantasized triumph on the concert stage--advantages which we have seen to be regressive, and sexually significant.

Edmund hears the same approving applause, signalling acceptance and power, that echoes in the private ears of Mary and Tyrone. And Edmund's distinction, like the talents of his parents and brother, is carefully preserved, like a delicate hothouse bud, from cold reality, protected from a world that does not guarantee recognition of the unique value of his gifts or the propriety of his needs. Tuberculosis, like arthritis, alcoholism, fear of poverty, has interrupted a career that has so far been remarkable for its potential rather than for its achievements. O'Neill himself adds bricks to the defenses constructed around Edmund's fantasy of poetic genius, ensuring that it remains gratifying fantasy, protected from critical eyes, by lending safeguards to Edmund's lengthy indulgence in poetic language in Act IV. The scene directions controlling the tone of the speech are full of escape routes:

> When he speaks it is as if he were deliberately giving way to drunkenness and seeking to hide behind a maudlin manner. . . . He laughs with maudlin appreciation. . . . Then with alcoholic talkativeness. (Act IV, p. 152-3)

Neither Edmund nor O'Neill will accept responsibility for the emotional words of a drunken consumptive, but even Tyrone's qualified praise is plainly welcome.

With the exception of A Moon for the Misbegotten, these last plays treat directly with characters burdened by ego-ideals of artistic achievement and fantasies of thwarted, unrealized genius. In his own career, O'Neill expressed considerable confidence during and after the composition of each play--a confidence in his own ability which seems divergent to the reluctance these would-be artists feel in the testing of their genius. But O'Neill's preoccupation with this

recurrent fantasy of wasted talents strongly suggests that in the late 1930's and early forties, the period during which these plays were written, he was experiencing inward doubts as to his real creative accomplishments, and that he may have felt some portion of his genius to be still untapped, unrevealed, possibly through his own unwillingness to confront and test it. The existence of these feelings would help to account for the long hours and great energy he devoted to his work when ill-health made writing so difficult.

As a presence in the play, Edmund, with his sickly pallor and persistent cough, is powerful and catalytic; as a character he is somehow not much more than a cough and a sallow complexion. The probing, exploratory honesty with which O'Neill treats the other characters and which makes them vital and real, has not been applied with such rigour to Edmund. He appears to be so much a victim of the ferment of hostilities within the family, weak and helpless as he now is, that he is rendered almost wholly passive, except for his confrontation with his father in the last act as he becomes more and more drunk. His essential passivity seems to obscure the operative determinants of his behaviour at this time of crisis, and Long Day's Journey offers less direct, concrete information about O'Neill's understanding of his own personality than it does about his consciousness of the other personalities in his family. This may seem to limit the autobiographical commitment of the play, but I think, rather, that O'Neill's identification with the themes of the drama is diffuse and not measurable solely in terms of his apparent surrogate. Jamie O'Neill played a major role in O'Neill's life, offering a model for behaviour. The adolescent Eugene's life-style was so strikingly

imitative of his older brother that we can conclude that parts of Jamie became irrevocably parts of O'Neill. With this in mind, the portrait of Jamie Tyrone takes on far greater significance in terms of the author's self-examination. I have noted areas in which the presentation of the playwright's parents is as much a projection of his own consciousness as characterization of James and Ella O'Neill. And the tones and shades of the family portrait in Long Day's Journey are revelatory of the mode of perception with which O'Neill saw his family. O'Neill's presentation of Edmund's posture of passive helplessness, however much it makes indistinct the outline of his personality, itself reveals the nature of his expectations of the other members of the family. I have noted above that O'Neill's choice of this juncture of experience for the temporal setting of the play affords his own agent advantages which the other characters lack. Edmund has realistic, not unreasonable needs which are logically determined by his present condition, and which are not fulfilled by the other family members. Their behaviour under these circumstances has powerful significance for Edmund, and for O'Neill, because the situation represents a re-enactment of an unresolved struggle for survival first played in his earliest years. O'Neill's own infantile sickliness and acute needs, and his father's unwillingness to give and share, and his brother's hostility are the concomitant themes of his retrospective view of the first chapter of his experience. Until these still unquiet themes are confronted, reconciled, and put to rest they will continue to dominate the later chapters of his life and work, and prevent his escape from the chaos and pain they inflict upon him.

In Mary the affliction that infects the whole family is most easily diagnosed. Morphine is like a black ink dropped into clear water, slowly overwhleming and impairing the clarity and integrity of the liquid--its course plainly traceable. Before the drug has wholly coloured and darkened Mary's consciousness, she is cognisant of a duplicity of self, of opposing elements within her own mind, and poignantly aware of the ultimate outcome of the conflict.

"None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever." (Act II, p. 61)

"True self" is the relating, out-going part of her personality which would freely connect itself with both the problems and riches of present reality and would reject the restriction and control of the past. At the end of Act II, when Mary has succeeded in ridding herself of her family's disturbing presence, she experiences conflicting feelings:

"It's so lonely here."
Then her face hardens into bitter self-contempt.
"You're lying to yourself again. You wanted to get rid of them. Their contempt and disgust aren't pleasant company. You're glad they're gone."
She gives a little despairing laugh.
"Then Mother of God, why do I feel so lonely?" (Act II, p. 95)

Two voices speak within Mary: one emanating from all the pressures of archaic experiences that seek to recreate gratifying, fantastic scenes of the past and to eliminate all the prohibitive elements from Mary's environment; the other emanating from the part of Mary that suffers the excruciating loneliness and isolation of this fantasy world and, if in control, would reject its fantasized images for alliance with the real people around her.

What this internal division of personality finally means is a loss of autonomy, abnegation of the rights of free, uninhibited intercourse with the real world. Part of Tyrone recognizes the absurdity of his choice of sanitorium for Edmund, and how his thriftiness is wholly inappropriate to the present financial situation of the family. But his obsessive fear of the poorhouse, a lesson learned from long passed, now irrelevant experience, deprives him of the energy and capacity to behave in a manner less injurious to family relations. He say, " . . . once you've learned a lesson, it's hard to unlearn it. You have to look for bargains." (Act IV, p. 148) Tyrone's early commitment to a belief in the untrustworthiness of the world, reinforced by the scene of eviction and his mother's furniture on the street, casts the characters of his later life in the roles played by the chief figures of his childhood. This repetitive script erects an insuperable barrier between him and his family, impelling him to adopt an un-giving posture which frustrates them and angers them, and denies him their love. Tyrone is afraid to offer himself (or his money) to those closest to him; he cannot trust them not to reject or betray him as he was once before rejected and betrayed.

Jamie's confession in Act IV reveals a personality similarly tortured by division--a mind out of control of its own destiny. He wants to feel love for his brother, and tries to express acceptable feelings of concern and devotion, telling Edmund, "I love your guts. I'd do anything for you." (Act IV, p. 163) But the expressions of hatred that emanate from his alcoholic confusion are stronger. From another part of his mind come the reawakened hostilities of his childhood. His jealousy and need for vengeance grow from

the child rejected by mother seemingly in favour of father and a new son. Jamie knows that his brother's invalid condition merits concern and affection, but he is overwhelmed by the energy of the child's renewed anger and infantile logic: " . . . it was your being born that started Mama on dope. I know that's not your fault, but all the same, God damn you, I can't help hating your guts--!" (Act IV, p. 166) Jamie's sympathy for his brother is overruled by the urgency of the archaic conflicts which have been stimulated by the correspondences between the present situation (Mary's relapse and Edmund's illness) and the trauma of childhood.

When Edmund leaves the house after Act III and Mary's latest rejection of his appeals for sympathy, he takes a walk through the thickening fog. He describes his journey to his father:

> "The fog was where I wanted to be. Halfway down the path you can't see this house. You'd never know it was here. . . . I couldn't see but a few feet ahead. . . . Everything looked and sounded unreal. Nothing was what it is. That's what I wanted--to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue and life can hide from itself. . . . It felt damned peaceful." (Act IV, p. 131)

The insular cocoon of the fog offers peace; but as well it means separation from truth and from other human beings. And, however much it nourishes projections of fantasy, it impairs perception, clothing reality in a deadening white shroud. Mary finds relief in the fog, too, and Edmund compares the effect of the morphine on her to the feelings of isolation and estrangement experienced in a bank of fog. The deadening of the senses through alcohol promises a similar form of escape and effects a comparable alienation of father from son, brother from brother.

In all the Tyrones the events of this August day reawaken radical influences in their personalities, influences which

make it impossible to carry on the business of living together. Deep-rooted fears and hostilities are called to the surface and exercise a cruel tyranny over the four inhabitants of the house, directing them in desperate re-enactment of futile, destructive scenarios of old experience. O'Neill is acutely sensitive to the influence of archaic determinants on behaviour and personality. Long Day's Journey is openly aware of the relationship between early experience and ultimate destiny. The play is clearly retrospective in its investigative direction, unlocking closed doors of the past, one after the other, exposing ancient but still unresolved conflicts. The first step backwards was for the middle-aged playwright, ostensibly independent of his long-dead family, to return to a period of his own life in which he was still very much involved in family relationships. But, from 1912, the configuration of the dramatic events demands further regressive motion, not only to the first chapters of this family's life, but beyond, to the early years of Tyrone and Mary, resurrecting unknown ancestors and never-forgotten sequences of experience. It is tempting, and perhaps fruitful, to suggest that O'Neill's remarkable capacity for insightful, cohesive observation of the complex causal relationships between past experiences and present behaviour may have grown in part from his experiences with his mother's addiction, and the manifestly regressive effect morphine had on her consciousness. Certainly it is Mary's relapse and withdrawal into the past, that provide the first impetus behind the retrospective direction of the play.

But, however daring is O'Neill in his exploration of the buried sources and origins of his life, there remain darkened,

shadowed areas in the family portrait he draws. One of these obscure, only vaguely suggested areas is the image of his father as hero, genius, matinee idol, and the relationship between Edmund and Tyrone, and O'Neill and his own father. The dramatic progress of Long Day's Journey is punctuated with outright expressions of the hostility Edmund feels towards his father, and, as well, with O'Neill's uncompromising, almost vengeful depictions of Tyrone's stinginess. There is clear evidence of the rivalry between father and both sons, and the jealousy Mary excites in all three men. At the same time, however, there are marked congruencies of fantasy life between Tyrone and Edmund. It is very likely that O'Neill's (and Edmund's) adventures in South America were an attempt to win the approval and acceptance of a father who seemed unresponsive and remote through emulation of the tales of hardship he had so often heard from him. And the uncompromising qualities of O'Neill's portrait of his father relent somewhat in the fourth act when Tyrone is permitted his lengthy self-justification and plea for sympathy. A Touch of the Poet, in its presentation of the relationship between Con and Sara Melody, extends this aspect of relationship between parent and child, and examines the degree to which the child participates in the parent's fantasies. In that play, and in its sequel, dependence on a parent's "crazy dreams" for psychological sustenance elicits from a strong, pragmatic woman an irrational, debilitating response that results in loss of autonomy and self-control, and nearly in tragedy.

In Long Day's Journey the precise nature of Edmund's relationship to Mary remains undefined. O'Neill seems at this point unaware of the compulsive nature of the son's attitude towards his

mother. In spite of Edmund's repeated, persistent appeals, just what it is he wants from his mother is never specified. Edmund's irrational response to ascertainable evidence of Mary's relapse can be explained only partially in terms of a child-like belief in his own power over sources of sustenance. The stage directions describe Mary's girlish charm with obvious appreciation--an appreciation expressed by the playwright but to which his surrogate is steadfastly immune. These unfulfilled suggestions of a sexual attraction between mother and son find more complete expression in the walled garden of childhood in More Stately Mansions, peopled with the kings and courtesans of a mother's fantasies.

The urgency of the emotions renewed by the playwright's examination of this critical period of his life is confirmed by the fact that all four of O'Neill's last major drama attack, from one direction or another, the experiences of early adulthood. In each of these four plays there is at least one central character embroiled in the conflicts of establishing adult identity and achieving independence of powerful family influences.

The Dispossessed

Long Day's Journey into Night gives the chief figures and themes of O'Neill's consciousness identity and form intimately linked to the personalities that dominated his life. The play offers so much information about these personalities and his own self-awareness that it is like a bright light shining on the plays that preceded it, and those that followed. And at the same time, it raised for O'Neill problems and conflicts he could not resolve within its compass. The current of creative energy engendered by the writing of Long Day's Journey overflows into the last three major plays he worked with, carrying him to fresh explorations of the dynamics of the family relationships that shaped the lives of the Tyrones. In A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions Tyrone, Mary, Jamie and Edmund find different expression and, in some ways, fuller expression.

Certain aspects of A Touch of the Poet are both structurally and dramatically parallel to aspects of Long Day's Journey. The action of each play is confined within a sixteen hour period and within one room. Although A Touch of the Poet introduces several peripheral characters, the principal figures of the drama are Con Melody, his wife and daughter. The alcoholic fumes of Long Day's Journey have wafted into the Melody household--in fact, the barroom adjoins the single stage set. Upstairs, demanding care and attention from the women of the family, Simon Harford is an unseen reflection of the tubercular Edmund and he shares Edmund's poetic aspirations. In both

the Tyrone and Melody households family life is gratingly discordant and potentially explosive, and continuously assailed by haunting images of a distant, restless past.

Certain characteristics of A Touch of the Poet indicate that O'Neill may have intended the play, at least originally, as a route of access to his father's world. O'Neill's boyhood was permeated by The Count of Monte Cristo, his father's most popular stage vehicle, and both the melodrama and the noble hero of that play are in some measure reflected in Poet. And while A Touch of the Poet presents a modified, qualified image of the romantic, fearless figure James O'Neill played for so many years to admiring audiences, it also explores James' real background, his "shanty Irish" ancestry. The nineteenth century setting of this drama, and its sequel, is not unprecedented in O'Neill's work; many of his earlier plays departed from contemporary settings. But within the planned nine-play cycle of Possessors Self-Dispossessed, the temporal scene of Poet and More Stately Mansions was significant, for it represented a return to origins and a basis for the intended record of a family's history, from the early nineteenth century to the present day. The extravagant scope of the mammoth, retrospective cycle suggests the intensity of O'Neill's preoccupation with sources, origins, the inheritance of possessors, at this stage in his career.

The materials of the drama, the circumstances to which the characters must respond, are these: the Melodys are in severe financial straits, the grown-up daughter of the family is involved in a sexual relationship, and the day is the anniversary of the battle

of Talavera, scene of the father's greatest success. The Melodys' individual responses to each of these stimuli are determined by archaic attitudes and fantasies which provoke extravagant and sometimes destructive reactions. There are aspects of immediate reality which reawaken patterns of perception and behaviour that have been moulded by experience buried deep in the past, experiences which are, on an objective, logical level, unrelated to the events of this July day in 1828. On a subjective, psychological level, however, the present situation becomes a torturous re-enactment of old conflicts, and the anniversary dinner, a ritualized acting out of by-gone times, plainly states the regressive direction of the play.

At the core of the drama is the development of the grown-up child's sexual relationship with a member of the opposite sex from outside the family co-inciding with a strong call from an archaic fantasy world to the child's parent of the opposite sex. This is a round-about way of saying that the daughter's new sexual experience occurs simultaneously with the father's display of regressive tendencies, but I use such circuitous language in order to make what may seem a rash and unjustifiable assumption: that in Melody O'Neill sees not only his father, but his mother as well, and, more than this, sees himself in the Sara of A Touch of the Poet. That part of O'Neill which expressed admiration of Mary Tyrone's girlish charm and prettiness in appreciative scene descriptions has close kinship to the part of Sara that is attracted to the dashing soldier Melody becomes when he dons his uniform. O'Neill's portrait of Con Melody is an investigation of his father's private world of fantasy (of which we caught a glimpse in Long Day's Journey) and of the influence exerted by his fantasies

on his children. But at the same time, and perhaps on a deeper, less conscious plane, O'Neill is probing the nature of his own relationship to his mother through re-stating the sequence of Mary's retreat from life in Long Day's Journey. Again the parent's withdrawal occurs when the child is undergoing the adjustments involved in the post-adolescent period, but this time those adjustments are cast in a specifically sexual pattern, that is, in the choice of a sexual partner and the formation of adult sexual commitment.

The presentation of Con Melody borrows from Tyrone, from Mary, and from Jamie, too, who was a kind of parental figure in the life of his younger brother. The stage directions that introduce Major Melody describe again Tyrone's erect posture and handsome figure and Jamie's dissipated, wasted countenance. Like Tyrone, Melody can consume large amounts of alcohol without exhibiting conventional signs of intoxication. Like Tyrone, Melody preserves one grand day of triumph in his memory, one moment when a great man smiled and bestowed praise while the world applauded. But the scene of Major Melody, resplendent in his uniform, watched and admired by the whole of Wellington's army, has still another precedent in O'Neill's writing and this is the scene of Mary Tyrone's wedding day. Mary's marvellous wedding gown, her uniform, is tucked away in the attic trunk with Melody's Dragoons coat, preserved from disturbing and decadent contact with present reality. The "touch of the poet" in Melody corresponds to both Mary's and Tyrone's fantasies of musical and dramatic genius, and even more neatly to Edmund's own unrealized literary potential, suggesting that once again through the investigation of parental figures O'Neill revealed something of himself. And, like the Tyrones,

Melody has been victimized by a world that refused to recognize and affirm images of personal superiority: a pregnant peasant girl and a band of conniving lawyers conspired to deprive him of his future and dispossess him of his estate.[1]

Like Mary Tyrone, Con Melody is steadfast in his defiance of reality. The financial situation of the Melody family demands immediate and decisive action, but Con refuses even to recognize that there is a financial predicament or that he has failed to provide for his family, just as Mary defies evidence of the immediacy of Edmund's infirmity and needs. Con maintains his position as gentleman and well-beloved lord of the manor even in the face of such pressing evidence to the contrary as the raucous entrance of O'Dowd, Roche and old Patch Riley. His treatment of Sara is aridly courteous, until her behaviour becomes so manifestly unlady-like that he cannot sustain his gallant pose. He approaches Nora with a pompous condescension befitting the attitude of a nobleman towards his servant. Unable to commit himself to his real position as husband and father, he exploits his relationship to the two women to preserve and perpetrate his fantasy of noble distinction and genteel authority. Melody sees the people around him, even his wife and daughter, through a distorting medium created by his own anxieties and needs, imposing an impenetrable barrier between him and the people they really are. The posture of the well-bred gentleman is ultimately not a satisfactory or fruitful

1 The circumstances of Con's marriage suggest an interesting parallel between Melody and O'Neill. O'Neill's first marriage was similarly necessitated by pregnancy. And, according to Kathleen O'Neill's recollections of their courtship, Eugene appeared to her to be as dashing, romantic and poetic a figure as Con did to Nora.

one for him, nor does the role of the leering, coarse peasant promise to bring him into closer contact with reality. Behind both the Major and the shanty Irish innkeeper is a vulnerable man, helpless to control his own destiny. What are the powerful influences in Melody's personality that press him into these destructive, futile positions and force him to the extremes of behaviour he displays?

In Con Melody O'Neill draws the figure of a man at once ridden by anxieties of rejection and enslaved by his notion of his own omnipotence. The death of Con's mother, almost before his life began, is part of a characteristic image cluster in O'Neill's work, and portends all the fears and conflicts which the deserted child must endure. The forty-five year old Melody's defensive pride is an outgrowth of a decision made early in life regarding the nature of the world: original experience taught the young Con that his environment was essentially untrustworthy, unreliable, even hostile to his needs. His school experiences, as Jamie Creegan describes them, recall a boy anxious for acceptance and love which are repeatedly and cruelly denied him. The adolescent's penchant for duelling arose from a desperate need for self-assertion and vengeance on the representative agents of his deprivation. Even the events of this July day in 1828, so many years after original experiences of rejection, reawaken profound feelings of hostility and the need for vengeance. He shares Mary Tyrone's route of escape from the unwelcome demands of reality by regressing to an earlier period of his life, now perceived through the distortions of fantasy, where he can re-experience feelings of omnipotent authority and narcissistic gratification immediately un-

available to him. When he cannot elicit from those around him the kind of admiring, sustaining response his hunger for security demands, he turns to the mirror, and his own reflected, costumed image, which affirms his dreams of personal grandness and special worth in a way the real world can never approach.

Melody's Byronic pose is calculated to stimulate sympathy for the hero suffering a tragic fate. He presents to Deborah Harford the picture of unfulfilled genius and ruined fortunes, and his mode of seduction is an appeal "for a woman's understanding and loving compassion."[1] He projects his pride in such a way that it becomes a praiseworthy weakness, a lovable incompetence and helplessness that will inspire the kind of protection and care a child deserves. Tyrone presents himself in the same defeated posture of vulnerability and unrealizable potential to Edmund in Act IV of Long Day's Journey and Edmund responds with satisfactory sympathy. But in this play the appeal has a specifically sexual impetus, and its calculation is more plainly exposed. Melody's claims of victimization are clearly unrealistic and unacceptable to O'Neill.

Con's marriage to Nora slips neatly into the pattern of his life. The peasant girl's admiration and unparalleled devotion were indispensable to him, and her pregnancy and low station offered convenient circumstances that made it impossible for him to fulfill in reality the picture of the dashing, brave nobleman who had so vigorous and rewarding a life in fantasy. Melody's approach to all

1 Eugene O'Neill, A Touch of the Poet (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1957), p. 70. All subsequent reference to the play will pertain to this edition.

the women in his life is methodical and calculated. When love-making is called for, it is not a matter of achieving intimacy; rather, it is a question of "savoir-faire" and "romantic fire," the adoption of a guarded pose of playful intensity carefully designed to reveal a basic indifference.

Of all Melody's actions in the play his most desperate are his two attacks on his daughter. Sara's liaison with Simon deeply disturbs Con and elicits from him a variety of extravagant and irrational responses. As the relationship develops, Con is driven to frantic attempts to interrupt it. As he is exiled from his position as the most important male in Sara's world, a violent sexual jealousy is aroused in him. His cruel mockery of Sara's unattractive hands is a vengeful and child-like retaliation. When Sara tells him that he is impotent to alter her attachment to Simon, Con erupts furiously: "You filthy peasant slut! You whore! I'll see you dead first--! By the living God, I'd kill you myself!" (Act III, p. 128) In the last act, when Sara tells him that she has had sexual intercourse with Simon, Melody cannot maintain his air of leering indifference, and he grabs his duelling pistol and aims it at Sara's heart, "his eyes as cold, deadly and merciless as they must have been in his duels of long ago." (Act IV, p. 172) From the perspective of the lonely, alienated child, Melody sees Sara's relationship with Simon as a personal rejection, and he re-enacts the scenes of his adolescence when he struck back at hose who withheld from him the love and acceptance he demanded.

Con's transformation at the end of the play into the

loud, sneering peasant occurs when the "looney" Major's needs finally reach a pitch of intensity that renders them insupportable and unrealizable. His violent collision with reality leads him not to a rational adjustment to its terms, but rather to a new role that promises greater compensations. It is clear that Melody's sudden, wholesale identification with his image of his father, which Sara finds so upsetting, is as much an escape from life as was his noble, gentlemanly posturing. When Sara pleads with him to be the person she wants him to be, and reaches out to him, he reveals a fleeting glimpse of the man hidden behind both the major and the shanty Irish peasant. He . . .

> . . . has been visibly crumbling as he listens until he appears to have no character left in which to hide and defend himself. He cries wildly and despairingly, as if he saw his last hope of escape suddenly cut off.
> "Sara! For the love of God, stop--let me go--!" (Act IV, p. 178)

Sara's touch is terrifying to him for it invites intimacy, and exposure of genuine, but disturbing feelings that are unacceptable and threatening. Mary Tyrone, too, fearfully repells her son's touch, and withdraws to compensatory fantasies. Con turns to the "hurroos" that greet his toast to Jackson, and finds in them a substitute for the cheers of Wellington's army.

Nora's agility in adapting to the new Con Melody contrasts sharply with Sara's dumbstruck astonishment and dismay. Clearly, Nora does not find the situation nearly so upsetting as her daughter does. Her position is well-defended against such an about-turn. She explains to Sara:

> " . . . I'll play any game he likes and give him love in it. Haven't I always?" She smiles. "Sure, I have no pride at all--except that." (Act IV, 181)

Nora recognizes Con's thick brogue and roughened demeanour as only a new expression of his abandoned fantasies of polished nobility. Her willingness to participate in either system of fantasy and behaviour gives her a secure, unalienable place in her husband's world, and her recognition of the "game" as such gives her a powerful weapon over him. "I'm the only one in the world he knows nivir sneers at his dreams!" she syas, and Con's awareness of her position gives her high card in whatever game he plays.[1]

Nora's demonstrative humility ("I know. I'm ignorant."), her devotion to an ungrateful, alcoholic husband, and her unceasing labour on his behalf in spite of rheumatism and exhaustion, make her at first seem totally oppressed and miserable. Yet she is not eager to have her situation improved. She won't see a doctor, she nearly insists that Con take a drink before breakfast, and she meekly submits to his abuse. What are the advantages Nora gains by maintaining such a position? Chiefly, they are Sara's comforting arm around her shoulder and her words of sympathy and praise for her mother's steadfast endurance of such obvious trials. And there is Mickey Maloy's warm admiration of her perfect wifely qualities. And perhaps Nora finds a certain satisfaction in hearing Sara's and Maloy's attacks on Melody on her behalf, expressing vicariously her own unspoken resentment of a man who seems repulsed by her mere presence and cannot accept her love openly and freely.

There are definite links that connect Nora Melody with Mary Tyrone. In one way the portraits of the two mothers are dia-

1 Other women in these plays have similar advantages over the men who are their partners. The very core of Jim Tyrone's guilt and anxieties and resultant fantasies is exposed to Josie Hogan, but she

metrically opposed: one is old beyond her years, lovably careworn; the other has remained youthful through middle-age, charmingly girlish. Although in this aspect Deborah Harford seems to have closer kinship to Mary, the precise nature of the opposition between Nora and Mary suggests a subterranean relationship, and that all three women are of the same sorority. Nora was in love with Con before she ever met him, as Mary was with Tyrone. Both women see their marriages as marking their separation from innocence and peace, and their alienation from the protection and security offered by the strongly parental figures of the church. Both women endure a heavy burden of guilt which they believe they will one day unload on a confessor who will re-admit them to the parental protection of the church. Nora's sin is a specifically sexual one, and her premature aging is an escape from the identity of the beautiful young girl who committed it. Mary chooses a different route of escape, that of regressing to a period before sin, but the destination is ultimately the same.[1] With a refined, subtle hostility, gentle Nora laments her "black tormint" of guilt in the presence of her husband and daughter, the cause and result of her sin. Mary's family must helplessly endure more direct accusations of their roles in despoiling her innocence and peaceful security.

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uses her awareness of the nature of the "game" he wants to play with compassion and understanding. Sara herself has a measure of control over Simon through her recognition of his areas of weakness and vulnerability. In More Stately Mansions she and Deborah use their weapon of awareness to Simon's disadvantage, until the feminine conspiracy is dissolved, and Sara, like Josie, promises to withhold the threat of exposure and use her understanding to promote Simon's "peace and happiness."

1 The clear identification of the source of Nora's guilt as her capitualtion to unacceptable erotic needs complements and extends the presentation of Mary's sexual anxieties in Long Day's Journey. The

In Sara Melody, daughter of the dashing nobleman and wayward peasant girl, O'Neill explores the effect of fantasy, fear and guilt on their progeny. Sara's seduction of Simon is a re-iteration of her mother's pre-marital relationship with her father, and her attitude towards her young lover's "dreams" affords her a position similar to Nora's. But she is reluctant to acknowledge the similarities that link father and lover. She reacts resentfully to Deborah's innocent remark comparing Simon's poetry to that of her father's ideal and model: "I don't think Simon imitates Lord Byron. I hate Lord Cyron's poetry." (Act II, p. 82) Sara's extreme sensitivity to recognition of her father's attractiveness to her, now clearly evident in her attraction to Simon, and irritable defense of the differences that distinguish the two men, are clues to discovering a pattern behind some of her apparently inconsistent behaviour in the play. She is acutely aware of the barren truth behind Con's grand facade; she attacks him with it at every opportunity and expresses the hope that someday Con will see in the mirror the man he really is. Yet, at the end of the play, when Con himself jeers at the pretentious figure of the major, Sara tries desperately to defend the remnants of this romantic figure from mockery. Sara is at once the nobleman's daughter, suffering a decline in fortunes, and the quick-witted peasant girl, alert to reality and opportunities to ridicule the absurd notions of a father who humiliates her. In this one character, O'Neill is dealing with two facets of his own

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portrait of Deborah Harford in this play and in Mansions explores further dimensions of Mother's sexual consciousness. This subject is a particularly urgent and compelling one for O'Neill, generating manifold images and characterizations.

experience: first, he is examining his identification with his father and his father's fantasies, and testing his image of his father for its validity as a hero figure, worthy of emulation. Secondly, in a reversal of sexual identity, he is investigating, through Sara's relationship to her father--a father whose foible and fantasies bear close comparison to those of Mary Tyrone--his relationship to his mother.

The result of the first level of investigation, that of the degree of Sara's participation in Con's fantasy world, is Sara's confusion as to who she really is at a period in her life when she must commit herself to choices that will determine the course of her adulthood. One part of her perceives her position in the world for what it really is: that of a young woman who lives and works in a tavern. But another part of her finds gratification in Melody's fantasies of grandeur and social prominence and in his feelings of uniqueness and special merit. Edmund Tyrone's literary aspirations follow a marked line of inheritance from his father's sense of his own unrealized dramatic genius, and acceptance of his father's private vision of personal achievement offers a kind of justification and affirmation of the sons's fantasy of success. In the same way, Sara is easily seduced by Con's dreams of grandeur and she perceives her father's youth through the same distorting medium of fantasy that colours his own recollection of it. When Con appears in the second act, after donning his soldier's costume to enhance his flirtation with Deborah, both Sara and O'Neill are receptive to his heroic stance. The scene descriptions introduce a man

. . . extraordinarily handsome and distinguished--a startling,colourful,

romantic figure, possessing now a genuine quality he has not had before, the quality of the formidably strong, disdainfully fearless calvary officer he really had been. (Act II, p. 88)

"In spite of herself," Sara responds to Melody's grand manner and sees in it a kind of reality that could be regained through a force of will. She speaks an appeal "that is both pleading and a bitter reproach."

"Oh, Father, why can't you ever be the thing you can seem to be? The man you were. I'm sorry I never knew that soldier. I think he was the only man who wasn't just a dream." (Act II, p. 90)

Sara is not asking that Con face the terms of present reality, or adapt to the immediate needs of his family, pressing as they are; rather, she is asking that he conform in reality to the image of the powerful superman, to the image of a real-life Napoleon, that so attracts her and that would offer her an alliance with power. She reproaches him for his failure to make fantasy real and his failure to sustain the heroic image that was early seeded in her consciousness and has now grown to compelling proportions. Melody sees himself as betrayed by an unfortunate marriage and the cheating swindlers who deprived him of his estate and social position. In Sara's world-view, Melody is the betrayer, robbing her of the chance to be the inheritor of riches and power that part of Sara feels to be rightfully hers.[1] Earlier in the play she tells Nora (who isn't listening):

"Oh, Con is the easiest fool ever came to America! It's that I hold against him as much as anything, that when he came here the chance was before him to make himself all the lies he pretended to be. He had education above most Yanks, and he had money enough to start him, and

1 At the end of More Stately Mansions, Melody emerges again as a kind of betrayer, a perpetrator of futile dreams stand between Sara and real fulfilment of her needs. She says, "I see now the part my greed

this is a country where you can rise as high as you like, and no one but the fools who envy you care what you rose from, once you've the money and the power that goes with it." Passionately. "Oh, if I was a man with the chance he had, there wouldn't be a dream I'd not make come true!" (Act I, p. 27)

Sara's life has been long troubled by insecurity. Her father's unreliability and the family's precarious financial situation are evidence of a history of instability and threatening poverty, originating in the exile from the family home in Sara's childhood. Con's erratic, undependable behaviour has deprived his daughter of material security and, as well, of a reliable source of emotional sustenance. Through the eyes of the little girl exiled from her home, and in the eyes of the young woman, Con's "lies" acquire an inherent value and legitimacy and demand realization. The fairy tale of the "formidably strong, disdainfully fearless cavalry officer" offers an appealing image of a powerful and omnipotent father to counter the real figure of weakness and inadequacy that Con presents. Sara laments her own femininity ("Oh, if I was a man . . . ") as an aspect of helpless vulnerability, apparent to her in her mother's humbled posture. She fiercely rejects the model her mother seems to offer her in favour of competent, quick-witted vigilance in all the raltionships of her life. In her first appearance in the play she projects a forceful, hard-edged, authoritarian image, immediately engaging in aggressive verbal battle with Mickey Maloy. She defends herself in her relationship to Simon with her "wits;" too much unguarded, uncontrolled love

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and my father's crazy dreams in me had in leading Simon away from all that was best in him!" (Mansions, p. 190) From this perspective, Melody and his dreams are seen as instigators of a dissension that nearly destroys Sara's marriage.

is a fool's weakness.[1]

Like Sara, O'Neill finds the hero image compelling and the fantasies of power and uniqueness gratifying in that he lends the figure of the middle-aged innkeeper parading in his uniform a magical authenticity, a "genuine" quality that affirms Con's narcissism as somehow reflecting truth. In Long Day's Journey, Tyrone's recollection of his glorious past are rendered with a similar legitimacy, and his son responds with the same unwilling sympathy Sara shows her father. But in this play O'Neill recognizes the effects on Sara of her adherence to this heroic image of her father and the attitudes it entails. The feelings of dispossession and exile that accompany the myth of the lost estate make part of Sara incapable of accepting the real terms of her life as a tavern waitress. At times of crisis, when her security seems most in jeopardy, she asserts her lost power and authority with vengeance. When Melody cannot conform to the ideal portrait, Sara can only reproach him with resentful bitterness, and without understanding. Her bitterness infects other relationships, making what should be an open, free relationship with her lover a conflict of will, a calculated perpetration of games, schemes and "tricks." Through identification with the nobleman's daughter in Con's world, Sara assumes the position of the frustrated victim of ruinous

1 Josie Hogan in A Moon for the Misbegotten is similarly reluctant to commit herself to uninhibited love. And she and her father, like Sara and Con, experience the oppression of a social hierarchy that burdens and restricts them. Josie's relationship with Jim Tyrone, like Sara's with Simon, seems to offer opportunity for membership in the power structure. But in Poet social needs seem to take a back-seat to more personal, fundamental psychological needs, and in Misbegotten social ambition is a defensive rationalization of covert, too-intense emotion that cannot be expressed openly.

circumstance, distrustful and angry.

In Long Day's Journey the family relationships presented involved a father unwilling to give of himself to his children, and a son whose hostility towards this ungenerous father was paradoxically countered by a subtle emulation of his father's attitudes and behaviour. Edmund's literary aspirations re-state Tyrone's fantasy of genius, and his South American adventures re-iterated his father's early experiences of hardship. A route to the approval and affection of this distant, remote father, whose defensiveness is figured in his tight-fisted stinginess, seemed to the child to lie in participation in the father's fantasy world. In A Touch of the Poet, Sara is confronted with an equally defensive, un-giving father. The hostility she expresses towards him is similarly undercut by her involvement in the life of the daughter of the exiled nobleman. She feels Con's mockery of her unaristocratic hands as a stinging rebuke and forthright rejection. The intensity of her hurt reveals the importance of admittance to his private world: such participation in his fantasies is her only opportunity for intimacy with her father.

At this stage Sara begins to share more and more of the experiences of Mary Tyrone's son. Con's fantasies, like Mary's, are compensations for real sexual fulfilment and expressions of erotic needs. Romantic savoir-faire and sexual conquest are integral components of the image of the handsome soldier. Sara's position in the virile officer in Wellington's army is inevitably determined by the nature of the sexual feelings and frustrations that are operative in Con's personality. Con displays a fierce sexual jealousy when his daughter forms a liaison with her lover, and tries to enforce an abrupt

interruption of the affair. His attempted seduction of Deborah Harford is the appeal of tragically helpless man for sexual response inspired by maternal concern and compassion. In Sara these sexual patterns are repeated and recast: she is her father's mate in fantasy, responsive to the sexual power of the splendidly-attired major, jealously anxious when he turns his attention to Nora; her maternal ministrations to her bed-ridden lover are expressions of the "woman's understanding and loving compassion" Melody sought from Deborah. In this play the appeal of the parental fantasy world to the child, which was suggested by O'Neill's admiring scene directions describing Mary's winning charm and innocent girlishness in Long Day's Journey, is more fully characterized in Sara's involvement in the terms of sexuality as they are constructed in Con's fantasies. Both the virginal bride and the dashing soldier offer compelling erotic images to their children.

Involved as she is in her father's private world, Sara can only experience Con's self-sufficiency within the defenses of his pride and his fantasies as a torturous rejection. Mary's regression to a period of her life in which her son can have no contact with her is felt by Edmund to be a painful repulsion. As alcohol erects the same barriers around Con that morphine builds around Mary, Sara reacts with bitter resentment and vengeance. When she cannot dissuade Con from executing his ludicrous attack on Simon's father, when Con is wholly enveloped in the sensations and experiences of his past life to the complete exclusion of real concern for his daughter's happiness or "honour," Sara vows, "I'll show him I can play the game of gentleman's honour too!" (Act III, p. 131) Sara revenges herself on her father sexually, by seducing Simon. Jamie Tyrone reacts to his mother's

regression in a similar manner: he finds a piano-playing whore, a subtle reflection of Mary, with whom intercourse is totally his prerogative. Sara experiences her father's indifference to her needs as a sexual rejection, and she expresses her resentment sexually. In the last act of the play, Sara's despair at her father's new found role in life reaches an hysterical pitch when he kisses Nora and speaks endearments to her. She offers to end her relationship with Simon, and, with a "strange, anguished look of desperation," she appeals to her father: "'Please! Oh, Father, I can't bear-- Won't you be yourself again?" (Act IV p. 176) Melody has found a way to overcome the trauma of watching a sexual relationship develop between his daughter and the guest upstairs, and overcomes it, literally, with a vengeance. Sara's sexual jealousy is quickly aroused by the tenderness Con shows Nora--a tenderness the major could be trusted not to express. Herein lies a crucial extension of the statement of parent-child sexual expression as it is presented in the play: in spite of the child's painful experiences of rejection that accompany the parent's regression and withdrawal from intimacy, the sexually attractive parent belongs exclusively to the child in fantasy if, and for as long as, the parent's fantasies inhibit free, loving relationship with the other parent. This triangle of rivalry and possession is a fundamental construct in all four of these plays.

Sara finds her father's regression to a period predating her own existence frustrating, as Edmund found Mary's regression frightening and disturbing. However, the sudden shift in Con's behaviour and his identification with the vulgar, leering image of his unscrupulous father is even more frustrating for Sara, for it precludes

participation in his fantasies of sexual prowess and aristocratic omnipotence. In Simon she finds a substitute for her father's attention, a quantity which, in her lover, she can manage and control for her own gratification. The similarities between Simon and Con are focussed on their shared "dream," their emulation of Byron, and the sheltered poet each man nurtures within himself. (Sara tells her mother that Simon's poetic sensibility and potential are "'what I love most about him.") The correspondences between Nora's pre-marital relationship with Con and Sara's with Simon are clear, and suggest that Sara hopes to win for herself a Con Melody.

There is a point, however, at which Sara's relationship with Simon has more significance in the context of More Stately Mansions than it does within the compass of A Touch of the Poet, and it is at this point that O'Neill's identification shifts from Sara to the unseen figure of Simon. What little information there is in the play pertaining to Simon as a personality independent of Sara's fantasies and needs outlines a character not far removed from Edmund Tyrone. Like Edmund, Simon has embarked on an adventure independently of his family, but again finds himself requiring parental attention and care. The whore-mother figure who attracts and terrorizes Simon in More Stately Mansions begins to take shape in Sara's seduction of her lover. Through the assumption of maternal functions, carrying food to him, fluffing his pillows, Sara awakens Simon's suppressed erotic needs and compells him to a sexual encounter. Sara correctly perceives that Deborah, another attractive mother, is her only rival for Simon's attention, and a dangerous threat to a sexual relationship that is based on an early precedent of an exclusive mother and son liaison.

In one part of Simon's mind, Sara is a "holy image," a virginal mother, perhaps who will repell the sexual advances of her offspring. But in his poetry, and in his diary, he oversteps the bounds of incest around the holy image and sees Sara as a compelling object of sexual desire. The opposition of these two segments of Simon's consciousness is the perpetrator of all the tensions and guilt of More Stately Mansions.

The Witches' Coils

Deborah Harford's rambling, "eccentric" warning to Sara in A Touch of the Poet portends the younger woman's transformation in More Stately Mansions from O'Neill's surrogate to the ambitious adventuress who exploits Simon's weakness. As Deborah recalls the history of the Harfard family, she outlines a determining genealogy of relationships, an inevitable, inescapable pattern of men enslaved and weakened by dreams, and women enslaving, made greedy and powerful by vengeance.[1] Deborah creates a picture that invites comparison of the present with the past: Simon's grandfather preserved his French National Guard uniform as Con preserved his military uniform; Simon's poetic and philosophical ideals are a legitimate and ominous inheritance from his ancestors; Sara finds Napoleon a compelling, magnetic figure as past Harford women did, and she shows signs of the kind of ambitious, resourceful energy Deborah describes as characteristic of Harford women.

The parallels between the Melodys and the Harfords implicate Sara in the pattern: her femininity aligns her with her predecessors in this repetitive, imprisoning sequence of bitterness and vengeance. Deborah perceives in Sara the qualities that make her

1 O'Neill is acutely aware of the determinant influence of parental attitudes and behaviour on offspring. The spectral presences of long-dead ancestors haunt Mourning Becomes Electra. In that play, family history becomes a script for the present, re-casting contemporary characters in the roles of their ancestors, to an ultimately tragic end. In Mansions similar tragedy and incarceration within the past is only barely averted through the intervention of Sara's fresh blood.

susceptible to involvement in the family's dreams and nightmares, and she tells Sara that the "evil old witches" who were the mates of the Harford men "would have smiled like senile, hungry serpents and welcomed you into their coils." (Poet, Act II, p. 83) The suggestion here of serpentine, labyrinthine female conspiracy becomes the most resonant, powerful image of More Stately Mansions. It is an image terrible, phantasmagorical, mythical, yet growing out of the fundamental dynamics of everyday family relationships presented in Long Day's Journey into Night. By disengaging himself from the realistic context of Long Day's Journey, O'Neill seems to gain freedom to fully explore the unconscious implications of the portrait of Mary--implications perhaps unacceptable within the explicitly autobiographical atmosphere of the Tyrone play. Even Deborah's confrontation with Sara at their first meeting begins to reconstruct experiences of radical importance in the Tyrone drama. Deborah's rapid chatter and detached, remote manner as she speaks to Sara is reminiscent of Mary's style of speech as morphine lifts the barriers between fantasy and reality, and Deborah operates in both A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions as a figure caught between fact and dream. Mary's susceptibility to the power of her fantasy world stimulates the family's trauma of conflict, and Deborah's precarious position has similar disturbing influence on those around her and on the direction of the play (even such a firmly practical man as lawyer Gadsby becomes somewhat unhinged in the artificial atmosphere of Deborah's garden). She is the initial catalyst in the disruption of the ordinary domesticity of her son's marriage.

Again O'Neill has organized his dramatic materials in

such a way that his agent in the play confronts the choices presented by early adulthood, and again strong parental influences interrupt the transition from childhood to fulfilling adult identity. Deborah's presence in the play, and her metamorphosis from young coquette to good grandmother to wizened witch, reawaken archaic conflicts and power struggles in Simon's mind, and, like a sorceress, Deborah transposes him from the reality of his adult life to the bygone experiences of his childhood, and plunges him into the sensations and feelings of a small boy re-enveloped in the intensity and strength of family relationships. Simon is left emasculated and totally incapable of fulfilling the demands reality makes on him as a grown-up man, a husband and a father. His extreme sensitivity to his mother's influence distorts and infects his perception of reality and deprives him of control of his own life.

The terrifying vision of insanity that runs like a current of poison through the play and reaches its fullest expression in the last act, focusses finally on the power of the evil witch to possess and destroy the helpless boy. On the one hand, O'Neill suggests that the witch-mother's arts are a projection of the intensity of unresolved conflicts in Simon's own mind. But at the same time, there is in the play a statement of a sinister, malevolent purpose behind the relationship between Sara and Deborah, of an insatiable need for revenge that finds its fulfilment in the hapless male trapped by his dependence on the women in his life. Simon retains a child-like belief in his mother's power to change the script of his life, to alter the ending of the fairy tale, and O'Neill seems to concur, investing Deborah with a conscious power over Simon's destiny. Her wilful

resistance to her son's demands frustrates and enrages Simon, and finally renders him a helpless child. Sara quickly becomes involved in Deborah's apparently purposeful, conspiratorial calculations and shares in her mother-in-law's power over Simon. By drawing the characters of the women in the play in the images in which they live in Simon's mind, O'Neill fixes responsibility for Simon's despair or peace in personalities external to his own. In the last scene of the play Simon is totally passive, totally deprived of autonomy and dependent on the goodwill of the powerful female figures that confront him in the garden where he spent his childhood.

The ghosts of the past haunt and terrorize the Tyrones and in More Stately Mansions these ghosts are realized in detail. The Harfords live in an atmosphere reduced to the most radical and elemental determinants of life and behaviour. The coquettish, celibate girl of Mary Tyrone's fantasy life takes over the core and heart of Deborah Harford's existence. The scenes and sensations of childhood that continue to live in the adult minds of Edmund and Jamie Tyrone become the reality of Simon Harford. What, then, does O'Neill do with the Tyrones in this rarified atmosphere of fantasy, guilt and fear?

The "real" circumstances of Mansions are these: a young man, who has chosen a wife and has had children by her, is discovered at a critical point in his career. He must choose, as Tyrone once chose, between attempting to fulfill a jealously guarded dream of artistic and intellectual success and accepting the material fruits promised by a tempting financial venture. Just as he is confronted by this choice, his mother, from whom he has been estranged, reappears in his life, impelled by the will of his dead father. These

reawakened parental influences have a disturbing effect on Simon and, under pressure from wife and mother, he abandons his independence, and his private dream, and accepts the offer of financial opportunity. He takes the place of a father he hated and returns to his mother's house. In the ensuing events of the play, the critical element of Simon's choice becomes his re-entry into the scene of his childhood, his reluctant return to his father's mansion and his mother's garden. For O'Neill the most portentous aspect of Simon's decision is his weakening grasp on his independence and the erosion of his autonomy as a self-determined adult male. As the play develops, the agents of oppression are exposed through the key relationships of Simon's life, relationships which in early childhood stimulated certain patterns of perception and behaviour that are now the precedents shaping his adulthood.

Simon's early experiences in Deborah's walled garden are active and revitalized determinants of his response to the current relationships of his life--his response to his wife, his children, his business colleagues. The garden remains unchanged, a fixed and powerful image in his consciousness, and a strongly realized setting for the most crucial scenes of the play. The garden is patently artificial, managed and controlled to conform to a personal vision of peace and security and withstanding the pressures of the outside world. The woman who created it and sequestered herself there in the first days of her marriage and motherhood lives there still, resisting time and change. The garden in Deborah's world, estranged from life, a stage for the enactment of gratifying fantasies and escape from the uncongenial terms of her life in her husband's home. Simon's participation, as a small

boy, in these fantastic productions and his experience of the anxieties and satisfactions he associated with them, are exposed as the chief determinants of his adult life.

There are essential congruencies drawing together Mary Tyrone's girlish fantasies of nunhood and artistic success and Deborah Harford's existence within her walled garden. Both women find the demands of marriage and motherhood insupportable: Mary's fantasy of withdrawal to the seclusion of the cloister is paralleled by Deborah's retreat to the garden. A figurative celibacy effects for each a secure defense against the threat of intimate sexual relationships. In A Touch of the Poet, Deborah describes her honeymoon to Sara:

> "I used to dream I was Josephine--even after my marriage, I'm afraid. The Sisters [Simon's great aunts], as everyone called them, and all of the family accompanied my husband and me on our honeymoon--to Paris to witness the Emperor's coronation." She pauses, smiling at her memories. (Poet, Act II, p. 84)

Such an irregularity--a honeymoon that was a family venture in the service of mythical, ritualized notions of romantic love--surely suggests Deborah's fear of sexual intimacy with her husband and the function of her compensatory erotic fantasies. Deborah's white dress and girlish, maidenly appearance at the beginning of this play recall the scene of Mary's wedding day, and facilitate a regression to pre-marital experience that denies the existence of husband and sons. In the first garden scene of More Stately Mansions Deborah is discovered in a state of acute tension, struggling with the "ghosts and corpses" of severe, unresolvable conflicts. Her condition is a precise reflection of Mary's confrontation with reality and the possibility of escape through submission to her addiction to morphine. Deborah describes to Gadsby and Joel the sensations aroused by her brief surrender to the magnetism

of the dark interior of the summerhouse:

" . . . I was so longingly fascinated, I had forgotten fear. The temptation to escape--open the door--step boldly across the threshold. And, after all, good God, why should I be frightened? What have I to lose except myself as I am here?"[1]

Deborah has just lost her husband, is deserted by a precious son, and age is depriving her of the privileges of a beautiful young woman. Her fantasy life as an eighteenth century courtesan has ill-prepared her to meet the real emergencies of life, and "self," deprived of the energy and resources to assert itself, becomes an imprisoning burden of consciousness. When Deborah's real environment cannot offer her the gratification and security her fantasies and anxieties require, the summerhouse, like morphine, offers escape. But both Deborah and Mary recognize the hazards of their routes of escape. It is a kind of suicide Deborah contemplates, and she is caught in a strangling web of fear and despair. In the character of Deborah, O'Neill creates a super-realistic extreme of the conflicts and anxieties that defeat Mary Tyrone. By freeing himself from the specific context of his own life, which inhibited a thorough exploration of his attitude towards his own mother in Long Day's Journey, O'Neill enters the garden, and, through Simon's eyes, watches the drama of his own childhood. The chief revelation of this re-directed investigation is the sexual relationship of mother and son, and the appearance of the powerful figure of the whore-mother.

Deborah's fantasy of the beautiful, powerful courtesan using her sexual charms to conquer and enslave kings and emperors satisfies her narcissistic sense of her own omnipotence and satisfies

1 Eugene O'Neill, More Stately Mansions (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1964), p. 28. Subsequent references to the play pertain to this edition.

sexual needs that cannot be fulfilled in real relationships. It's a double-edged weapon that Deborah uses to defend her dream-world: on one side her celibate existence, like Mary's, preserves her from real sexual intimacy which would be threatening to her notion of romantic love; on the other side, her fantasy life is so constructed as to fulfill urgent sensual needs in a context of power and authority which does not admit the possibility of rejection or guilt. "All the court watches" with envy and admiration as King Louis offers his arm to his mistress, enslaved by his passion for her--this is a straightforward erotic erotic expression of Mary Tyrone's desexualized dream of acclaim and success as a musical protege promoted by a benevolent, compliant father.

Simon's involvement, as a child, in this potently sexual dream world was both threatening and gratifying to Deborah. He was, indeed, an intruder in the garden, a reminder of another reality of marriage and motherhood that undercut the efficiency of Deborah's escape. But, on the other hand, the play suggests that the small boy's personality was easily manipulated and weakly receptive to the mother's influence. Simon accuses Deborah of a lack of respect for his--or anyone else's--independence, and of using her offspring as instruments in the perpetration of her fantasies:"'You've never cared about children, except as toys to play with--unless my memory is all wrong!" (Act I, p. 65) Simon's accusations are at least partially motivated by a need to justify his own participation in Deborah's erotic fantasies by projecting an image of a helpless, necessarily dependent child thoughtlessly manipulated by his mother. The accusations are legitimized by the terms of O'Neill's portrayal of

Deborah's calculations and the ease with which she establishes control over Sara, and O'Neill, like Simon, must have felt a need to justify his own involvement in his mother's fantasy life. Such involvement is, in both cases, perceived as unacceptable, arousing incest anxieties and inspiring fears of rejection and perhaps, as well, the kind of paternal jealousy Tyrone displayed in Long Day's Journey. Deborah's selfish, almost magical power over both the child Simon and the adult absolves Simon (and O'Neill) of guilt and responsibility for erotic fantasies aroused by his mother. The ease with which Simon can slip into the role of courtly gentleman indicates that Deborah was able to integrate her son into her eighteenth century life and that he became the dream-lover enslaved by her charms. Because of his needs, as a child, for Deborah's care and attention, Simon was easily pressed into accepting this mode of the filial relationship, and his dependence made him an ideal agent for the figure of King Louis ensnared by his mistress, or Napoleon at the feet of Josephine. And the role of king and emperor is a gratifying one for a little boy. But whatever satisfactions Deborah could elicit from her son, there is an undercurrent of powerful resentment that colours her attitude towards him, both as a child and as an adult. Her resentment inspires a feeling of vindictive hostility somewhat akin to the "revengeful hate" Deborah ascribes in A Touch of the Poet to the Harford "witches" of the past. She says to herself, in the parlour scene of strange and terrible hate and jealousy, "'I never wanted him to be conceived--I was glad to be rid of him when he was born-- He made my beauty grotesquely ugly by his presence, bloated and misshapen-- And then the compulsion to love him after he was born--'" (Act II, p. 122) Deborah's resent-

ment of Simon is naturally enough directed towards his untimely interference in her ideal fantasy world of the beautiful courtesan. The child's arrival demanded that Deborah assume maternal functions the performance of which was ill-suited to her own needs. Mary Tyrone's posture of girlish innocence was similarly frustrated by the demands of parenthood, and she suffered the concommitant feelings of maternal inadequacy. But Deborah's resentment runs further, on a deeper level: she complains of the "compulsion to love him." The threat of forming an intimate relationship with a real person who has existence outside the control of her private domain is a serious one for Deborah. It implies exposure of the characters and dramas of her dreams, and, more important, the possibility of rejection of her compelled offering of intimacy. Her dependence on Simon's loyalty deprives her of the omnipotence she enjoys in the imaginative world of King Louis' court --Simon can (and, in fact, does) discard her gifts and desert her. Simon's participation in the manifestly sexual dramas of illicit relationships opens another hazardous area of consciousness for Deborah through implications of incest. Deborah's erotic attraction to her son and the fear it inspires in her lends a wider significance to Mary's warning to Edmund in the last act of Long Day's Journey: "'Don't touch me. It isn't right when I'm going to be a nun.'" Deborah's frigidity contributes to the sanctity of the "holy image" Simon saw in Sara in A Touch of the Poet, and strictly separates "mother" from sexual partner. The paradox is obvious, one that Simon himself points out to his mother: Deborah's fearful disdain of the "filth" and vulgarity of reality and real sexual relationships is absurdly undercut

by her own eighteenth century "life" and indulgence in illicit love at Louis' court.

Simon's prolonged subscription to the terms of Deborah's fantasy world and his continue commitment, as an adult, to the role he played in it as a child is revealed in his choice of marriage partner. His perception of Sara as at once holy image and object of sexual desire in A Touch of the Poet is a reflection of Deborah's position in his childhood world. The precedents formed by his earliest experience continue to determine and restrict his response to Sara as a wife and companion, imposing archaic and inappropriate patterns of response and behaviour shaped by his original contact with woman. The limitations of the portrait of Sara in Mansions, the compelling correspondences between her personality, her needs and fantasies and those of Deborah that effect a profound transformation of the richly-drawn character of Sara in A Touch of the Poet, suggest that O'Neill participates in Simon's fantasy-determined vision of his wife. Sara enjoys the prospect of playing mistress to a Napoleon of commerce as much as Deborah enjoys her dream of enslaving a powerful king to his passion for her. Sara's involvement in the Company achieves for her an omnipotence similar to the power and authority that are Deborah's in her dream world. Finally, the apparent kinship of the two women, their feminine alliance, is seen as a dangerous and malevolent conspiracy, a real and constant threat to Simon's manhood and autonomy. The pattern of perception that reveals this insidious relationship is indeed a threat to Simon's freedom from archaic needs and conflicts. But the play itself lends an objective verity to Simon's anxieties and the creative process of development between A Touch of the Poet and

More Stately Mansions involves the elimination of those elements of Sara Melody's personality which made her a character independent of Simon's fantasies. The essential catalysts in this process are Simon's marriage, that is the sexual consummation of his relationship to this woman who seems so like mother, and his return to his parents' home and and the scenes of his early life.

Simon suffers debilitating guilt and anxiety in the company of wife and mother in his childhood home. The situation--living with his wife in his father's house adjoined by his mother's garden--reawakens conflicts and sensations of early life that finally overwhelm his capacity to function as an adult. The confusion of identity that merges Deborah and Sara, the similarity of their fantasies, and the congruence of the roles they play in Simon's world grow from Simon's original, infantile perception of his mother as both a figure offering maternal sustenance and protection and an object of sexual desire defended by prohibitive incest fears. Simon's retreat from Sara's bed is a symptom of his fearful perception of a re-enactment of his boyhood relationship with Deborah. His re-entry into this archaic world renders his adult identity inadequate and frustrating. He describes to Joel his feelings of rejection and alienation:

"Sometimes the two have appeared to lose their separate identities in my mind's eye--have seemed, through the subtle power of Mother's fantastic will, to merge and become one woman--a spirit Woman made flesh and flesh of her made spirit, mother and wife in one--to whome I was never anything more than a necessary adjunct to motherhood--a son in one case, a husband in the other--but now no longer needed since the mother by becoming the wife has my four sons to substitute for me, and the wife, having them, no longer needs a husband to use in begetting--And so I am left alone, an unwanted son, a discarded lover, an outcast without meaning or function in my own home . . . ." (Act II, p. 73)

Simon is describing himself as a man bereft of identity, power, sig-

nificance, exiled from his mother's garden and his wife's bed--"unwanted son" and "discarded lover." His estrangement from these important positions effects a profound impotence that fills him with resentment and he identifies the origin of his discontent in Deborah's "will." The alliance between the two women, which seems to hinge on their motherhood to Simon's sons, his rivals, suspends the useful dichotomy that guaranteed peace in Deborah's garden, and Simon feels the painful anxieties inflicted by its dissolution as a direct and malevolent attack on him by Deborah with Sara as her accomplice. He perceives the power of his relationship to wife and mother to exert archaic, inescapable influences as a weapon held by the two women to his disadvantage. The greatest significance of this projection of internal dissension lies in O'Neill's veiled concurrence. The merging of identities which occurs in Simon's "mind's eye" occurs as well in the objective eye of the play. The disquieting union of the "spirit" of Woman (maternal figure) with the "flesh" of Woman (sexual figure) is dramatically authenticated in the third scene of Act Two when the two women, hands clasped, become each a reflection of the other in the image of the whore-mother. O'Neill's real understanding and consciousness of the determinant effect of early childhood experiences on adult behaviour and perception leads him to a startling and certainly not sequential conclusion: through investigation of these archaic determinants he, and Simon, find their source not in the compendium of circumstances that surrounded the child Simon, but in a particular personality who mercilessly and vengefully manipulated those circumstances. Deborah's conscious complicity in Simon's miserable fate finally deprives him of all control over his own destiny. The power struggle that goes

on between Deborah and Sara for possession of the next generation of Harford sons indicates reprehensible motives of greed and self-interest in the maternal aspirations of the two women. Deborah declares to Simon, with "vindictive satisfaction," that her grandsons "'can never forget me!'" (Act II, p. 104) Her boastful assertion of control suggests a purposeful manipulation of their youthful and impressionable minds to her own advantage, and legitimizes Simon's complaints of her treacherous calculations to deprive him of mature freedom and render him captive once again. Any expression of the authority or independence of manhood on Simon's part evokes the presence of these powerful, greedy women who would reduce him to helplessness and impotence by threatening to exile him totally from their world. Sara, her anger and vengeance inspired by Simon's ineffectual manoeuvring and attempts at reorganization of the family scene, says to Deborah, "'I tell you, as woman to woman, I'd let him go back and back into the past until he got so lost in his dreams he'd be no more a man at all, but a timid little boy hiding from life behind my skirts!'" (Act II, p. 134-5)

By interpreting the psychological effect of the proximity of wife and mother as the result of purposeful conspiracy between the women, Simon finds himself the chief object of interest in their world. The notion of conspiracy, in spite of its obvious threat, offers definite gratification: it facilitates a return to a position of infantile importance.[1] Yet both O'Neill and Simon recognize the hazards and penalties of submission to the seductive, regressive influence of

1 Accompanying the unalienable centrality of the little boy's position in the mother's world, are feelings of infantile omnipotence. Simon's notion of consumer slaves oppressed by a closed economy under the Company's control rewards him with similar feelings of power. He

the conspiracy and to the power of the women and their fantasies--sacrifice of autonomy, abnegation of the rights of an adult. The sexually and mentally mature male cannot win admittance to the walled garden and its forbidden gratifications, a world now enjoyed by Simon's young sons. The compulsion to return there, inspired by the tensions and conflicts of the present situation and its analogy to the past, is finally identified in the play as insanity. The fearful vision of this ultimate rejection of reality and loss of adult identity, sexual potency and mature faculties of reason and perception is Simon's greatest terror. The insidious development of Simon's anxieties and regressive impulses into a totally incapacitating madness that deprives him of freedom and self-direction is determined by the response of the two women to his needs. As Simon abandons his commitment to reality he loses the power of self-determination through submission to a compulsive reliving of archaic experience. The power struggle which ensues is realized in the play not as dissension between opposing segments of Simon's consciousness, but, rather, as a struggle between Simon and the women who would reduce him to the helpless, impotent posture of a small boy.

Simon recalls with vital clarity and emotional intensity a fairy told him by his mother when he was a boy. The tale crystallizes in essence the script of Simon's life. It is a story of dispossession, privation and fear and, significantly, its author was Deborah herself.

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returned to commerce, and abandoned intellectual and artistic goals, in the service of uncontrollable regressive impulses which demanded enactment of childhood fantasies of absolute power, such as O'Neill described to Agnes when he told her of his walled-in "dream estate" and the authority he would enjoy there.

A young king is banished from his happy domain by the evil arts of a beautiful sorceress. Before his departure to lonely exile, she tells him that a dedicated search may discover a magic door through which he can re-enter his kingdom. He devotes himself wholly to the search and finally comes upon the magic door. But he is doomed to remain forever on the threshold, for the enchantress reappears and suggests to him that she may have betrayed him, that the door, once opened, may reveal a barren desert haunted by ghosts and ruled by an evil witch who will devour him with cannibal greed in an effort to maintain her right to his realm. The king can neither turn away from the door, for he is chained there by a powerful spell, nor can he open the door, for he fears that the sorceress' warning may be true. He spends his life in front of this ominous, enchanting portal, a beggar, starving, crying for alms. Simon recognizes the radical analogy this tale has to his own experience, and, more than this, identifies the author of the tale as the controller of his destiny. The young king's obsession with regaining what is rightfully his--an obsession which leaves him an aged beggar in front of a closed door--is figured in the tale as the evil spell of a malicious witch woman. Similarly, Simon's attempt to exercise the rights of possession over the garden of his childhood leaves him powerless and emasculated at the hands of the present proprietor. The closed door of the summerhouse portends both the peace and gratification of a fantasy world and the terrors and ghosts of insanity. And in front of the door stands Deborah, enticing and forbidding, courtesan and white-clad celibate, whore-mother.

The intensely erotic atmosphere of the garden, peopled as it is by the figures of Deborah's fantasies, suggests that Simon's lost kingdom is the period of free, uninhibited sensuality he experienced

in fantasy as a small child. The focal point of the garden is the conical summerhouse, sitting like a beguiling jewel amid the distorted shapes of natural vegetation. Its centrality is manifest: the door is painted a gleaming laquer red, and in one garden scene even Nature herself conspires with Simon's obsession to highlight the aspiring point of the roof and the rich colour of the door by directing the waning light of the afternoon sun to illuminate this mysterious, enchanting structure. The interior of the house is dark and somehow graspingly, erotically magnetic, and powerfully feminine, for it is the place of Deborah's most private, intimate and jealously guarded sequestration. The simultaneous fascination and dread inspired by the summerhouse is the collision of Simon's deep need for sexual acceptance by his mother and the fear of rejection by her and reprisal. Simon accuses Deborah of defending the summerhouse as if it were a "sacred temple," that is, barring him from entrance by erecting a barrier of guilt-inspiring taboo.

As the play develops, Simon's behaviour and perceptions become more and more fixed in the patterns created by those early experiences that are expressed in the fairy tale of the dispossessed king.[1] The reality of the first years of his life lends a profound significance to the message conveyed by the tale. As a child he experienced an exclusive relationship with a mother who was sensually attracted to him,

1 The planned, incomplete cycle of nine plays to which A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions belong was to be titled "A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed." The dispossessed fairy tale king of Mansions already had predecessors in Con and Sara Melody, banished from their Irish castle and deprived of their fortune. And A Moon for the Misbegotten, not intended for inclusion in the cycle, also involves a threat of dispossession--the Hogans fear eviction from their farm.

yet deeply afraid of intimacy. His infantile position of masculine helplessness gave him a secure place in her fantasy world, but he could maintain that security only by conforming to the terms of her fantasies. Sexual gratification could be achieved only in fantasy and Deborah herself was the creator and controller of the independent world of fantasy and gratification--her power over Simon was the power of the wicked enchantress over the banished king. Her son's consuming desire for intimacy with her was a dangerous threat to her sovereignty and, ultimately, he had to be rendered helpless and emasculated, or he had to be effectively repelled. The recounted drama of the young king's plight and his prolonged trials climaxed by complete submission to the power of the witch woman is Simon's figurative view of his own life. O'Neill concurs, supplying images in both stage directions and dialogue that justify Simon's lament for lost freedom at the hands of feminine arts. The final scene of the play, in which Simon is reduced to abject poverty of will in a posture of infantile passivity, presents a renewal of the tale, rewritten as Simon asked, Sara supplanting in reality Deborah's role in fantasy. In this last exchange Sara is a figure of great strength and power, responding to the weakened, child-like Simon as she could not respond to the husband who ruled a commercial empire. At the end of the play she not only controls his material resources, but as well his psychological resources, and she assures him, with "a fierce, passionate, possessive tenderness, 'Yes, I'll be your Mother, too, now, and your peace and happiness and all you'll ever need in life! Come!'" (Act III, p. 194) O'Neill's presentation of the fairy tale as a metaphorical restatement of the inescapable conditions of Simon's life restricts the vision of the drama to the scope of Simon's own tortured, obsessed per-

ceptions. The power of myth accrues to the metaphor, because, more than succinctly and expressively describing the past, or the present, it determines the future, the course of the play. Simon's commitment to its presentation of truth accords it a verity justified by his own actions and the events and images of the drama as O'Neill constructs them. Hence, it is more than metaphor; it is the script of the play, and of Simon's life, from which neither he nor O'Neill can deviate.

The world-view promulgated by the fairy tale casts all the characters of Simon's life according to the terms of its script. Simon's sons are dangerous rivals, and his jealousy of their privileged position in the feminine world inhibits any paternal feeling he might show them. Indeed, the play itself gives them no identity or form beyond their position as rivals of Simon in the central fantasy of female power and male insecurity. Like Simon, O'Neill himself was unable to maintain a sustained paternal commitment to his children, and his creative energy is arrested in this play at the point of acknowledging Simon's sons as presences but not as personalities. Joel, Simon's brother and another potential rival, is characterized as a dull, self-interested, even lustful creature.[1] Even Simon's business life, away from home, is infected by the domestic influence and the images of the mythical fairy tale world. He engineers Sara's encounter with the ruined banker according to the specifications of the scene of the deposed king ensnared by the merciless witch. Simon's apparently real financial acumen and

1 O'Neill's own brother completely contradicts Joel's personality and position in the family. While Joel is unattractive, dull, hard-working, and ignored by his mother, Jamie was charming, reckless and doted on by Ella. So profound an alteration of character must indicate O'Neill's jealousy of Jamie's attractiveness and privileged position.

ability (indicated by the prosperity of his own business before he returned to his father's Company) is overcome by an irrational ruthlessness that leads him from stability and productivity to the verge of bankruptcy.[1] Sara's take-over of his property effectively dispossesses Simon of his empire, and is a clear extension, or realization of Deborah's fantasies of the omnipotence of the voluptuous courtesan and Simon's own self-image of the exiled king. Responsibility for Simon's self-destructive actions is consequently directed towards the perpetrator of the fantasies and author of the fairy tale--Deborah.

Simon's invitation to Sara to join him in his business life is impelled by his growing incapacity to love her as his wife. His efforts to re-organize the domestic scene are directed towards re-establishing the dichotomy that distinguished mother and sexual partner in his childhood. The distinction is threatened by a woman who is both wife to him and mother to his children, and the boundaries Simon attempts to impose are in a constant state of flux, pressured by the merging of sexual and maternal identities of the two women. The dissolution of the boundaries exerts impossible regressive influences on Simon, to which he finally succumbs. Simon comes to understand his distress in terms which demand the removal of one of the women from his consciousness. He appeals first to Sara to eliminate the causes of his misery, to get rid of Deborah, to put her away where she can no longer have power over him; he then asks Deborah to join him in a plot to remove the threat of Sara's presence from their existence. When, in Act III, he makes his "choice," he is a small child struggling to defend himself from the

1 In this aspect of his life, Simon is re-enacting his father's experience. The imprudent speculation and risks undertaken by the ostensibly astute businessman left Harford, at his death, in a financial position very similar to Simon's.

causes of his discomfort and torture, and he focuses finally on the female agent of the grown-up world of anxiety and guilt he finds so intolerable. Marriage, which requires intimacy with a woman who is both mother to his children and his own mate, is insupportable in its demands. He chooses, instead, retreat to an unrealized world of "peace and happiness" where infantile fantasies of protection, security and erotic sympathy are fulfilled. He demands of Deborah entrance to the summerhouse, the rewriting of the fairy tale.

The last scene of the play records Simon's confrontation with his choice. He is absent from the garden at the opening of the scene; Sara finds Deborah alone, angry and rejected. The women turn on each other with suspicion and antagonism, but Sara's grudging sympathy for Deborah's pain in what she perceives as her desertion by Simon slowly effects a reconciliation. They identify with each other's fear and anxiety and form a tenuous alliance through the recognition that unity is their strength. Together, merged in one sorority, they destroy the dichotomy of mother and whore that Simon has laboured to maintain, and they destroy Simon. Deborah imagines the power and security they would enjoy without his divisive presence instigating dissension:

" . . . at last we'd finally be rid of him. Oh God, think of how simply contented we could be alone together with our children--grandmother and mother, mother and daughter, sister and sister, one woman and another. . . ." (Act III, p. 171)

The fears and needs of the two women coalesce, fostering a stable feminine kinship. The image of their solidarity, threatening to the object of their conspiracy, is powerfully operative in Simon's mind, even before it assumes concrete shape in the play: he enters the garden declaring that he has "heard" their calculations. The relationship between the two women becomes as distorted and unnatural in reality as it is in Simon's

mind. In the face of the cunning alliance of wife and mother, all opportunity for fulfilment of his needs is beyond Simon's grasp. Alienated, rejected, resentful, Simon authoritatively and forcefully accuses the women of treachery. But, significantly, his vigorous, manly assertiveness and threats to rid himself of one or the other of his tormentors end in a sobbing admission of helpless defeat. By exposing his fears and vulnerability Simon wins from the women spontaneous maternal response and soothing words of comfort and reassurance of sympathy.[1] His abandonment of manly self-assertion gains him re-instatement in the feminine world and its vital security, and he wins a place in Deborah's imagined picture of the women "alone together with our children." To ensure his position, he banishes Sara, representative of the sexual commitments of his adult life, from the garden, and withdraws into the sexual identity of the small boy anxiously demanding admittance to his mother's summerhouse. When Sara returns from the mansion, so enveloped is Simon in the reawakened sensations of his childhood that he perceives his wife as an inconvenient trespasser whose presence is inexplicable and somehow vaguely threatening. He asks Deborah, "'Who are you talking to, Mother? What is she trying to make me remember? This is long before any other woman.'" (Act III, p. 187) Simon's sexuality, under intense regressive pressure, has become totally passive, demanding the polymorphous expression of infancy. Sara is an unwelcome reminder of adult sexual commitments which entail emotional reciprocity and vulnerability, and which are incompatible with his return to childhood and the security and infantile omnipotence he seeks there.

1 This regressive fantasy pervades O'Neill's last plays. For example, Jim Tyrone, in A Moon for the Misbegotten, wins similar reassurance and protection from Josie by confessing his weakness and helplessness.

The summerhouse door is never opened to Simon. Sara's intervention clearly saves Simon from madness, from entrapment in the strange sexual world of the summerhouse (the world Mary Tyrone evoked by morphine addiction). Deborah's solitary retreat, formulated as a final, ultimate expression of disdain and self-sufficiency, frees Simon from confrontation with the evil witch, and the terrible fears and anxieties that surround the summerhouse. Sara, now a willing, generous mother to Simon, promises to supplant Deborah and offer a more productive, secure dependency than he ever enjoyed with maiden mother and evil temptress. She vows, "' . . . I'll give my life now to setting you free to be again the man you were when I first met you--the man I loved best! --the dreamer with a touch of the poet in his soul, and the heart of a boy!'" (Act III, pp. 190-1)

Simon has been preserved from a terrible end; his future of "peace and happiness" seems secure. Sara emerges at the end of the play as a figure of great power and strength, a loyal protector of the weakened, dazed, semi-conscious Simon, not unlike the "holy image" of the benevolent mother who ministered to him in A Touch of the Poet. In the last moments of the drama, Simon awakens, as if from a nightmare, to find himself safe in strong, maternal arms, his fears and terrors quieted. What are the operative conditions of his new-found security?

Foremost is the assurance of Sara's devotion and understanding. While Deborah withdraws to her glittering sexual fantasies of power, Sara finds a new awareness of the terrible effects of her own fantasies on Simon, and rejects them: "'I see now the part my greed and my father's crazy dreams in me had in leading Simon away from himself until he lost his way and began destroying all that was best in him!'"

(Act III, p. 190) Apparently, the voluptuous whore Simon made the real power behind a commercial empire is gone forever from his life. And Sara's commitment to a maternal role in Simon's life relieves the threat of reciprocal intimacy--a threat which at one time drove Simon from his wife's bed. She says, "' . . . I'll be your Mother, too, now. . . .'" Sara's new position of strength and compassionate understanding promises Simon escape from the garden and mansion to an old farm where, in his youth, he first tried to establish independence of family influences. But before Simon can win his release, two spectres of the past must be banished: first the wicked witch is exorcised, locked away in her fantastic world. Sara's rejection of her own fantasies of power dissociates her from Deborah, and dissolves the dreadful kinship of wife and mother that so terrorized Simon. Secondly, the Company, Simon's legacy from his father, is destroyed. Sara declares, "'Don't I know, Darling, the longing in your heart that I'd smash the Company into smithereens to prove my love for you and set you free from the greed of it!'" (Act III, p. 191)

Throughout the play the influence of Simon's deceased father is apparent but never fully realized: Henry Harford has intangible presence and exerts oblique pressures on his son, but he is never confronted as a personality. His presence is evoked by certain important parallels that link him not only with Simon and his career in the business world but as well with other fathers in O'Neill plays. The few concrete details that outline the personality behind the paternal influence O'Neill seems to have supplied only grudgingly, keeping the conscious focus of the play on the mother-son relationship and away from the father-son relationship.

Yet Simon's intense reaction to suggestions that he

is like his father, that he is imitating the paternal model his father provided, indicates that Henry Harford has a radical effect on Simon's consciousness, and, indeed, the whole course of the development of the play can be described in terms of this subtly elusive father figure whose entrances and exits occur at the most critical points of the drama. He never makes an actual appearance in the play, he is rarely discussed by the other characters, he is dead when Mansions is barely underway, and these conditions obviously limit the amount of information about him that is available. But his absence is conspicuous, particularly in view of Simon's bitter resentment of his memory, and in view of the play's regressive direction to a period of the hero's life when parental figures were so important. From A Touch of the Poet we know that Melody's investigations found Harford's family background cannot match the distinction of his wife's, that he was perhaps in a relatively similar position to Tyrone's in relation to Mary's respectable upbringing. Harford's death reveals risky business ventures that have threatened the stability of the Company, and uncovers the gambler dreaming of grand stakes under the guise of the conservative businessman. His folly anticipates Simon's risk-taking in the service of a wild fantasy of absolute power and economic control. Deborah, sequestered as she was in her fantasies, offered her husband little or nothing in the form of wifely companionship, as Mary had little to give Tyrone while she was oppressed by morphine addiction. Deborah's reaction to her husband's death is simply "'I am free,'" affirming the fact that she found Harford's needs demanding and impossible to fulfill. By the time of his death, the marriage had apparently settled into a habit of mutual indifference shrouding latent hostility, but Simon's resentment of his father suggests that there was

an earlier period of active antagonism when his father, deprived of his wife's affection and approval, may have shared Tyrone's jealousy of his sons. This is, of course, conjecture, but it would have been a natural reaction and one which does not jeopardize the logic of Simon's behaviour in this play. And, further, this triangle of family relationships is not inconsistent with that presented in Long Day's Journey.

When Deborah re-enters Simon's life in the third scene of the play, she finds a domestic scene fairly tranquil, a marriage of a dominant woman to a man who asks direction. Simon's involvement in business and his marriage have undercut his attempts to realize his intellectual dreams, but he adjusts to the impossibility of achieving his ideal. He is winning a measure of commercial success, and is already following in his father's footsteps, although he is reluctant to admit it. As in the lives of Sara Melody, Edmund Tyrone, and O'Neill himself, the paternal image in Simon's life has ambivalent value. All these children express open resentment of an aloof, jealous father, and yet they all imitate, in some degree, the model presented by Father's behaviour and fantasies. Deborah's entrance is a dramatic interruption of the evening scene, but a more subtle and equally disturbing event has already occurred. The newspaper notice of Harford's funeral catches Simon's eye and the sequence of dialogue that follows brings Simon to an outright assertion of his new identity, so clearly moulded in his father's image, and primes him for acceptance of the offer Joel and Deborah will make him. And mother and brother come not of their own volition, but directed by the authority of the dead father. The return to mother's garden is as much a return to father's mansion. Involvement in his Company, under the terms of Harford's will, ensnares Simon in the archaic

world of sexual terrors and uncontrollable needs as powerfully as does his renewed contact with his mother's fantasies. The Company consumes him, depriving him of autonomy, and, importantly, alienating him from wife and mother. His emulation of his father's career, apparently initiated by Harford's ghostly authority, also denies him access to his fantasy of poetic genius and intellectual distinction. The giant Company, greedy, all-powerful and destructive of aesthetic sensibility, is conceivably a drastic presentation of O'Neill Sr.'s compulsive thrift, and his artistic sell-out. Simon's continued involvement in its hungry mechanism can only be disastrous to fruition of the "touch of the poet" in him.

On one level, More Stately Mansions is a play about marriage. The immediate, focal relationship of the play is that between Simon and Sara and the development of the drama reflects and is determined by the changes in their marital experience. The subject of adult sexual union was heavily invested with profound personal significance for O'Neill: he approached marriage three times himself, and his marital history records mercurial shifts between intimacy and indifference, dependence and independence, love and hate. Sara is several different women in More Stately Mansions--companionable helpmate, powerful mother, voluptuous whore, compassionate protector--and each renovation of her image may reflect aspects of O'Neill's experience with his several mates. Mansions is replete with illicit sexual relationships--courtesan and king, whore and Napoleon of commerce, mother and son--and this fetid atmosphere of illegitimate passion finally infects the legitimate sexual union of Simon and Sara. Sara assumes her most satisfactory posture at the end of the pllay, engineering Simon's escape from the fierce and seemingly

illicit passions that torment him. Her effectiveness as a deliverer is largely based on her wilfull dissociation from the parental personalities that overwhelmed her husband and her marriage. She becomes a strong and vigorous agent treating with Simon's archaic sexual anxieties and terrors, confronting them in their present embodiments--the wizened, witch-like Deborah and the powerful Company.

Closely related to the promise of Simon and Sara's future life together is the promise of potential creative achievement. We saw in A Touch of the Poet that Sara's sexuality and motherly ministrations were catalysts to Simon's creativity, and that she figured prominently in his diary and poetry. And at the end of More Stately Mansions Sara's declaration of devotion to Simon's welfare and security encompasses renewal of his creative propensities: "' . . . I'll give my life now to setting you free to be again the man you were when I first met you--the man I loved best! --the dreamer with a touch of the poet in his soul, and the heart of a boy!'" (Act III, pp. 190-1) As Simon's marriage became further and further embroiled in the conflicts and experiences of his early life, he was led away from "himself," and lost contact with that part of his consciousness which was asserted in his attempt at youthful independence when he lived alone in the woods, writing poetry and organizing his intellectual notions. Yet his regressive impulses, which in extremity would rob him of his independence, are at the same time components of his creative consciousness: the "dreamer with a touch of the poet in his soul" possesses the "heart of a boy." A tenuous balance must be maintained between the child-like attitudes that perceived Sara as both a "holy image" and a compelling sexual figure, and made her an object of imagination and poetry, and the vicious

influences which unleash incapacitating sexual fantasies. Sara has already described how the unmitigated power of these fantasies would effect Simon: he would "' . . . go back and back into the past until he got so lost in his dreams he'd be no more a man at all, but a timid little boy hiding from life behind my skirts!'" (Act II, p. 135) I would suggest that in this aspect of the play O'Neill describes his own creative experience. He recognizes the verity and energy that his sexual fantasies and archaic experience lend to his work, yet he fears their wholesale power, feeling horrible guilt and finally insanity as their ultimate conclusion.

A Wait for Death

A Moon for the Misbegotten returns to the realistic mode of Long Day's Journey and A Touch of the Poet. After the phantasmagorical excursion into Simon Harford's fantasy world of witch-mothers, betrayal and insanity, O'Neill recalls his more familiar themes of alcoholism and loveless, wasted lives. But some of the same figures that populated the Harford stage reappear in A Moon for the Misbegotten. The fundamental triangle of archaic relationships that is the chief determinant of the course of More Stately Mansions--mother, father, son--is reiterated in Misbegotten: Hogan is Jim Tyrone's surrogate father, an improvement on the original, and Jim sees in Hogan's daughter, Josie, qualities which fit her for the role of mother. The strong, pragmatic, self-sufficient figure that Sara Harford was in A Touch of the Poet and in the last scene of More Stately Mansions becomes Josie Hogan. Josie is independent, resourceful, physically massive.[1] As Sara is purged by the climax of Mansions of her obsessive fantasies of power ("'I see now the part my greed and my father's crazy dreams in me had in leading Simon away from himself. . . .'"), Josie, too, unburdens herself of her fantasies of sexual power and, like Sara, gains strength in her new freedom. And Jim, like Simon, benefits from this fresh resource of feminine

1 At the end of More Stately Mansions Sara can, and must, offer her bodily strength to the weakened, semi-conscious Simon, lifting him to his feet and leading him out of the garden. Jim's physical weakness makes similar demands on Josie and her size and strength well suit her for the role of deliverer and protector.

strength and clear vision. The similarities between Josie and Sara that are most persuasive are the congruences in their respective relationships to husband and lover. Both Simon and Jim are incompetent, weak men, demanding of maternal protection and attention: Simon's dramatic business bankruptcy is matched by Jim's ostentatious display of dissipation and failure. Josie and Sara each have within them a rich fund of motherly sympathy with which they spontaneously respond to the appeals of these defeated, tormented men. Yet Josie Hogan, in more than one way, is the larger figure of the two, for she is more fully conscious of the part she can play in Jim's fantasy life. She is fully aware of the exploitative nature of Jim's feeling for her, yet she yields to his demands with understanding and compassion. Her self-consciousness is an important dramatic product of the play, and its emergence, unlike Sara's sudden rejection of powerful archaic fantasies, has sound motivational basis and occurs within a carefully constructed sequence of dialogue. The sustained depth of O'Neill's portrait of Josie underscores the limitations of the characterization of the women in the Harford play, and adds resonance to his treatment of Jim, achieving a revealing and hard-edged distinction between fantasy and reality that was inimical to the tone of More Stately Mansions.

The external dramatic structure of A Moon for the Misbegotten rests on a promise made by an irresponsible alcoholic--a promise apparently broken but essentially trustworthy. The bargain involves the home and livelihood of the Hogans and Jim's ability to resist the expensive sexual temptations of Braodway in return for the respect and friendship of the Hogans. The inability of the three people concerned

to communicate directly and honestly with each other makes this burdensome subject a cause of resentment and suspicion in spite of the ties of affection that bind the three together. The intensity of the feelings generated by the Hogans' fear of eviction and treachery and Jim's resentment of their suspicions is transferred, through Hogan's machinations, to the sexual encounter between Josie and Jim in Act III, which is the heart of the play. The jokes, "kidding" and games assume a deadly seriousness for their perpetrators, and when their intent is discovered, Jim's nightmare of anxiety and guilt and sexual fear is exposed.

Jim Tyrone is ostensibly the inheritor of the position and personality of Jamie in Long Day's Journey. He remains lonely, alienated, cynical, tremulous in the face of intimacy. His alcoholism has strengthened its grasp on him, and the source of its power is more fully explored in this play. But within the context of these last four plays of O'Neill he has a kinship with Edmund, Simon, Con Melody and Tyrone Sr. that affords his characterization in Misbegotten a wider significance than it would have as simply a representation of O'Neill's older brother. He is the final synthesis of these male characters, removed from the family that always seems to close so tightly around, preventing O'Neill from seeing them from sufficient objective distance. Jim is presented at a moment of crisis that one feels is not unique or contrived, but a permanent image of Jim's world. The momentary relief he finds in Josie's arms, unlike the security Sara offers Simon, is plainly and painfully transitory, a rich but evanescent moment of peace estranged from the intolerable demands of reality. Josie's simultaneous self-discovery and acute awareness of what Jim is really asking of her and the boundaries he is imposing on their relationship lead to a fuller

understanding of these men who people O'Neill's plays.

The behaviour and situation of Jim Tyrone has firm roots in the life of O'Neill's brother. After the death of O'Neill Sr., Jamie did enjoy a period of apparent health and contentment with Ella. During these years he seemed at last to win the maternal favour and protection he felt was denied in childhood. The tensions engendered by the presence of male rivals for Ella's attention were dispelled: father was dead and brother Eugene was busy living his own life. Ella's victory over her morphine addiction suggests that she may have finally come to terms with reality and was prepared, as she had never been before, to assume the maternal role Jamie demanded of her. Seeing that her recovery was permanent, Jamie at last gave her his trust, but his response to her death showed that it was child-like faith demanding sustained, predetermined reward and confirmation from Ella. When he arrived from the west coast in New York with their mother's body, he shocked Eugene with the story of his hysterical, consummately decadent behaviour on the trip home. The story obviously touched an exposed area of acute sensitivity in O'Neill's consciousness, for it eventually provided the basis for this final brooding, despairing investigation of the themes that control and direct all the creative work of his later life. Jamie's return to alcoholism and dissipation after his mother's death is the psychological point of departure for A Moon for the Misbegotten.

Jim Tyrone's real-life biographical background is supplemented by the portrait of Jamie in Long Day's Journey. Descriptions of character and appearance which occur in the stage directions of both plays are consistent, indicating that O'Neill's initial intention was to extend and develop in Misbegotten the personality he had presented in

Long Day's Journey in the figure of Jamie. Jamie experiences Mary's withdrawal, with the help of morphine, to a distant golden world of youth in the same way Jim Tyrone remebers his mother's death. In the coffin Mary looked to Jim "' . . . young and pretty like someone I remembered meeting long ago. Practically a stranger. To whom I was a stranger. Cold and indifferent. Not worried about me any more.'"[1] Jamie responds to Mary's rejection of him in Long Day's Journey by paying a visit to a motherly whore, Fat Violet. In the comfort of her soft bosom he seeks some consolation for his injury, but finding her too preoccupied with her own needs to yield to his demands, he asserts his frustration by promoting a sexual encounter through which he is able to express the feelings of power that have been thwarted by Mary's indifference. Jim expresses his frustration and hurt at his mother's final rejection by seeking out the most conspicuously whorish female he can find.[2] In both cases Jim's behaviour is ostentatiously shameful, eliciting recrimination from those around him, self-recrimination from within, and intensifying his sense of his own worthlessness. In both cases confession of his misdeeds is compulsive, in spite of the pain it incurrs. This re-iterated pattern of behaviour underscores the contiguity of the two portraits of O'Neill's older brother. In my discussion of Long Day's Journey I suggested that the aura of helplessness and incompetence projected by Jamie may have been a posture adopted early in childhood calculated to

1 Eugene O'Neill, A Moon for the Misbegotten (New York: Random, 1952), p. 147. All subsequent references to the play will pertain to this edition.

2 When Simon Harford finds his mother's indifference and her interest in his sons finally intolerable, he too seeks a vengeance by transforming Sara into a whore, making her his mistress instead of his wife.

win maternal attention. When Jim Tyrone appears in A Moon for the Misbegotten, the stage directions indicate that, in spite of middle-age, he has preserved that aura of lovable incompetence:

> . . . he still has the ghost of a former youthful, irresponsible Irish charm--that of the beguiling ne'er-do-well. It is his humour and charm which have kept him attractive to women and popular with men as a drinking companion. (Act I, p. 37)

It is an effective charm: Josie responds to it spontaneously, telling Jim to eat, not to drink so much, to take care of himself, finally yielding totally to his demands for maternal solicitude. And Jim is not unique among O'Neill's male characters in using this form of appeal to elicit a satisfactory response from his environment. Edmund Tyrone continually confronts his family with his sickly helplessness and uncontrollable coughing. Tyrone Sr.'s tale of hardship and misfortune draws a murmur of sympathy and compassion from even so antagonistic a listener as Edmund. Con Melody displays his wares of lovable weakness before an indifferent Deborah Harford and does indeed elicit her attention and interest. Of all Jim Tyrone's dramatic ancestors, however, Simon Harford is the clearest link between Jim and the other late characters through whom O'Neill explored his own fantasy world. Simon's illness, in the first of the two plays in which he is involved, and the "touch of the poet" he harbours within himself, bear obvious resemblance to the afflictions and literary aspirations of Edmund, O'Neill's stated surrogate in Long Day's Journey. At the same time, Simon's experiences in More Stately Mansions, the nature and resolution of the conflicts he suffers, are closely allied to the presentation of Jim in Misbegotten. Finally, this circle of inclusive, over-lapping identities is drawn tight by the sorority of O'Neill women who reflect each other in their relationships to these men.

Jim's treatment of Josie through the first three acts

of the play reveals his subscription to Simon's rigidly classified, dichotomized vision of woman. He is clearly offended and revolted by Josie's rough language, her new-found and pretended thirst for alcohol, and her honest expression of sexual desire. He has his own image of Josie, an image which is threatened and contradicted by these other qualities. Jim tells Josie that she is "real and healthy and clean and fine and warm and kind" (Act II, p. 118), that is, consummately maternal.[1] As long as Jim sees in Josie the sacred image of mother, he cannot have sexual intercourse with her. When Josie invites him to her bed, he answers with exaggerated lust, reverting to the impersonal slang of Broadway gamblers and whores, using his language to eliminate the image of mother, and to ward off Josie's offer of intimacy. Jim finds Josie's sensuality disturbing and unacceptable; he can deal with it, and his own involuntary response, only in terms of the same distinctions that separated mother and sexual partner for Simon Harford. Jim accuses Josie of deliberately enticing him into a culpable position, of betraying his trust. In More Stately Mansions Simon attributed his distress to the treachery and calculation of Deborah and Sara, and O'Neill seemed to concur with this interpretation. In this play, however, O'Neill makes it clear that Jim's resentment of Josie's disturbing behaviour is unjustifiable. This suggests that some of O'Neill's neurotic, unconscious projections were becoming conscious and that the stringent realism of this play was making it difficult to maintain some life-long unconscious assumptions for which his art had been a vehicle.

Jim's resentment of Josie's invitation to love-making

1 Mary Tyrone's frigidity, abetted by morphine, may have made her seem "clean" to her sons, but "healthy," "real," and "warm" are hardly

is clearly illegitimate:

" . . . I warned you, didn't I, if you kept on-- Why did you have to act like a whore , asking me to come to bed? That wasn't what I came here for. And you promised tonight would be different." (Act III, p. 139)

Jim needs the kind of maternal love and acceptance he feels Josie can give him. When he finds Josie's role as mother becoming confused with her potential as a sexual partner, he reacts as Simon did. Simon, faced with a similar situation when wife and mother form their fantastic alliance, makes a determined effort to re-organize circumstances to his advantage, constructing a firm boundary between office and home, between whore and mother. Jim, too, labours to reshape Josie until she conforms to his needs, knocking the glass of bourbon from her hand, answering her sexual overtures with hardened, repelling cynicism, exploiting her maternal resources with the same kind of helpless, injured posture Simon adopts in the last scene of More Stately Mansions. Long Day's Journey drew the connection between morphine and whores, and now that association seems to be transferred to alcohol and illicit sex. Josie cannot even pretend to sip at her glass of whiskey without conjuring in Jim's mind images of "drunken tramps" and dirty hotel rooms. Jim succeeds in uncovering and exposing Josie's fantasy of sexual prowess and promiscuity, asking her to be "herself," demanding from her a promise that tonight will be "different." But Jim is not seeking to overturn their sexual games and pretenses in favour of a frank, open relationship. Rather, all his efforts are directed towards reconstruction of an ideal and acceptable relationship with his mother. Jim's fantasy

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apt descriptions of the remote woman so involved in her own fantasy life in Long Day's Journey. In his persuasive catalogue of ideal feminine qualities Jim is describing a fantasized image of his mother, and prescribing the conditions under which Josie can participate in the image.

is congruent with the world-view presented in this play's three predecessors, and O'Neill probably imagined that this central fantasy was at least partially realized when his brother enjoyed Ella's exclusive attention in the few years before her death. Freed from her morphine addiction, Mary Tyrone-Ella O'Neill was no doubt able to effect at least a functional escape from the fantasy world of sexual gratification that was similar to the world that existed within Deborah Harford's walled garden and caused Simon so much torment. The route to the peace and security Simon wins at the end of More Stately Mansions involves three essential steps: the elimination of male rivals, the dissolution of the sexual fantasies of mother candidates which stimulate guilt-incurring sexual desires on the part of the would-be son, and a concommitant third step, which is the escape from adult sexual commitments.[1] When Sara Harford promises to destroy the paternal Company and to devote her exclusive attention to Simon's needs, male rivals, both father and sons, are effectively dispelled. Within the context of A Moon for the Misbegotten, Hogan, Josie's father, is Jim's only potential rival, but he actually works to promote the liaison between his daughter and his friend. Perhaps for this very reason, Jim finds him an attractive father figure and is willing to adopt a filial attitude towards him.[2] Josie's virginity ensures that there are no other rivals on the scene; and the last

1 The relationship between Ella O'Neill and Jamie that developed after her cure seems to have fulfilled all three of these conditions. The sexual fantasies stimulated by morphine would be less powerful after the cure; Papa was dead and brother Eugene married and with a family of his own; and the mother-son relationship obviously negated needs for adult sexual commitment.

2 The whiskey "games" Hogan and Jim play are a more light-hearted but significant re-enactment of the deadly serious "battle of wits" Jamie and his father engage in Long Day's Journey.

brother was exiled from the farm at the opening of the play. Both Sara Harford and Josie undergo the stripping-away of their private fantasies that interfered with their suitability as potential sources of maternal sustenance. Sara discards her "crazy dreams" of her own volition, and Simon does not participate actively in the expulsion of Deborah's disturbing influence. But in A Moon for the Misbegotten the exposure and dissolution of Josie's fantasies are a result of Jim's calculation and manouevring. Finally, Simon's rejection of adulthood in favour of the security and unalienable rights of a boy is matched by Jim's regression to the same sphere of fantasized peace and security offered by a mother who promises to love him "no matter what" and who withdraws her adult sexual claims. Jim wants tonight to be "different" in very specific aspects and that is what he achieves through determined and vigilant manipulation of Josie.

In spite of the exaggerated offence he takes at Josie's sexual advances, Jim's attraction to her is by no means asexual. His fascination with her breasts and her wealth of soft flesh, his plan for slipping into her warm bed and spending the night with his head pillowed on her bosom indicate that Josie's female physicality is vital and enticing to him. His rejection of her sexual invitation is specifically a rejection of genital sexuality and the "poison" of guilt that infects it in his mind. In spite of his acute perception of the fantastic nature of Josie's promiscuity, Jim sees no farther. His vision of Josie is totally confined within the dichotomy of women he is committed to through his early experience with his own mother. According to the quality of Josie's physical response to him, maternal or genital, he sees her as either the sacred image of a forgiving mother or the "blonde pig on the

train" inspiring erotic feelings that will incurr guilt and threaten alienation and recrimination. Jim unconsciously assumes that the only way he can win and retain Josie's love is through the initiation of an infantile, polymorphous sexual relationship. His need to return to a pre-genital state renders him incapable of an adult relationship with Josie, and his incapacity parallels Simon's enforced suspension of sexual relations with Sara as long as the mother-wife boundary between her and Deborah is in jeopardy.

The guilt feelings aroused in Jim by recollections of his behaviour following his mother's last illness and death torture and obsess him. They are the stimuli to the repeated pattern of behaviour that was first shaped in his earliest experience and now determines the course of his relationship to Josie. The mode of perception with which Jim saw and still sees his mother's death is that of a small child, abandoned by an indifferent and perhaps vengeful mother. His experience of her death is analogous to Simon's sensations of the treacherous alliance of wife and mother. There are distinct similarities of language and image in the descriptions of these two feminine betrayals, widely separate as they are in kind. In the eerie parlour scene of More Stately Mansions Simon describes his sensations as he feels the conspiracy of Deborah and Sara knitting itself back together:

" . . . Mother and Sara have vanished--Mother took her hand and led her back--as if she opened a door into the past in whose darkness they vanished to reappear as one woman--a woman recalling Mother but a strange woman--unreal, a ghost coldly remote and proud--with a smile deliberately amused by its own indifference--because she no longer wants me--has taken all she needed--I have served my purpose--she has ruthlessly got rid of me--she is free--and I am left lost in myself, with nothing!" (Mansions, Act II, p. 125-6)

Jim recalls his mother's appearance as she lay in her coffin:

"I couldn't hardly recognize her. She looked young and pretty like some-

one I remembered meeting long ago. Practically a stranger. Cold and indifferent. Not worried about me any more. Free at last. Free from worry. From pain. From me." (Act III, p. 147)

These are two highly dissimilar events treated with strikingly similar language. Through the congruencies of language Simon's suspicion of treachery directed deliberately towards him seems transferred to Jim in his reaction to his mother's death. He sees her final departure as a personal rejection of her son, a deliberate, ruthless escape from his grasp.[1] And, more than this, the congruencies of language suggest that Jim, like Simon, experienced alienation from a beautiful, aloof mother as sexual rejection. The "young and pretty" figure in the coffin and the beautiful, inhumanly remote woman in Simon's mind are analogous to celibate schoolgirl in the adolescent fantasies that deny Mary Tyrone's role as mother and wife. Deborah, another extension of Mary Tyrone-Ella O'Neill, speaks very explicitly of her aversion to the intimate bodily association with her young son motherhood demanded of her. Finally, it is clear that Jim's frustration, hostility and guilt at his mother's death is not an isolated or singular incident in his life, but rather one more expression of sensations he has repeatedly experienced since his earliest years. In my discussion of Long Day's Journey I suggested that Jamie, as a child, saw a causal relationship between his feelings of his own worthlessness and his mother's withdrawal into fantasy or morphine. Underlying Jim's behaviour in Misbegotten is a firm and continued commitment to that interpretation made early in life, and in this play the source of his feelings of worthlessness is plainly revealed as his genital sexuality. His deliberate attempts to reconstruct a gratify-

1 Jim's resentment of his mother's escape through death is obviously unjustifiable and its irrationality undercuts justification of Simon's parallel feelings.

ing, secure relationship with his mother through Josie's understanding and compassion involve an irrational, spontaneous avoidance of sexual intercourse with Josie as long as she has potential as a mother surrogate. His confession of wrong-doing and expression of pain and injury is similar to Simon's dilemma in the last scene of More Stately Mansions. For both men confession and adoption of a pose of abject helplessness effect a return to an infantile sexuality which assures them of admission to the security these strong, maternal women can offer.[1] And in infantile erotic expression they are no longer threatened by the competition of male rivals, chiefly father.

Because Josie is a sensitive, perceptive and kind-hearted woman, Jim achieves his goal. She honours her promise to "love" him no matter how shocking and terrible the nature of his confession. But, in spite of his momentary victory over a hostile world, Jim is ultimately the loser. Josie herself is acutely aware of how much more love she could offer him beyond the strictly drawn boundaries of maternal love, and, by the end of the third act, she is painfully conscious of Jim's incapacity to accept the fullness of her feeling for him. Jim's life and vision have so narrowed and constricted that he can see no farther than the insistently repetitive scenario of archaic frustration and guilt and its nightmare recurrence in the scene of his mother's death and the journey home. The drawing room on the train slips between him and the immediate, alive world that surrounds him with its fresh opportunities for love and beauty. His feelings for this world are

1 The figure of the benevolent, forgiving, protective Mother is active in all these four plays. She is introduced in Long Day's Journey, in the shape of the Virgin Mary who is vitally alive in Mary Tyrone's fantasies. Presumably Ella O'Neill communicated to her playwright son the verity and

strangled by a crippling cynicism that justifies his rejection by a world that necessarily must be aghast at his spectacularly decadent behaviour. In the morning, when he awakens to a magnificent sunrise, he remembers his offering of confidence and trust to Josie with shame and anxiety, attributing his moonlight self-revelation to the loose mouth of "old John Barleycorn." He greets Josie and the morning with wary cynicism, cutting through the rich experiences of the night before with a sharp-edged self-mockery. But somehow Josie reassures him of her commitment to him, and, if he couldn't see the beauty of the moonlight, he can feel, at least fleetingly, the warmth of the sunrise. Watching the dawn with Josie, he experiences profound emotion that he first chokes on, and then can finally accept and acknowledge:

> "God seems to be putting on quite a display. I like Belasco better. Rise of curtain. Act Four stuff." Her face has fallen into lines of bitter hurt, but he adds quickly and angrily "God damn it! Why do I have to pull that lousy stuff?" With genuine feeling. "God, it's beautiful Josie! I-I'll never forget it--here with you." (Act IV, p. 174)

At this moment Josie is, for Jim, an agent of reality, piercing temporarily the hard shell that surrounds Jim's fearful vulnerability and torturous fantasies of guilt and rejection. She possesses the strength to quiet her own needs and fears in order to offer Jim a brief and peaceful respite from the ghosts that haunt him. She achieves far-reaching awareness not only of herself, but of Jim, too. Sara offers Simon life-long devotion and protection from the spectres of his childhood, but Josie recognizes the ultimate futility of her love for Jim and the

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importance of such a figure in dealing with sexual anxieties and conflicts, for the "holy image" is as significant and powerful in the minds of Simon and Jim as it is in Mary's.

impossible strength of his fears. It seems that O'Neill is taking yet another look at the personalities confronted in Long Day's Journey, A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions, and that the dramatic situation of A Moon for the Misbegotten is not qualitatively different from those of the other three plays. Perhaps the disparate conclusions of Mansions and Misbegotten grow from O'Neill's greater, more vigorous commitment to reality in the latter play; the absolute control that Simon's consciousness, obsessed and tortured by archaic fantasies as it is, wields in More Stately Mansions is in this play surrendered. The growth of this play bears a desolate, death-like despair for Jim, so unlike Simon's promised future of peace, security and fulfilment. Yet Josie emerges strengthened and revitalized through her her arduous, painful confrontation with fantasy and reality. She is the ultimate inheritor of the "touch of the poet" shared by Edmund, Jamie, Tyrone, Melody and Simon.

Josie's personality and position bear fundamental, convincing resemblance to those of other of O'Neill's feminine characters. In her relationship to her father, she seems born of the same system of attitudes that produced both Nora and Sara Melody. Nora possessed a certain unalienable authority over Con, in spite of her display of weakness, through her willingness to support and perpetrate his fantasies of nobility and distinction. Little Hogan has his own fantasies of power, even in the face of Josie's immensely superior physical stature. Josie wields her broomstick, a totally unnecessary weapon, with the same cunning Nora employed in her persistent pose of abject submission to Con's fantasized authority. In the behaviour of both women is the implicit

assertion of their consciousness of the reality behind the image of power, and that consciousness is an imminent threat to the security of both Con and Phil. Sara's position in relation to Simon at the end of More Stately Mansions offers another parallel: Simon's fears and fantasies have been broadly and explicitly exposed to her view. Her "love" for him, like Nora's love for Con, and Josie's for both her father and Jim, then involves the same awareness of the deepest, most radical components of Simon's mind, with a life-long commitment to compassion and devoted understanding.[1]

Josie shares some of the same feelings for Phil as Nora experienced for her husband. Josie's kinship with Sara is manifest, and in A Touch of the Poet Sara, in one area of her consciousness, envisions herself as her father's mate. Josie has been motherless since childhood and very early assumed the role of mother to her father's sons. Phil himself perceives and appreciatively affirms the similarities between his long-dead wife and his daughter. What all this adds up to is that in a powerfully determinant aspect of Josie's personality, one formed early in life, she is her father's mate, her brother's mother. The sexual patterns that grew from this configuration of her childhood experience, coupled with the influence of her father's personality, foster the fantasies and anxieties that obsess her as an adult.

Phil Hogan is a wary little man, suspicious of the world

1 This re-iterated aspect of man-woman partnership seems to develop progressively through these three plays. Nora's "love" for Con is genuine to a degree, but her "pride" in it, and the wholesale power she has over him, render it somewhat suspect. In Mansions Sara's power over Simon is eventually resolved to his apparent advantage, but up to that point her and Deborah's cognisance of his weakness is a dangerous threat. In Misbegotten O'Neill seems able to confront Josie's superior stength and awareness without seeing in it an inescapable threat to Jim's security.

and its motives. He tells Josie, "' . . . my motto in life is never trust anyone too far, not even myself.'" (Act I, p. 23) His love for his daughter is deep and genuine, but he is unwilling and unable to express it unguardedly and openly. His instincts for self-preservation demand that he couch his affection for her in their habitual games, jokes, kidding, and a kind of defensive cynicism that protects him from betrayal of any serious commitment he might make to her. Phil feels the appropriateness of a match between Jim and Josie, and is interested, in a fatherly way, in such a liaison being realized; but when, in the first act, he and Josie speak of the possibility he can discuss its desirability only in terms of financial advantage and material gain. His elaborate plot to bring the couple together shields his real feelings for Jim and Josie; his pretended drunkenness offers a quick escape route if Josie discovers and rejects his plan. Josie as a little girl must have been confronted with this same guarded, indirect affection from a father who feared betrayal of his trust and love. Her adult fantasies of sexual promiscuity, publicized at every opportunity, are direct outgrowths of her childhood relationship to her father: on the one hand they operate to elicit from her father a jealous, possessive response; on the other hand they create a world where her sexual needs are spontaneously accepted by men who wait upon her favour, and are subject to her authority. In spite of her physical attrativeness, Josie wants to see herself as totally devoid of feminine charm. Her mannish position in the household, and the game of being her father's pal, avert the threat of incestuous feelings. At the same time, through her declarations of erotic conquest, she is demanding from her father an assertion of his own rights of proprietorship over

her sexual favours.[1] She asks him why he has not intervened in her love life, but the question is framed in half-joking language that need not exact a potentially painful answer: "'I've often wondered why a man that likes a fight as much as you didn't grab at the excuse of my disgrace to beat the lights out of the men.'" (Act I, p. 19) Hogan is too well aware of the fantastical nature of her promiscuity, and too reluctant to openly express his love for her, to assert his authority. When he offers drunken suggestions on how to entice Jim into bed, Josie responds with bitterness and resentment: "'You're full of sly advice all of a sudden, ain't you? You dirty little tick! . . . it's not right, a father to tell his daughter how to-- '" (Act II, p. 93) Hogan side-steps with agility Josie's expressions of frustration and pleas for acceptance and attention, and has no doubt done so throughout his daughter's life.

The child Josie may have found an effective route to her father's heart through emulation of her dead mother. Her conversation with her brother in the first scene of the play reveals a protective, maternal personality. She probably won approbation and approval from her father for such behaviour when she was a girl and she has sustained her commitment to this role. Josie's actions in the first scene of the play gain additional significance if they are seen in the light of Josie's elimination of all rivals for her father's attention. Mike is not the first son to leave the farm, and Hogan shows not anger but satisfaction at Josie's part in his escape. Hogan's implicit concurrence in the liaison between himself and his daughter, as long as it requires no outright declaration of trust or affection, makes all the more special

1 Josie's fantasies of illicit sexuality may shed some light on the motives behind Jamie and Jim's whoring. In all three characters, indulgence, whether in fantasy or in reality, in illegitimate erotic relation-

and valuable his acceptance of Jim. Josie must feel her father's approval of her love for Jim, and draw from it the strength to embark, finally, on a sexual relationship.

All these archaic components of Josie's personality, fantasies and anxieties and unfulfilled needs inherited by the adult from the child, shape her relationship to Jim. In the first part of the play their dialogue is limited to overtly sexual jokes and "kidding," both of them refraining from commitment until the moonlight date is set, and even then the would-be lovers hide their real seriousness. The mock-agressive banter that Josie and Jim engage in operates in the same way her verbal duelling with her father does. In fact, Josie emulates in her response to Jim her behaviour towards Hogan. She promotes her promiscuous image in Jim's presence as vigorously as she does in her father's. Her ostentatiously displayed thirst for alcohol, which is a new extension of her role as a loose, sexually-experienced woman, elicits from Jim at first only a disappointed indifference, but he eventually explodes with anger and displeasure, knocking the whiskey glass from her hand. Josie responds to Jim's authoritative gesture with "suprising meekness: 'All right, Jim, if you don't want me to-- '" (Act III, p. 121) Her submission and easy compliance to her lover's commands suggests that this is the response she wanted from Jim, just as she desired the intervention of authority from her father.

Certainly Josie initially exhibits the same fears of intimacy with Jim as she does with Hogan. In Act II, as she stands alone and humiliated when the hour for her rendezvous with Jim has long passed,

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ships seems to occur in response to parental indifference. (And there is a vengenace on Deborah implied in Simon's whoring at the office.)

her love for him rapidly turns to hate and the need for vengeance. She experiences Jim's absence as a betrayal of her trust, the painful rejection she feared. Although she must know that her father is an inveterate liar and schemer, Hogan needs to exert little effort to persuade her that Jim is totally untrustworthy. Her mind computes all circumstances as evidence of her own sexual unworthiness, and she resolves to play a "trick" on him to punish him for causing her such pain. She reteats to the safest position she can hold: the person who perpetrates the cleverest "joke" is the person who avoids all commitment and avoids all the hazards of intimacy and honesty. This position involves an unceasing, vigilant defense of genuine feeling. Her anger at Jim's assumption that he could easily seduce her is really an expression of fear at the power he has over her--the power of her own feelings for him--to rob her of the gratification she is accustomed to through her fantasies of sexual omnipotence. While part of her yearns for real erotic gratification, another part forbids the relaxation of vigilance it would entail and draws back from danger. When Jim pulls her to him with "genuine passion" and then suddenly releases her, "Her face betrays the confused conflict within her of fright, passion, happiness and bitter resentment." (Act III, p. 114) At this point in the play Josie is still unable to understand sexual rejection as having a cause outside herself; simultaneous "fright" and "happiness" drive her back into her role of loose woman, self-sufficient and indifferent to the men she seduces, avoiding real sexual commitment.

The success of Josie's elaborate scheme of revenge, which will deprive Jim not only of actual intercourse with her, but as well of the money with which to buy the sexual favours of the whores on

Broadway, is threatened by her strong sexual and maternal feelings for him.[1] Even in the first act of the play, she responds to him in a decidedly protective, motherly way, telling him to hide in her bedroom during Harder's visit to save himself from implication, offering his wasted body food, finding real pleasure in his admiration of her breasts. The success of her "joke" is later jeopardized by her spontaneous reaction to Jim's pitiful misery. She is resentful when she realizes that this is the only kind of love that Jim can accept from her, that his real purpose in coming to her is to exploit her maternal resources. But when Jim threatens abrupt departure, like a hurt, helpless boy, Josie can only call him back, finally offering him a mother's unconditional love. She sacrifices her own needs and desires to fulfill his demands, and accepts the role in which Jim wishes to cast her in his scenario of confession and forgiveness. Sara does the same for Simon, offering him peace, unconditional devotion, unalienable security. But in this play the happiness that was to be immutable in More Stately Mansions is seen as impermanent, evanescent and artificial. What elements of Misbegotten expose the futility of the myth of everlasting devotion that concludes More Stately Mansions?

There is a fundamental consistency in the dramatic situation of all these four plays. Jim Tyrone is a character re-iterating not only the personality of Jamie in Long Day's Journey but also the premises that determine the behaviour of Edmund Tyrone, Con Melody and, particularly, Simon Harford. The regressive direction taken by all these

1 Josie's vengeful scheme, if successful, would effectively emasculate Jim, thwarting the sexual hunger she believes to be uppermost in his mind. In the same way, the malicious alliance of Deborah and Sara seeks to render Simon impotent and sexually unfulfilled.

men in the face of conflict is consummately figured in the image that emerges from the third act of A Moon for the Misbegotten: Josie gazes with sadened countenance at the sleeping, boyishly helpless man she cradles in her strong protective arms.[1] Powerful anxieties, guilt and sexual fears have created a nightmare in Jim's mind that drives him blindly to Josie's arms for comfort and consolation. The conflicts that torment him are not qualitatively different from the contests that are waged in the minds of his predecessors. The information supplied by Long Day's Journey about parental personalities and early family life offers substantiation of the logic of Jim's behaviour in the later play. A Touch of the Poet develops the same themes and makes more specific the sexual dimensions of the relationship between parent and child and its influence in the child's development of adult sexual identity and relationships. In More Stately Mansions there is violent parental intervention in the hero's sex life and for Simon the most desirable mode of erotic expression becomes polymorphous infantile sexuality. A Moon for the Misbegotten extends these clarifications of O'Neill's preoccupations, and in Jim Tyrone maternal rejection or indifference is clearly associated with a fear of sexual intimacy.

1 A recapitulation of Jim's predecessors and their respective modes of regression may be in order here. In Long Day's Journey Edmund's illness renews his dependency on parental care; Jamie's alcoholic irresponsibility, his failure to find a place for himself in the world, and his general incompetence (he can't even be trusted to cut the hedge straight) render him no less dependent than his invalid brother. In A Touch of the Poet Con Melody can only deal with a troublesome world by stepping backwards to a period of his life that represents expression of his own authority and omnipotence; Simon Harford's illness marks the failure of his attempt to achieve independence of his family and draws him into a child-like position of helplessness. And, of course, More Stately Mansions imprisons Simon in his childhood, and culminates in Simon winning assurance of maternal solicitude similar to but not indentical with that which Josie offers Jim.

A Moon for the Misbegotten, then, continues to explore the fantasy which obsessed O'Neill in More Stately Mansions. And the final scenes of these two plays are so strikingly similar that they beg comparison. Yet, at the same time, there are subtle disparities in their tone and hue that my be revelatory in analysis. Such analysis of less than concrete details is a hazardous area of criticism, with its tempting opportunities for subjective response, but let us look at the language of the scene directions that open Act IV of Misbegotten. Josie and Jim remain in the postures that closed Act III:

"Josie sits in the same position on the steps, as if she had not moved, her arms around Tyrone. He is still asleep, his head on her breast. His face has the same exhausted, death-like repose. Josie's face is set in an expression of numbed, resigned sadness. Her body sags tiredly. In spite of her strength, holding herself like this for hours, for fear of waking him, is becoming too much for her. The two make a strangely tragic picture in the wan dawn light--this big, sorrowful woman hugging a haggard-faced, middle-aged drunkard against her breast, as if he were a sick child." (Act IV, p. 157)

The light of the sunrise offers less comfort than does the romantic light of the moon; it illuminates the painful, barren futility of Jim's fantasy of forgiveness and security. His expectations of Josie are revealed as selfish and impossible. By dawn her body is cramped and weary, her face sad and numb with wasted emotion. This tragic, bitter image of love is drawn with the precision and objectivity of a medieval tableau, sternly representative of a fundamental truth.[1] Is this the inevitable morning that must be born of the moonlight encounter in the Hogans' yard--and of

1 In his chapter on Misbegotten in The Late Plays of Eugene O'Neill, Rolf Scheibler notes the influence of the powerful image of the Pieta in this scene. Certainly his insight is legitimate, and no doubt O'Neill was conscious of his imitation of and his significant departures from the Christian image of the Virgin Mary holding the dead Christ. But exploration of such a correspondence does not necessarily illuminate the real motive power behind the playwright's evocative construction of the scene.

the evening scene in the walled, fantastic garden?[1]

Often enough we have seen that Josie and Jim are legitimate kin of Sara and Simon. And the problem of their divergent destinies persists. I suggest, in answer to that question, that in this play the character of the strong, protective woman responded more fully to O'Neill's portrayal, and Josie developed into a dramatic personality of impressive dimension and offered a resource of realism that was unavailable in the other play. The playwright's consciousness seems to float omnipotently through the first scenes of the play, fixing itself in no one personality,[2] yet meticulously constructing the details of circumstance that climax in the confrontation in Act III between fantasy and reality. When Josie experiences the exposure of her fantasies and achieves new awareness and freedom from their constrictions, O'Neill joins her in her awareness. She experiences sexual rejection as both Simon and Jim did, yet she rides through the waves of turbulent emotion that threaten to flood her consciousness, and is able to understand Jim's rejection of her as having a real, immediate cause, external to herself, independent of her private fears and fantasies. Of utmost significance is that with the freedom won through painful confrontation with the exposure of her erotic fantasies, she gains a new language, a frank, even beautiful mode of self-expression that bespeaks truth and which O'Neill allows her to recognize as "poetry." In her soliloquy

1 The other three plays of this group all conclude with a midnight or evening scene; only Misbegotten waits for sunrise.

2 This objectivity in itself separates Misbegotten from More Stately Mansions: in the latter play Simon's fears and fantasies control and direct the whole development of the drama.

at the conclusion of Act III she expresses her understanding of the nature of her selfless gift to Jim:

" . . . our night that'll be different from all others, with a dawn that won't creep over dirty windowpanes but will wake in the sky like a promise of God's peace in the soul's dark sadness. . . . Will you listen to me, Jim! I must be a poet. Who would have guessed it? Sure, love is a mad wonderful inspiration!" (Act III, p. 153)

And even after the moon has waned and the harsher light of day discovers the pain and sorrow of her position, Josie maintains her commitment to reality, and with it her claim to poetic language.[1] In a few simple, dramatic words she describes the cruel irony and terrible beauty of her nocturnal experience: "'A virgin who bears a dead child in the night, and the dawn finds her still a virgin. If that isn't a miracle, what is?'" (Act IV, p. 160) In a play so fraught with exaggerated if colourful language, "kidding," jokes, lies, dissimulation, Josie's words are importantly alive and real. She must and does revert to the habitual mode of communication between her father and herself, so disturbed is he by her "queer" talk. Yet she preserves her profound consciousness of her experience, as witnessed by the straightforward, frankly expressed emotion and understanding of her final words:

Her face sad, tender and pitying--gently. "May you have your wish and die in your sleep soon, Jim, darling. May you rest forever in forgiveness and peace." She turns slowly and goes into the house. (Act IV, p. 177)

The implicit conflict that threatened Simon's future as a poet at the end of More Stately Mansions involved his simultaneous fear of wholesale regression and his need for partial regression in order to regain the position of the "dreamer with a touch of the poet in his soul and the

1 It is tempting to speculate that Act IV may have been an addition to the play, that in its initial conception Misbegotten may have concluded with Josie's fine and touching moonlight soliloquy. Act IV seems,

heart of a boy." In A Moon for the Misbegotten Josie undergoes arduous revelation of her sexual fantasies, rooted in long-past experience, and survives the ordeal as Simon could not. She becomes the rightful heir to the "touch of the poet."

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in some ways, a courageous clarification of the truths exposed in the third act. Indeed, the play could have ended, without jeopardy to its logic, with the Act III scene of the weak, defeated man comforted by the strong, devoted mother, as More Stately Mansions was concluded.

The Last Mansions

1943 and the completion of A Moon for the Misbegotten brought an abrupt end to O'Neill's long career as a productive dramatist. While he and Carlotta were still living at Tao House in California O'Neill had tentative plans for a cycle of one-act plays entitled "By Way of Obit," but Hughie was the only drama of that group to be completed. O'Neill had already made his final artistic statement, and the planned obituary was either superfluous--or painfully impossible.

In 1943 O'Neill had ten years of life before him. Writing was difficult as the severity of his hand tremours increased, but his best plays were written under the strain of this affliction. And his health was not so poor as to prevent him from engaging in a busy social life in New York in the late 1940's. Carlotta was as attentive to his needs as ever, letting no unwanted interruption disturb his peace. There was enough money to buy both isolation and comfort. But during these last years O'Neill was overcome by a brooding, sombre despair that left his creative energies strangled and impotent and his private life dismal and joyless. Formerly there had been a vital urgency in his writing: out of each play grew manifold directions and images for other dramas, generating pressures and tensions in his consciousness that could only be alleviated through fresh creativity and new explorations of pressing themes.

The chronology of O'Neill's final works seems to have been as follows: after the removal from Casa Genotta to Tao House in 1937

he worked with the cycle, "A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed," bringing A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions closer to completion. The cycle must have been posing difficult problems because Carlotta reported that The Iceman Cometh, written in 1939, was felt by her husband to be a kind of escape or release from work on the cycle. Iceman returns to the early years of O'Neill's adulthood, to the scene of his own suicide attempt at Jimmy the Priest's. Later experiences, which followed his decision to become a dramatist, are incorporated into the play as well, in the figures of various Greenwich Village personalities he had known. The language of Iceman returns to the source of O'Neill's earliest dramas--his sea-faring experience of destitution and raw life among societies outcasts. Long Day's Journey into Night was begun late in 1939 and completed nearly two years later. Its temporal setting--1912--makes it a sequel to Iceman's presentation of the months O'Neill spent as a lodger at Jimmy the Priest's. The parental themes of Iceman, only obliquely expressed in the triangle of relationships among Larry, the imprisoned Rosa, and her son, are clarified in Long Day's Journey. The radical personal commitment involved in writing of the Tyrones caused O'Neill acute anguish; he suffered mentally and physically. A Moon for the Misbegotten was begun and completed in 1943, and the eighteen month interval between the completion of Long Day's Journey and the undertaking of Misbegotten was occupied with other work, probably preparation of the extant versions of the two cycle plays.[1]

1 There is evidence to support this. First, O'Neill was at work, spasmodically, on the cycle from his arrival at Tao House in 1937 until 1943, and he was becoming increasingly reluctant about undertaking work that could not be completed in a relatively short time (considering a reasonable period to be twelve months, more or less). So it seems likely

The Tyrone plays and the cycle plays speak in explicit family terms as Iceman does not. When O'Neill finished Misbegotten he rejected the possibility of further work on the cycle and turned instead to his "By Way of Obit" series, and Hughie, the one completed drama of the group, returns to the medium of Iceman. The flashy, pathetic jargon of the down-and-out probes hesitantly at fantasy and frustration, attacking again the "pipe dream" theme of Iceman, but with less courage and less success. Perhaps O'Neill was trying to begin again, to return to the point of departure that The Iceman Cometh had provided for Long Day's Journey and Misbegotten. But the realism of A Moon for the Misbegotten had gone so far in exposing and destroying the life-long unconscious beliefs that had been the basis for O'Neill's art that he could not return effectively to his original premises. Nor could he risk further development of the truths revealed through Josie Hogan's arduous confrontation with fantasy and reality. Carlotta's recollections confirm the severity of the debilitating trauma that gripped O'Neill in the composition of these last dramas. Hughie must have been an ineffectual escape from the conflicts aroused by its predecessors, for, when Hughie was completed, O'Neill did not write again.

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that Poet and Mansions, as the segments of the cycle nearest completion, would demand his attention before the rough drafts and scenarios of the other plays. Secondly, in this same interval, between Long Day's Journey and Misbegotten, Oona's career as a glamorous debutante was about to climax in her marriage to Chaplin, a man her father's age. O'Neill's seething anger in response to her social activities and finally to her marriage neatly parallels the behaviour of one of his own characters: Con Melody, hero of Poet, reacts with violent and irrational jealousy to his daughter's affair with their boarder. Thirdly, the preoccupations and conclusion of More Stately Mansions bear such close comparison with those of Misbegotten, known to have been completed late in 1943, that it seems probably that the Harford play underwent final revision immediately prior to the writing of A Moon for the Misbegotten.

O'Neill's return to his experiences at Jimmy the Priest's in Iceman revisited a period of his life that contrasted sharply with his existence at Tao House. The adventures of his early adulthood, at sea and on the docks of Buenos Aires and New York, were a source of immutable pride to him throughout his life. For many years after he had established a sedentary, well-regulated life, he wore, at every opportunity, the American Lines sweatshirt he had been issued on his voyage to Liverpool, reminding himself of a less secure, more dynamic style of life. In Long Day's Journey, when Tyrone eulogizes his difficult youth and its scarcity and instability, Edmund insistently reminds his father that he, too, has suffered and hungered, thousands of miles from home. But O'Neill was destitute by choice; James was always ready with a modest but adequate cheque, and his son need never have been hungry for an hour, except by design. O'Neill gained a satisfying sense of kinship with the shanty Irishman his father once was, by seeking out hardship. The descriptions of his adventures he offered Agnes were images of virile manhood and stubborn endurance, an ostentatious assertion of the young man's position as an adult male. While his son was growing up, James O'Neill was a matinee idol--a handsome, compelling symbol of virility in the American theatre, exuding confidence in his own masculinity. His son's youthgul adventures are sometimes interpreted as a rebellion against the established values of hard work and ambition of his father's world;[1] more likely they were an attempt to win his father's approval and an attempt to identify with the virile, authoritative figure was on

1 Doris Alexander's Tempering of Eugene O'Neill, particularly, interprets O'Neill's adolescent behaviour as youthful rebellion.

stage and in life. Significantly, young Eugene's attempt to pattern himself after his father's image climaxed in failure, attempted suicide and a return to his family; Simon Harford's career as the ruler of his father's commercial empire ends, too, in sobbing, helpless defeat. For both men, involvement in the father's world excluded artistic or creative activity. Con Melody, too, forcibly denies the world of the poet-aristocrat through identification with his shanty Irish father. In the late 1940's O'Neill made another attempt to find gratification and security through affinity with his father; by this time O'Neill was in his late fifties and his writing career was over.

While O'Neill was writing of the raw experiences of his youth, he was living a life of totally different character. Carlotta orchestrated for herself and her husband an existence of gentle harmony and tasteful refinement. O'Neill demanded a perfectly ordered domestic milieu within which to carry on his work and Carlotta sought every conceivable means to achieve this end. House guests were even rarer at Tao House than they were at Casa Genotta. O'Neill kept up his correspondence with old friends, but his letter were frequently laments over his poor health and his disturbed state of mind and, as such, implicit warnings to would-be visitors to stay away. He had extricated himself from all family responsibilities; he communicated with neither Shane nor Ona and they were never invited to the house, although Oona did pay one brief and highly unsuccessful visit. Carlotta had long ago assumed stewardship of the marriage, and responsibility for the untroubled course of the relationship was solely on her shoulders. The dream that had formed in young O'Neill's mind in Greenwich Village days, the fantasy of the walled estate unthreatened by interlopers, had come to

fruition in reality, but it threatened a bleak harvest of despair in old age.

A corollary of the estate fantasy was the fantasy of unique and powerful genius, expressed by so many of the characters in O'Neill's later plays. Tyrone, Mary, Edmund and even Jamie shared it in Long Day's Journey. Simon Harford was restored to love and sanity through confirmation of his fantasy of boyish genius at the end of More Stately Mansions. But the character of Con Melody in A Touch of the Poet most clearly emphasizes the link between the lost castle and the erstwhile poet. Castle Melody was the figuration of the estate O'Neill described to Agnes in the first months of their life together--the walled-in mansion offering absolute security and omnipotence to its proprietor. Castle Melody's feudal character lent Melody indisputable authority over the inhabitants and accorded him unlimited sexual privilege. When, in later years, he re-lives his days as a feudal lord, it is the "touch of the poet," the spark of special genius, that distinguishes him from his ordinary fellows and carries him back to the distant world of heroic omnipotence and universally recognized privilege. So much of Con Melody is Eugene O'Neill that it would be profitable to explore some of the implications of this fantasy cluster. Melody's claims on his castle and the authority associated with it are suspect: his father's ambition and possibly unscrupulous methods won him material advantage, and his father, like, James O'Neill, was shanty Irish. Although it was the elder Melody's success that brought his son wealth and power, his father's background makes Con's aristocratic position dubious. Yet the "poet" and the romantic hero in Melody are real in the terms of the drama, and

these legitimate qualities are tragically unfulfilled. The handsome, virile officer of erect posture has much in him of the matinee idol O'Neill once aspired to emulate, and Melody's past sexual conquests are a source of pride to him and to his child. Melody's methods of sexual overture are O'Neill's: the encounter between Con and Deborah Harford is plainly reminiscent of Carlotta's descriptions of her early meetings with O'Neill. Both the playwright and his character adopt postures of appealing helplessness, and lament the bitterness of unrewarded or unappreciated merit. And their boyish charms are to varying degrees successful.

The genius fantasy, justifiable as it happened to be in O'Neill's case, was perpetrated by him with facility throughout his life. Agnes was certainly receptive at the outset of their relationship, as witnessed by her efforts to adjust to the demands her husband made for isolation and freedom from family commitments. She writes, in her record of the early years of their marriage, of her unquestioning acquiescence in the requirements of their marital "agreement," which made no room in their lives for her daughter or for their own children--"so preposterous would have been the idea of my poet-genius with a child around." (Boulton, pp. 171-2) Even Agnes' choice of language suggests her willingness to subscribe to her husband's fantasy and play her role in it. The chief import of O'Neill's vision of his own genius in its effects on his career were the stringent conditions it imposed on his ability to write. Only in a particular atmosphere could he respond fully to the creative impulse. He made the decision to become a playwright at Gaylord Farm the tuberculosis sanitorium where he spent five months in 1913. Life was strictly regimented at Gaylord; rest, physical exercise and social activities were

each assigned their portion of the day. The staff were parentally authoritative and genuinely devoted to the welfare of the patients under their care. If O'Neill felt that his family had failed to confront the seriousness of his affliction, as Long Day's Journey suggests, then at Gaylord he must have found his needs sincerely respected. For many years after he left the sanitorium he remained in friendly contact with one nurse in particular, a motherly woman who had taken a special interest in him. The family atmosphere at Gaylord offered him impetus to make a commitment to his art, but his commitment could only be maintained through immersing himself again in the kind of security Gaylord provided. The first prolonged period of concentrated work in his career occurred during the fall and winter of 1913-14 when he lived with family friends, the Rippins, in New London. The Rippin household, apparently, was warm and jovial, and young Eugene was welcomed as a paying guest. Mrs. Rippin took a motherly interest in his health, and her daughters typed his manuscripts. One of the daughters reports that O'Neill seemed to be romantically attracted to her, but he expressed his tender sentiments only in letters, after she had left New London.[1] O'Neill's devotion to his new vocation amused and fascinated the Rippins, and his precarious health and blossoming talent elicited from them the attention and respect accorded an especially charming child. O'Neill responded and wrote prolifically during this period.

1 O'Neill seemed much more at ease in expressing sentiment or affection in correspondence than he did in face-to-face situations. Even after his marriage to Agnes began to falter, he wrote her loving epistles when they were apart. And the sentimental inscriptions on manuscripts he presented to Carlotta would suggest that their relationship was much less tempestuous than it really was. Even in his moods of darkest despair he was able to compose messages describing infinite bliss and undying devotion.

One of the symptoms of discontent that forewarned the end of O'Neill's second marriage was the increasing difficulty he experienced in concentrating on his work. The domestic routine that had been so productive suring the spartan years at Provincetown and Peaked Hill Bar disintegrated as more demands were made not only on O'Neill's attention but on Agnes' as well. As their family and social life grew, Agnes' exclusive devotion was denied him, and he reacted with fits of irrational jealousy. His health became a subject of concern and he attributed his discontent and physical malaise to recurrence of tubercular symptoms, although the disease had years before been diagnosed as completely arrested. In Bermuda writing was extremely difficult and his health deteriorated.

What Gaylord, the Rippin home, and Carlotta offered O'Neill Agnes was now unwilling to supply. To work successfully, O'Neill had to feel the terms of his fantasy of genius satisfied. As he grew older those terms became more and more restrictive, crowding out other facets of his life. At Gaylord, and the Rippins', he found himself in a position of child-like centrality; both the sanitorium and the New London boarding house honoured him as a special guest. As a small child he had been obsessively watched over by Ella for signs of illness. Guilt over the loss of her second son drew from her a specific mode of maternal solicitude, and it was awakened by signs of infirmity in little Eugene. Her addiction to morphine, a possessive husband, and an elder child to whom she was particularly attached all competed with Eugene in Ella's mind. In Long Day's Journey Edmund, at twenty-three, is still nurturing hopes of winning from his mother a concerned, protective response to his tubercular condition. The deterioration of O'Neill's

health during the period of his separation from Agnes indicated a smilar recurrence of ungratified, child-like needs.

While living in his last stately mansion, Tao House, O'Neill's physical condition demanded unceasing care and vigilance from Carlotta. She defended her hom and her husband from all invaders with fearless ardour. The O'Neills' circle of social intercourse had contracted to exclude nearly all the old friends with whom O'Neill had spent hours, days, even weeks of alcoholic conviviality in the early part of his career. Indeed, if there was one conspicuous contrast between the days at Jimmy the Priest's and the genteel refinement of Tao House it was the absence of alcohol. Carlotta had been strict and authoritative on this count: the few times he had broken his abstinence during the first years of their relationship, she had responded with sharp rebuke. Agens, on the other hand, had tendered no impediment to O'Neill's drinking. Through the first part of their marriage she would wait patiently for his need for liquor to subside, then nurse him through the painful remorse and convalescence that always followed. In later years, she drank with him. Until he formed his liaison with Carlotta, alcohol was a severe and chronic problem for O'Neill, particularly in view of the fact that only under a program of strict abstinence could he approach his work. The origins of his drinking problem may lie in several areas. His father was not a heavy drinker, or, at least, he was rarely incapacitated by liquor, but he had a particular affinity for the barroom and its ribald, jocular atmosphere. Jamie's alcoholism was more serious than his brother's; liquor finally killed him. In both his father and brother Eugene surely found patterns of masculine be-

haviour with which he wished to identify. But more fundamental to the root of O'Neill's alcoholism was the part it played as a defensive ploy against intimacy and a justification for his incompetence in the daily business of life. In three of these four plays drink becomes an agent facilitating escape from personal commitments and from confrontation with reality. For Jamie, in Long Day's Journey, it is a counterfoil to his brother's illness, a function of his own desperate jealousy of his rival in the struggle for his mother's affection. Liquor oils the mechanisms of escape for Con Melody, enabling an easy regression to archaic fantasies, and erecting a defensive barrier between him and his wife and daughter. Drink has a similar regressive influence on Jim Tyrone, on the one hand affording him the means to return to his mother's arms, and at the same time guarding him from intimate personal commitment to Josie. O'Neill's alcoholism was a problem which, unlike his brother's alcoholism, was overcome abruptly and decisively in middle-age. In his youth, his drinking had been primarily associated with whoring and intemperate, indifferent sexual relations. Armed with the raw cynicism and careless attitudes liquor and his brother's influence could bestow, the adolescent Eugene overcame the trauma of adult sexual initiation. That it was indeed a traumatic period for him seems certain, for three of these last four plays deal, with increasing profundity, with the young adult's emergence into sexual identity and adult sexual relationship. Fears of rejection, inadequate performance or insufficient stimulation were mitigated, for the adolescent, by alcohol. O'Neill was nearly thirty when he met Agnes, and was still drinking heavily. Liquor was a serious impediment to this work; drinking was carried on in

cycles, alternating, never over-lapping, with his writing. Days, sometimes weeks of convalescence were necessary before he recovered sufficiently, mentally and physically, from periodic and prolonged binges. As the relationship between O'Neill and Agnes developed, it was punctuated by merely moderate drinking or more severe lapses from abstinence. During these lapses he would treat Agnes with cruel indifference or stubborn cynicism, as if she were one of the whores of his youth. After their marriage, when the relationship had stabilized itself, O'Neill's alcoholism seemed chiefly to assert itself when the couple came in contact with either of their families. The imminence of their first meeting with Ella and James caused a serious lapse in their son's abstinence. The situation was an anticipation of the themes he was to deal with in later dramas. Deborah Harford's possessive jealousy and selfish intervention in her son's marriage was something he later described in More Stately Mansions. Did O'Neill expect or desire in fantasy that the lady-like, gentle Ella would make the maternal claim on him that he felt she had for so long avoided? In Desire Under the Elms father and son rival one another for the affections of the young mother. Did O'Neill fear that Agnes would be susceptible to the compelling attractiveness his father once possessed as a matinee idol? Fantasies of childhood were re-awakened by the situation and his treatment of Agnes the night before the visit foretold Simon's behaviour in More Stately Mansions when early experiences of family life overwhelmed him. O'Neill struck Agnes, publicly and unjustly attacking her flirtatious, "loose" behaviour. In Simon's mind, when archaic, fantastic images of his mother and father exert intolerable pressures, his wife, too, becomes a whore.

For O'Neill, alcoholism and regressive impulses were

co-operative. During the first years of his marriage to Agnes his drinking was not as disruptive a problem as it became after the birth of Shane. One of the most significant failures in O'Neill's life was his inability to adjust to the demands made on him by his parental responsibilities. His acute perception and sensitive expression of the source of Mary Tyrone's inadequacies as a mother in Long Day's Journey must surely have grown, at least in part, from his own unfortunate experiences as a parent. When Shane was born, the boyhood dream of perfect aloneness that O'Neill had described to Agnes during their courtship was shattered. Shane, like Simon's sons in More Stately Mansions or the infant boy in Desire Under the Elms, was an impediment to the fulfilment of O'Neill's fantasies of exclusive affection and appeared in the light of a rival, as both his father and brother seemed to the boy Eugene. Mary's fantasies of the triumph of the child-genius are O'Neill's, too, and neither Mary Tyrone nor O'Neill could forgo its gratifications in favour of commitment to parental functions. When the pressures of reality became intolerable for Mary, morphine supplied a facile regression to archaic fantasies. Similarly, O'Neill found alcohol a fortuitous escape from the pressures his own fatherhood exerted on him. And Agnes' new role as mother to his son may have stimulated anxieties comparable to those Simon Harford suffered as mother and wife form their fantastic alliance in his mind. Simon leaves his wife's bed, sundering their marital intimacy. Alcohol had a similar effect on O'Neill's second marriage: at Ridgefield, when houseguests and liquor were plentiful, he often slept in the barn.

Agnes describes O'Neill's need for liquor as having been most intense before social encounters which were, for one reason

or another, particularly significant. She interprets his need as a desire to stimulate in himself a sufficient amount of emotion or intensity of feeling he feared he might otherwise lack. However, it seems that, rather than make up for a deficiency of feeling, alcohol justified inappropriate or extravagant emotion. O'Neill was an extremely shy man, withdrawing from social intercourse whenever he was without the special armour of alcohol. He confided to a friend, in later years, that after establishing total abstinence he avoided parties and gatherings in which he would be required to carry on normal social functions. One of Carlotta's complaints against the continuance of her husband's friendships with old acquaintances was that reunions were always drunken affairs of unpredictalbe outcome. And O'Neill seemed to comply unprotesting with the severance of those friendships. Some observers of the O'Neill household as it gradually withdrew its welcome to visitors felt that Carlotta was exacting a high price for her devotion. But O'Neill rarely, if ever, made any attempt to contact, even surreptitiously, those who had been excluded from the small circle of favour.

Carlotta was a firmly parental figure in O'Neill's life. The suicide note of her ex-husband, Ralph Barton, indicated that she knew well the role of protector and deliverer of the neurotic artist, although she met will little success in her marriage to Barton. One of her most appealing attributes in O'Neill's eyes must have been her perfect aloneness in the world. Her maternal resources were totally at his disposal: her own daughter had no place in her life and there was apparently nevery any thought of her and O'Neill having children of their own. She was immediately receptive to O'Neill's fantasy of the child-genius, secure in a special and unique position in the world, and her

role in the fantasy was appealing and gratifying to her. She built for him his stately mansions, kept vigilant watch over his ever-precarious health, organized an efficient routine of work and leisure for the great dramatist. She demanded nothing of him he was unable or unwilling to give; she obeyed his needs as an iron command. And she stopped his drinking. O'Neill's abstinence was a natural off-shoot of their relationship for his drinking interfered with his work and health and disturbed the harmony of routine Carlotta exerted herself to establish. The stresses which had intensified O'Neill's drinking problem in the later years of his marriage to Agnes had been alleviated through Carlotta's intervention and support. Shane and Oona were gone from his life. He was no longer required to assume responsibility for domestic affairs. In spite of the companionship and love she had once given him, Agnes had been callously dismissed as selfish and grasping. The fantasy of the magnificent estate, sequestered home of the prodigiously talented child and his devoted protector had become sufficiently realized for O'Neill to escape his need for alcohol, and the restrictive pattern of aggressive behaviour and painful remorse it imposed upon him. At the same time, O'Neill's abstinence enforced an estrangement from old friends and drinking companions for it withdrew his accustomed means of relating to them, requiring an intimacy and sober honesty he could not give. Acquaintances who had the opportunity to visit or meet with the O'Neill's in later years observed O'Neill's increasing dependence on Carlotta in social situations, and their apparently implicit agreement that she should carry the burden of conversation and, ultimately, of all their intercourse with the world outside their insular realm.

The form of Carlotta's and O'Neill's courtship has already been described: he came to her as a misunderstood genius, a helpless boy, ill in health, impoverished in love and attention. He lamented not only Agnes' inadequacies, but as well the hardships of his earlier life. His notion of this relationship to Carlotta finds clear presentation in the hopeful future of Sara and Simon at the end of More Stately Mansions, and the dynamics of each situation are parallel. Simon's marriage to Sara has three distinct phases. In A Touch of the Poet the engagement of the young couple portends a partnership of the poet-boy with the strong, pragmatic woman. Simon experiences distressing anxieties emanating from the conflict of fantasies of Sara as a holy image and his response to her as an erotically stimulating woman. Agnes appeared to O'Neill, during the days of their courtship, as a potential participant in his boyhood dream of idyllic devotion. At the same time, she aroused in O'Neill natural sexual desires which he at first attempted to deal with through alcohol and the manipulation of rather sordid scenes of careless indifference and unattractive invitations to sexual intercourse. The initial difficulties, however, were overcome: A Touch of the Poet suggests that genuine love and Sara's strength of mind cemented the relationship, and O'Neill and Agnes must have themselves achieved a degree of intimacy and joy that brought them those few years of contentment and peace.

The second phase of Sara's and Simon's marriage is the subject of More Stately Mansions. James, Ella and Jamie all died, within three years of one another, during the corresponding period of O'Neill's marriage to Agnes. Simon, at the beginning of the play, seems similarly

free of family ties. His mother has suspended communication with him, his father dies, and Simon has long been estranged from his brother. Yet the domestic tranquility and straight-forward realism of Act I is rapidly undercut by the re-emergence of family commitments with the arrival of Deborah and Joel bearing the commands of the dead father. As childhood influences overwhelm Simon, the play becomes phantasmagorical in atmosphere, and powerful fantasies and fears of insanity interrupt the intimacy of husband and wife. Under Deborah's witch-like influence, intensified by the spectral presence of the dead father, Simon's sons become rivals in his struggle for sanity and survival. Sara alters profoundly in personality, and joins deborah in her vengeance on Simon. The dream of artistic triumph that Simon continued to cherish, even at the beginning of the play, is totally abandoned, renedered impossible by his uncontrolled regression into the fantasies and experiences of childhood. In the latter part of his marriage to Agnes, O'Neill was finding work increasingly difficult, and, indeed, at Spithead, he declared to friends that writing was "impossible." His children, Shane and Oona, had as little intimate effect on their father's life as did Simon's faceless sons. Yet in both cases the children figured prominently in fantasies of rivalry and jealousy, having privileged access to maternal resources. O'Neill's unfeeling, cruel treatment of Agnes during separation proceedings suggested that he, like Simon, saw his wife as radically different from the woman who had once given him happiness. An episode described in Chapter One indicates that O'Neill may have begun to experience the confusion of identity of sexual partner and maternal figure that caused Simon such acute anxiety. In this incident Agnes' wearing of a mantilla that had once belonged to Ella

severely disturbed her husband and he tore the lace from her head and later tried to drag her home by the hair. One of the symptoms of Simon's trauma is the suspension fo sexual relations between him and Sara, and the re-introduction of relations on a basis of illegitimate, clandestine eroticism. O'Neill's heavy drinking surely inhibited expressions of genuine intimacy between the two, and his unreasonable jealousy of Agnes put her in the light of a loose woman, sexually promiscuous.

The foundations of the third phase of Simon and Sara's marriage are laid at the end of More Stately Mansions. Simon is weak and helpless, as O'Neill was when he went to Carlotta in New York. The eruption of uncontrollable regressive tendencies has sapped him of the energy to pursue intellectual or artistic goals. The terrible charm of the lost kingdom and its associations of erotic relationship with his mother have attracted him to the verge of insanity. His father's implicit censure of his son's sexual liaison with Deborah is figured in the consuming power of the Company over him. While Simon sits in the garden, a helpless child, incapable of quieting the psychological strife within, torn from himself, Sara emerges as his deliverer and protector. She respnds spontaneously to his helplessness, offering assurances of devotion, and a reverence for the poet in him, and the boyish heart. She forcefully expells the witch-mother and the greedy Company from his consciousness, and vows an undying vigilance to ensure that they never return to haunt him.[1] The sons are forgotten, dismissed, no longer important

1 During O'Neill's separation and divorce proceedings, Carlotta issued strict orders to friends forbidding mention, even in letters, of Agnes and her children and their activities. Many years later, when Oona was enjoying a measure of notoriety, Carlotta again imposed censureship of

enough to threaten the exclusive nature of their relationship. The new Sara is something like the woman with whom Simon fell in love in A Touch of the Poet, but with one important difference. The adventuress, with a taste for vengeance, whom Deborah perceived in Sara at their first meeting, is now absent from her personality. Her affectionate but amused attitude towards Simon's literary aspirations and fantasies of glorious acclaim becomes a profoundly serious respect for the potential genius within her husband. The ruthlessness of the ambitious woman O'Neill must have seen as the fatal flaw in Agnes, the flaw that justified his repudiation of her at the time of their divorce. In letters to his friends, during separation and divorce proceedings, O'Neill characterized Agnes as a vicious adventuress, bent on exploiting her relationship to him. The divorce decree itself included a proviso inhibiting Agnes from writing of their marriage, indicating an irrational suspicion in O'Neill's mind that Agnes would try to capitalize on his weakness. Carlotta took very seriously her own role as deliverer and protector, and complemented O'Neill's fantasies of the lovable helplessness of boyish genius. From the very first their relationship was based on terms

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information about his daughter that might reach her husband's ears. Carlotta accurately perceived that O'Neill was unable to react rationally and appropriately to either situation, just as Sara Harford finally learned that her husband was incapable of coping with the ostensibly innocuous reappearance of family influences in his life.

that mitigated the need to establish sexual intimacy,[1] a need which had caused O'Neill to behave erratically and unreasonably in the first months of his life with Agnes. There were no rivals for love in Carlotta's world; she was willing and eager to devote herself whole-heartedly to her husband.

At the end of A Touch of the Poet Nora explains the quality of her love for her husband, telling her daughter: "' . . . I'll play any game he likes and give him love in it. Haven't I always? Sure, I have no pride at all--except that.'" (Poet, Act IV, p. 181) Throughout her life with Con, Nora has accepted the position dictated her by her husband's fantasies, and now she will be the mate of the shanty Irish innkeeper instead of the abused wife of the poet-aristocrat. Sara, at the end of More Stately Mansions, accepts a similar role in marriage, and Simon's future, imprecise as its direction may be, seems hopeful. In his portrait of Con Melody, O'Neill approached recognition of the destructive nature of the poet-hero's futile fantasies, and the dashing major's lightning rejection of one fantasy life, or "game," in favour of another game with greater immediate compensations undercuts the verity of the hallowed "touch of the poet" within Melody. Yet, in More Stately Mansions, these painfully revealed truths, so pertinent to O'Neill's own life, are rejected in favour of a renewal of the myth of the dispossessed genius. The very depth of the exploration of his own fantasy world, through the character of Simon, caused O'Neill to retreat from

1 O'Neill came to Carlotta as a helpless child, and Carlotta responded as a motherly, smypathetic "angel"--as Raplph Barton, her ex-husband, described her in his suicide note. Carlotta's recollections of their courtship are of long hours of talk in which O'Neill revealed himself as a tortured, misunderstood genius, and not of passionate love-making.

its intolerable revelations into the peaceable, secure world that the new Sara would build for him, just as he turned away from Agnes to the devotion of Carlotta. The most significant revelation of More Stately Mansions lies in the transformation of Mary of Long Day's Journey into Deborah Harford. Mary's avoidance of intimacy becomes in Deborah wilful seduction and malicious manipulation of Simon. In Deborah, Mary's frigidity and guilt feelings associated with her sexual commitments to her husband become a fear of incest involving intense erotic attraction to her son. Mary's fantasies of genius and the triumph of the child protege develop into Deborah's fantasy of female omnipotence and the subjugation, through sexual manipulation, of men and emasculation of kings, whether they be a Louis or a Napoleon, or merely rulers of commercial empires like Simon or his father. The result of this process of transformation is, first, the son's movement into a position of vital importance in the mother's world, a position of infantile centrality. And, secondly, Simon (and O'Neill) offers an implicit justification for his own erotic attraction to his mother by casting her as a greedy woman of magical power and immutable strength. Simon is, in effect, aligning himself with his father and asking pardon for his erotic desire for his mother and his feelings of aggressive jealousy towards his father. Simon's emotional turmoil was initially sparked by ordinary marital relations and their re-awakening of archaic parental influences which finally inundated him. Such relations of conjugal intimacy had to be avoided in favour of the kind of life Sara can provide at the end of the play. She is clearly accepting a parental role, but one purged of the unacceptable aspects of Deborah's position in Simon's

life. Her rescue of Simon, as she carries him weak and stricken into the house, anticipates the scene of the virgin mother cradling the wasted child in A Moon for the Misbegotten, but in the later play O'Neill was to make much more specific the particular nature of the sexual avoidances in the relationship between surrogate mother and middle-aged child.

A Touch of the Poet and the nightmares of More Stately Mansions threatened to expose deeply-rooted fantasies that had controlled O'Neill's life and work. Long Day's Journey, for all its sensational frankness, had only begun to probe the trauma of family life plagued by morphine and alcoholism, leaving untouched certain unconscious assumptions which O'Neill had held throughout his life. Among these was the portrait of O'Neill Sr. as a stingy, unfeeling man who deprived his family of love and material comforts he could easily provide. In fact, James was deeply attached to his wife, and generous to his sons, although he understandably lacked the sensitivity to comprehend the causes of his wife's addiction or his sons' apparently rebellious behaviour. O'Neill seldom acknowledged the security his father had tried to provide for him, or his attempts to promote his career. Such an acknowledgement would have jeopardized his own fantasy of the suffering of the deprived, misunderstood genius. Concommitant with the portrait of the stingy Tyrone was O'Neill's image of himself as a victim, exploited and injured by those close to him. Edmund, in Long Day's Journey, is helpless and aggrieved through no fault of his own: tuberculosis and his family's unwillingness to respond to his legitimate needs are justifiably lamented. Yet there is no historical evidence that the O'Neills did not offer sympathy and care when Eugene needed it. Gaylord Farm was a highly respected institution and the best treatment available was provided. These fantasies

of victimization are exposed in Con Melody, who was dispossessed of his estate not through unscrupulous tactics of wheeler-dealers, but through his own greed. In some ways More Stately Mansions is a backward step, in terms of commitment to reality, from the revelations of A Touch of the Poet, but Mansions, in its surrealistic, almost uncontrolled explorations of fantasy life, exposes with explicit clarity the nature of O'Neill's sexual attitudes. And it must have revealed to him the dynamics of his break-up with Agnes. His flight to Carlotta and the fantastical estate she would build for him is justified by the conclusion of More Stately Mansions, but an artist of O'Neill's honesty and vigour, constantly driven by the need to further explore, was necessarily impelled to continued investigation, to examination of the peaceable world of the child-poet after victory over the terrible assailants in Deborah's walled garden.

Jamie's life with Ella after his father's death must have caused O'Neill some envy, for he was himself at the time involved in a marriage he found difficult and ungratifying. Chapter Five has already described the nature of the relationship between mother and son: Ella's attention was exclusively Jamie's; Ella was cured of her addiction; Jamie, at Ella's insistence, had stopped drinking, and the two travelled together. And James' death had wrought a significant change in Ella. Once the sheltered, delicate wife of the authoritative husband, she had become an efficient businesswoman, competent in the management of her own affairs and Jamie's. What all this meant in O'Neill's mind was that his brother had won the position he himself sought, and would later find with Carlotta. Jamie had found a mate who, while offering him maternal sustenance, could make no demands for sexual intimacy. The O'Neill

family history suggests that both Ella and James regarded their elder son as possessing superior potential, while they were genuinely unprepared when Eugene showed talent. So Ella could gratify her son's sense of his own special genius. That O'Neill should choose these last years of his mother's and brother's lives as a subject for dramatization is not surprising. The life that Jamie led with Ella closely paralleled the future that Simon faces with Sara at the end of More Stately Mansions. Nor is it surprising that O'Neill chose the period after Ella's death for the temporal setting of the play. To have written of Ella directly would have incurred the risk of re-opening the chasms of archaic fantasy that More Stately Mansions uncovered in detailing the fantastic relationship between Simon and Deborah. And it was his own life with Carlotta that most deeply concerned O'Neill in 1943. Although one suspects that Carlotta, sophisticated and refined as she was, may have been offended by comparison with Josie Hogan, Jim Tyrone's seduction of Josie is O'Neill's of Carlotta in 1926.

It is conceivable that O'Neill undertook the writing of A Moon for the Misbegotten with the intention of supplementing and affirming the vision of the strong, loving woman delivering from hell the weak, defeated man-child, the vision that concluded More Stately Mansions. And, if Misbegotten had been confined to three acts, it is possible that this purpose would have been achieved. But the power and profundity of the portrait of Josie Hogan propels the drama into a fourth act. Josie is the only character in these four plays, possibly in all of O'Neill's work, who escapes from the initial premises of the playwright's unconscious beliefs and her own unconscious assumptions about the world and herself. Her rebirth is painful and strenuous. At the end of the play

she is alone, unsupported by myth or fantasy. There is no magical release awaiting her at dawn--only progound and bitter emotion and the beauty of the real world. Why did O'Neill's career end with this stark and fine achievement?

Through the writing of Misbegotten O'Neill came into confrontation with certain aspects of reality which severely threatened him and called into question the validity of his work, his life, his relationship to Carlotta. Although Jim Tyrone feels threatened by and resentful of Josie's sexuality, the drama clearly states that her desires are essentially trustworthy, and innocent of the kind of malicious intentions ascribed to Deborah and Sara in More Stately Mansions.[1] This questioned the very basis of justification O'Neill had employed to expel so callously Agnes from his life. Josie, like Sara, must be purged not only of her erotic fantasies but as well of her sexual needs before she can slip into her place in Jim's fantasy life. But this play makes much more specific the threat to Jim of sexual intimacy and, unlike Mansions, determines the high price each lover pays for their adherence to the terms of Jim's fantasy of forgiveness and unalienable security. Josie perceives the quality of their sacrifice to ghosts from the past when she cradles Jim on her lap and lets him begin his confession: "' . . . I have all kinds of love for you--and maybe this is the greatest of all--because it costs so much.'" (Misbegotten, Act III, p. 142) While the sunrise in Misbegotten revealed the bitter pathos of the virgin mother

1 Josie's plan of seducing Jim in the service of vengeance and the desire for power over him suggests that O'Neill's original intention may have been to re-cast the fantasies that determine the course of Mansions. But her scheme is soon defeated by her honest love for Jim.

burdened with the middle-aged child, it at the same time illuminated O'Neill's own loneliness in his marriage to Carlotta. And, more than this, Josie, for her clear vision and sensitive perception of beauty and reality, no matter how terrible, achieves the stature of a poet. After thirty years of creativity, O'Neill's conception of the artist had suddenly altered: his art could no longer function as a fantasy vehicle. The genius was no longer the protected, revered child, but an autonomous adult.

During the later years at Tao House O'Neill suffered a growing, merciless despair. At the root of his despair was the inescapable collision between his fantasy life and the real world, a collision which was foreseen in the first three of these four plays and finally confronted and presented dramatically in Misbegotten. With Hughie O'Neill tried to return to the original premises for his art, but his anxieties of again uncovering the unacceptable and intolerable images of Deborah's garden or again confronting the futility and destructive power of his own fantasies rendered his art impotent and ineffectual. An artist of O'Neill's magnitude must have seen that Hughie was a tepid failure in comparison with the four major plays that were contemporary to it.

Con Melody, in a fantasy life of sexual prowess secured through child-like appeal and of the omnipotence of the poet-hero, gratified archaic needs. And he, like O'Neill, came into forceful collision with reality--dramatically figured by a knock on the head from a Boston policeman's night-stick. He endures a few hours of consuming despair, then suddenly rejects the insular life of the Major in favour of complete identification with his long-dead father. He turns to the con-

vivial atmosphere and cheers of "hurroo!" in the barroom. When he and Carlotta returned to New York after the war, O'Neill, too, seemed to be seeking some form of security through patterning himself after his father. He emerged from the seclusion of many years to become a grand old man of the theatre, feted and celebrated as James had once been. If Carlotta had adapted to this new gregariousness, as Nora did to her husband's new "game," O'Neill might have continued in this life-style. It was a revitalization of the young man who once looked for affinity with his father through adventure and hardship. The young man sought to overcome the guilt and anxieties associated with sexual maturation by winning his father's approval and sharing in his virility and masculinity. The middle-aged playwright had uncovered the source of guilt and fear in More Stately Mansions and Misbegotten and, by doing so, unleashed those emotions in their original fury. Essentially, and simplistically, the nature of the son's erotic feeling for his mother, the revelations that confronted him in his art drove him to abandon not only the agent of his despair--his art--but as well the specific regressive impulses that consistently led him back to the ancient struggle for survival so awesomely re-enacted in Deborah's garden. The acclaimed dramatist now returned to his father's town, having achieved success in his father's world, to play out the later chapters of James' life. The circus of Broadway social life warded-off despair by supplanting the jeopardized fantasy of the child-genius sequestered within the walls of the grand estate with a new ego-ideal. But this was not the O'Neill Carlotta had married and promised undying devotion and she, unlike Nora Melody, refused to play her part in the new game. In A Touch of the Poet O'Neill had already perceived

that Melody's shanty Irish posturing was only a reaction to intolerable aspects of his accustomed fantasy life--specifically his incestuous feelings for Sara--and not an honest expression of the man he really was. With this perception already recorded and acknowledged, O'Neill's new life-style was on shaky foundation, even if Carlotta had subscribed to it. In any case, Carlotta rebelled and finally left New York and her husband. O'Neill was desolate, and responded with the treatening appeal quoted in Chapter One. He spontaneously reverted to the fantasy of the lovable, helpless genius, and managed to break his shoulder and return to Carlotta as an ivalid. Together, to the end of his life, they continued in their search for the stately mansion in whose magic O'Neill could no longer believe.

The conclusion of More Stately Mansions describes the boundaries within which O'Neill's creative activity had to be contained. He recognized, in A Touch of the Poet, the significance of certain regressive tendencies as a catalyst to creativity: Simon's poetry and diary are products of his child-like response to Sara. But at the same time, uncontrolled regression stimulated emotions which were intolerable when threatened with exposure through an artistic medium. While under the influence of the magical atmosphere of his mother's garden, Simon must abandon his art and employ all his psychological energy in the struggle against insanity. The fantasy of the child-genius, omnipotent yet protected by a powerful woman, is the operative myth that intervenes at the end of Mansions, preserving Simon from the terrible phantoms of desire and fear that inhabit the childhood realm and simultaneously gratifying in a more acceptable way the needs that originated there.

In order to pursue his art, O'Neill had to steer this precarious course, on the one hand avoiding the total, blank repression of the regressive impulses that were fundamental to his art, and, on the other hand, skirting the chasm of insanity that he feared lay beneath confrontation with the images of the walled garden.

If these were the premises of O'Neill's art, then Josie's emergence as a poet in Misbegotten must have profoundly threatened them. O'Neill consistently identified with the artists, poets and sundry idealists in his work, yet he was probably unprepared for Josie's new presentation of the possibilities for autonomy in the poetic personality. In spite of the painful revelation of the emptiness and loneliness of Jim Tyrone's loveless life, O'Neill could only resign himself to the same joyless wait for death that faced Jim.

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