

FROM FAILURE TO TRIUMPH:
A STUDY OF EUGENE O'NEILL'S FEMININE CHARACTERIZATIONS

THESIS

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A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

Generally, I advise the young ladies I teach to exercise extreme care in choosing their future mothers-in-law. After this thesis ordeal, I may advocate selection of a husband based solely on the merits of his mother. Without the assistance and encouragement of "Our Mom," my adorable husband, Roy, and the kindest, most patient thesis advisor imaginable, Dr. Vernon E. Lynch, this paper would never have been completed. For the perseverance, selflessness, and sensitivity of these three people, I am particularly grateful.

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J. S. N.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Eugene O'Neill made the following statement in 1921 soon after the premiere of Beyond the Horizon, his first Broadway production:

To me, the tragic alone has that significant beauty which is truth. It is the meaning of life-- and the hope. The noblest is eternally the most tragic. The people who succeed and do not push on to a greater failure are the spiritual middle-classes. Their stopping at success is the proof of their compromising insignificance. How petty their dreams must have been!¹

Certainly, the dreams of O'Neill for the American theatre were overwhelming. As the father of modern American drama O'Neill experimented with the ancient Greek theatre techniques including the use of masks and the Greek chorus, as well as exploring the Oedipal family relationships in his plot development. He, who had been reared "in the wings" of the American theatre watching his father's renowned performance as the Count of Monte Cristo, understood more about staging, lighting, makeup, sound effects and all the other paraphernalia of the

¹Arthur Gelb and Barbara Gelb, O'Neill (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), p. 5.

play than any other dramatist had before. His dreams were not petty. He lived in an era of psychological investigation and experimentation. Spiritually akin to Nathaniel Hawthorne, O'Neill always examined the motivation behind the action and the possible ramifications of the action. He was fascinated by motive, and by the consequences of sin in an individual's life. In the early 1930's O'Neill remarked to the critic Joseph Wood Krutch, "Most modern plays are concerned with the relationship of man and man, but that does not interest me at all. I am interested only in the relationship between man and God."²

All communication is pigeonholed arbitrarily into one of these three purposes: to entertain, to inform, or to persuade. It does not take more than a surface acquaintance with the works of O'Neill to state unequivocally that his life-consuming desire was not to entertain. There is only one avowed comedy, "Ah, Wilderness!" among his forty-five completed plays. Interestingly enough, one choice bit of humor, the "Harder episode," which in all likelihood O'Neill lifted straight

²Egil Tornqvist, A Drama of Souls (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 11.

from his own father's exploits, occurs in two of his dramas, Long Day's Journey into Night and A Moon for the Misbegotten.³ The Bluefish incident in Ah, Wilderness, an actual experience of the James O'Neill clan, also leaves little to be desired in comic presentation. "The Movie Man" and even the tragic one-act drama, "Abortion," have lighter moments, and Marco's speech about his invention of paper money and the cannon, a weapon to end all wars, in Marco Millions is delightful. Perhaps one of the most unexpected bits of humor is Ned Darrell's observations that guinea pigs have no tails in Strange Interlude. Nevertheless, those rare moments of unthreatened laughter in O'Neillian drama may be counted on the fingers. Assuredly, the motive behind the writings of America's only Nobel Prize winning dramatist was something far greater than merely the wish to entertain. What comedy there is, is often mixed with pathos.

Are the dramas of O'Neill intended to inform? Yes, that is at least partially so. His plays reveal a depth of knowledge of shipboard existence, American religious, economic, political, and literary thought, race

³Gelb, p. 91.

relations, continental writing and thinking, Biblical literature, Nietzschean philosophy, family relationships, theatrical techniques, and basic human psychology. This intellectual diversity might have been sufficient for lesser playwrights; it has been, but it was not for Eugene O'Neill.

Persuasion is the purpose of his drama.

Among modern writers, he was almost a voice in the wilderness crying for moral values when the world about him was smugly preaching economic determinism and the fatalism of matter.⁴

The writings of O'Neill do not confine themselves to the theatre; they are part "of the great stream of poetic literature coursing through all history and legend."⁵ O'Neill's plea is for the recognition of good and evil; his pursuit is the quest of everyman, the search for inner peace.

With O'Neill, the problem of the individual as a soul in distress or torment has been clearly supreme. It is the individual's rebellion against the mass, or his abject surrender to it that counts, rather than the action of the individual as representing the mass. . . . He is the poet of the individual

⁴Richard Dana Skinner, Eugene O'Neill: A Poet's Quest (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 44.

⁵Ibid., p. 5.

soul, of its agony, of its evil will, or its pride, and its lusts, or rare moments of illumination, of its stumblings and gropings in surrounding darkness, and of its superbly romantic quest for deliverance through loving surrender.⁶

The women characters in O'Neill's dramas furnish a clearly marked path through the turmoil of the poet's soul. Descending into the pit of hell for his characterization of the woman, our mother Eve, who prostitutes herself before Satan and ascending to the heights of feminine aspiration with his drawings of the mother of Christ, the Virgin Mary, O'Neill vividly illustrates the journeyings of a mortal soul from defeat to victory.

In this thesis I shall discuss all the feminine creations of Eugene O'Neill in his forty-five published dramas. It is my purpose to catalogue these more than two hundred women in one of the following groups: (1) feminine symbols, (2) profile sketches, (3) the physical mother--Eve, or (4) the spiritual mother--Mary. The second category is composed of the women who do not have leading roles in the dramas, but whose occupations or relationships are essential to plot development or interest.

⁶Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Some of the women who are catalogued do not appear on stage, but their personalities are strong influences on the characters in the dramas; therefore, they are included in this paper. In Chapters III and IV, I intend to prove that by a close examination of the female characterizations in O'Neillian drama, one may view the journeyings of a soul from utter failure to triumph, and thereby understand Eugene O'Neill's basic philosophy of life.

C H A P T E R I

FEMININE SYMBOLS

It is in O'Neill's philosophy, stated in The Great God Brown, that "Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue!"¹ Herein most of the maternal symbols in his dramas are rooted. These maternal symbols may be placed in two categories according to their purpose--revelation or restoration. Revelation of the Mother God occurs in Strange Interlude, The Great God Brown, and Dynamo. Nina Leeds in Strange Interlude presents the concept of God the Mother vividly:

We should have imagined life as created in the birth-pain of God the Mother. Then we would understand why we, Her children, have inherited pain, for we would know that our life's rhythm beats from Her great heart, torn with the agony of love and birth. And we would feel that death meant reunion with Her, a passing back into Her substance, blood of Her blood again, peace of Her peace! Now wouldn't that be more logical and satisfying than having a male whose chest thunders with egotism and is too hard for tired heads and thoroughly comfortless.²

¹Eugene O'Neill, "The Great God Brown," Nine Plays (New York: Modern Library, 1932), p. 370. All future references will be to dramas written by Eugene O'Neill.

²"Strange Interlude," Nine Plays, pp. 524-525.

Nina toys with the Mother God idea intellectually until she becomes a mother herself. From the heightened sensitivity of this creative process, Nina begins to understand and accept the idea that if she is a mother, how much more a mother is the great God. Nina sees herself as part of the eternal life process:

. . . my child moving in my life . . . my life moving
in my child . . . the world is whole and perfect
. . . all things are each other's . . . life is . . .
and the is is beyond reason . . . questions die in
the silence of this peace . . . I am living a dream
within the great dream of the tide . . . breathing
in the tide I dream and breathe back my dream into
the tide . . . suspended in the movement of the tide,
I feel life move in me, suspended in me . . . no why
matter . . . there is no why . . . I am a mother . . .
God is a Mother . . .³

On at least four occasions Nina addresses God the Mother in her prayers. In Act VIII Nina prays with religious fervor, "O Mother God, protect my son! . . . let Gordon fly to you in heaven!"⁴

Dion in The Great God Brown practically dismisses the male role in procreation. He says that at the time of his father's death, he looked upon his face and

³Ibid., pp. 573-574.

⁴Ibid., p. 662.

wondered where they had met before. The answer came, "Only at the second of my conception."⁵ On the other hand, at the time of his mother's death he "felt like a forsaken toy and cried to be buried with her, because her hands alone had caressed without clawing."⁶

The prostitute in The Great God Brown, Cybel, who is the Mother Earth symbol, assumes the attitude of the eternal mother sending her child to the world for a brief sojourn when she speaks to Dion:

You mustn't forget to kiss me before you go, Dion. Haven't I told you to take off your mask in the house? Look at me, Dion. I've--just--seen--something. I'm afraid you're going away a long, long ways. I'm afraid I won't see you again for a long, long time. So it's good-by, dear. (She kisses him gently. He begins to sob. She hands him back his mask.) Here you are. Don't get hurt. Remember, it's all a game, and after you're asleep I'll tuck you in.⁷

Dion understands the life cycle. He knows himself and accepts his destiny in the overall scheme of existence.

⁵"The Great God Brown," Nine Plays, p. 333.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 339.

I've been life's lover! I've fulfilled her will and if she's through with me now it's only because I was too weak to dominate her in turn. It isn't enough to be her creature, you've got to create her or she requests you to destroy yourself.⁸

Cybel is an indomitable spirit who offers encouragement for the individual soul in the process of its "mending" as she chronicles the life cycle:

Always spring comes again bearing life! Always again! Always, always forever again!--Spring again!--life again!--summer and fall and death and peace again!--but always, always, love and conception and birth and pain again--spring bearing the intolerable chalice of life again!--bearing the glorious, blazing crown of life again!⁹

The dynamo is a mother symbol for Reuben Light in the drama by that name. In essence, the dynamo is calling Reuben to join his physical mother in death. In the absence of his actual mother, Reuben readily accepts May Fife, who is willing to claim him as her own. May Fife's kinship to the Great Mother Dynamo is obvious because she "hums her imitation of a dynamo's whirring purr."¹⁰ She admits she loves dynamo and like it she is big

⁸Ibid., p. 347.

⁹Ibid., p. 375.

¹⁰"Dynamo," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, (3 vols.: New York: Random House, Inc., 1954-55), III, 459.

and warm. Through a rather complicated exercise in logic beginning with "the water rushing over the dam"¹¹ and ending with an assertion that "our blood and the sea are only electricity in the end!"¹² Reuben determines that the Great Mother of Eternal Life must be electricity: "Dynamo is her Divine Image on earth."¹³ Believing he must be purified of sexual passions, he executes his lover and then sacrifices himself, rushing headlong to the exciter-head of the dynamo. As Reuben's hands clasp the carbon brushes, he entreats, "Never let me go from you again! Please, Mother!"¹⁴

May Fife's response is typical of most people's attitude toward God in the face of catastrophe. Turning to the dynamo "with childish bewildered resentment and hurt,"¹⁵ Mrs. Fife chides, "And I thought you was nice and loved us!"¹⁶

¹¹Ibid. p. 476.

¹²Ibid., p. 477.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 488.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 489.

¹⁶Ibid.

The Polish peasant woman who appears with her child in Fog is a tantalizing bit of symbolism. The poet of the piece had decided to go down with the ship after it hit a derelict, but he reversed his decision when he discovered the peasant woman and her child were still aboard. "At any rate there she was and I decided she was so happy in her love for her child that it would be wrong to let her die."¹⁷ In a conversation with the businessman, the poet poses a question which defines the poet's philosophy and foreshadows their rescue:

I mean supposing we--the self-satisfied, successful members of society--are responsible for the injustice visited upon the heads of our less fortunate "brothers-in-Christ" because of our shameful indifference to it. We see misery all around us and we do not care. We do nothing to prevent it. Are we not then, in part at least, responsible for it? Have you ever thought of that?¹⁸

After the child dies, the poet regrets that he has subjected the woman to such grief. He refers to her as the old queen of Troy--Hecuba--who lost her husband, her children, and her country. The peasant woman speaks

¹⁷"Fog," Ten "Lost" Plays (New York: Random House, Inc., 1964), p. 95.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 90.

not a word but she symbolizes the blessed virgin Mary holding the dead Christ. It is the miraculous crying of the dead child that saves the poet and the businessman from being lost eternally in the vast, dark sea. Commenting on the unusual circumstances surrounding their salvation, the businessman admits it is "almost unbelievable."¹⁹

It is only when the old hag in The Fountain is transformed into the beautiful young Beatriz that Juan Ponce de Leon realizes that the fountain is truly God. With adoration Juan says, "O God, Fountain of Eternity, Thou art the All in One, the One in All--the Eternal Becoming which is Beauty!"²⁰

The prostitute known simply as Woman in Welded is recognized by Michael Cape because she symbolizes what his own conscience has made her.

You're a symbol. You're all the tortures man inflicts on woman--and you're the revenge of woman! You're love revenging itself upon itself! You're the suicide of love--of my love--of all love since the world began!²¹

¹⁹Ibid., p. 107.

²⁰"The Fountain," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, I, 442.

²¹"Welded," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Random House, Inc., 1951), p. 289.

Woman preaches the doctrine of laughter, "You got to laugh, ain't you? You got to loin to like it [life]!"²²-- which is very similar to the basic idea in Lazarus Laughed. With that philosophical attitude Woman makes a convert of Cape.

Yes! That's it! . . . That goes deeper than wisdom. To learn to love life--to accept it and be exalted--that's the one faith left to us!²³

Mammy Saunders, the dying grandmother in The Dreamy Kid, symbolizes Dreamy's desired image of herself. Even though Dreamy leads a gang and has committed murder, his Mammy sees him in a pure light, "an' if dere's one thing more'n 'nother makes me feel like I mighter done good in de sight er de Lawd, hit's dat I raised yo' fum a baby."²⁴ Dreamy feels that his luck will "turn bad all his life"²⁵ if he leaves Mammy alone to die. She intensifies that idea by threatening, "If yo' leave me

²²Ibid., p. 292.

²³Ibid.

²⁴"The Dreamy Kid," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Vintage Book, 1951), pp. 24-25.

²⁵Ibid., p. 28.

now, yo' ain't gwine git no bit er luck s'long's yo' lives, I tells yo' dat!"²⁶

The irony of the situation is that death is already closing in on Mammy and the law is closing in on Dreamy:

Mammy: I feels--like--de en's comin', Oh, Lawd, Lawd!

Dreamy: Yes, Mammy. Dey're sneakin' cross de street. Dere's anudder of 'em. Dat's tree.²⁷

The "tree" here could easily refer to the trinity. Every time Dreamy utters a profane expletive, Mammy thinks he is addressing the "Lawd Jesus" in prayer.

In Desire Under the Elms, the elm trees are symbolic of Ephraim Cabot's first two wives. These two trees on either side of the Cabot farm house seem to both comfort and control.

They are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on the shingles.²⁸

²⁶Ibid., p. 29.

²⁷Ibid., p. 31.

²⁸"Desire Under the Elms," Nine Plays, p. 136.

The spirit of Eben's Maw is inside the house also. "She's tellin' ye t' love me,"²⁹ Abbie interprets and Eben agrees, "I see it! I see why. It's her vengeance on him--so's she kin rest quiet in her grave!"³⁰

In The First Man the tribeswoman "so curiously sure of herself"³¹ who was nursing her child as Curt and Martha Jayson passed by in their "wandering about the world"³² symbolizes beauty to Martha and instigates her intense longing for another baby.

Other revealing feminine symbols in O'Neill's plays include references to the banshee in both Long Day's Journey into Night and Bound East for Cardiff. The banshee is a female spirit from Irish folklore who was believed to wail outside a house as a warning that a death would occur soon in the family. The death comes for Yank as "a pretty lady dressed in black"³³ in Bound East for Cardiff.

²⁹Ibid., p. 179.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹"The First Man," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, II, 585.

³²Ibid.

³³"Bound East for Cardiff," Long Voyage Home (New York: Modern Library, 1955), p. 54.

Just as Mildred Douglas' search for identity at the beginning of The Hairy Ape is echoed by Yank's eventual behavior, the beginning sequence between the old native woman and Smithers in The Emperor Jones is symbolic of the eventual predicament Jones faces in the drama. The reader realizes that both characters are caught struggling in fear between opposing hostile forces; the old woman cowers at the sight of Smithers' threatening whip as Jones will cower when he is whipped by the prison guard; and she sinks to the ground in supplication before Smithers as Jones will sink "into a kneeling devotional posture"³⁴ before the Congo altar; the symbolism of this brief scenario is obvious.

Another feminine characteristic denoting sensuality and passion, at least during the time of O'Neill's era--hair--merits more than passing notice in five plays: Desire Under the Elms, The Great God Brown, A Touch of the Poet, A Moon for the Misbegotten, and Mourning Becomes Electra. In Desire Under the Elms, Simeon remembers his wife, Jenn. "I rec'lect--now an' again . . . She'd hair long's

³⁴"The Emperor Jones," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie and The Hairy Ape (New York: Modern Library, 1964), p. 50.

a hoss' tail--an' yaller like gold!"³⁵ In The Great God Brown, Cybel's "yellow hair hangs down in a great mane over her shoulders."³⁶ Con Melody says to his wife, Nora, in A Touch of the Poet, "For God's sake, why don't you wash your hair? It turns my stomach with its stink of onions and stew!"³⁷ but later Nora basks in Con's attention to her thick hair, "Did you hear him tellin' me he loved me . . . and then kiss my hair?"³⁸ In A Moon for the Misbegotten Josie is said to have "black hair as coarse as a horse's mane"³⁹ and the woman who was Jim's nightly companion on the train ride back to the East when he accompanied his mother's corpse is indelibly etched in his memory as the "blonde pig."⁴⁰ All three of the Mannon women have the same unusual hair--"thick curly hair, partly a copper brown, partly a bronze gold."⁴¹ Brant tells Lavinia in Mourning Becomes Electra:

³⁵"Desire Under the Elms," Nine Plays, p. 138.

³⁶"The Great God Brown," Nine Plays, p. 372.

³⁷A Touch of the Poet (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1957), p. 42.

³⁸Ibid., p. 181.

³⁹"A Moon for the Misbegotten," The Later Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Modern Library, 1967), p. 301.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 385.

⁴¹"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 691.

You're so like your mother in some ways. Your face is the dead image of hers. And look at your hair. You won't meet hair like yours and hers again in a month of Sundays. I only know of one other woman who had it. You'll think it strange when I tell you. It was my mother.⁴²

In addition to the symbols which reveal, there are feminine symbols which offer healing. One such is the chanty "Shenandoah" which is sung repeatedly in the drama Mourning Becomes Electra. The recurrent song emphasizes a longing for the soothing maternal aspect of the mighty Shenandoah River as an avenue of escape to the cleansing peace of the sea and away from the horrid reality of the Mannon curse.

Also in Mourning Becomes Electra is the concept of a Mother Island. While Orin was recuperating from a head injury, he read Herman Melville's Typee and this reading instigated his idea. After returning home he explains the phenomenon to his mother:

. . . those Islands came to mean everything that wasn't war, everything that was peace and warmth and security. I used to dream I was there. And later on all the time I was out of my head I seemed really to be there. There was no one there but you and me. And yet I never saw you, that's the funny part. I

⁴²Ibid., p. 704.

only felt you all around me. The breaking of the waves was your voice. The sky was the same color as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you. A strange notion, wasn't it? But you needn't be provoked at being an island because this was the most beautiful island in the world--as beautiful as you, Mother!⁴³

As the island restores Orin, the sea fulfills this need of healing in the life of Annie Christie in the play Anna Christi. When her father tries to minimize the effect of the sea and the fog, Anna elucidates her experience:

I feel old

.
like I'd been living a long, long time--out here in the fog. I don't know how to tell you yust what I mean. It's like I'd come home after a long visit away some place. It all seems like I'd been here before lots of times--on boats--in this same fog.

.
But why d' you s'pose I feel so--so--like I'd found something I'd missed and been looking for--'s if this was the right place for me to fit in? And I seem to have forgot--everything that's happened--like it didn't matter no more. And I feel clean, somehow--like you feel yust after you've took a bath. And I feel happy for once--yes, honest!--happier than I ever have been anywhere before!⁴⁴

Chris protests with a vehemence which belies his words,

"No! Dat ole daviil, sea, she ain't God!"⁴⁵

⁴³Ibid., p. 776.

⁴⁴"Anna Christie," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie and the Hairy Ape (New York: Modern Library, 1964), pp. 102-103.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 103.

Isaiah Bartlett's wife in Gold is a symbolic character. Isaiah realizes her goodness and he desires his wife to christen his new schooner with her maiden name, Sarah Allen.

Ye mustn't think hard o' me that I want your name.
It's because it's a good woman's name, and I know
it'll bring luck to our vige.⁴⁶

Actually, Sarah Bartlett performs a double function in the play, acting not only as Isaiah's wife but also as his conscience. Isaiah's labeling her constant reproaches as "houndin'" recalls Francis Thompson's poem "The Hound of Heaven." Sarah's role in the play is comparable to Christ's in Thompson's poem.

A prostitute in Marco Millions is symbolic of lost innocence, and she is the last of the feminine symbols to be discussed. Even though she appears three times in three different localities and costumes, she is ever the same. By the third encounter Marco's purity is no more. He is neither honest nor chaste and the prostitute says mockingly, "Don't sell your soul for nothing. That's

⁴⁶"Gold," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Vintage Books, 1951), pp. 158-159.

bad business. Going! Going! Gone! Your soul! Dead and buried! You strong man!"⁴⁷

The grace of God, whether it be through the revelation of the mother god or through the restorative power inherent in a "mother island" or "dat ole devil sea," recurs in all the dramas. This grace, revealing and healing, advances the mending process of the soul. One must keep in mind that it is man's relationship with God with which O'Neill is primarily concerned.

⁴⁷"Marco Millions," Nine Plays, p. 239.

C H A P T E R I I

PROFILE SKETCHES

In addition to O'Neill's full characterizations of women there are several profile sketches. The purposes of these sketches vary. Some are essential to plot development, some amplify the action of the major characters, others emphasize the theme of the drama, and some few furnish comic relief. These sketches will be discussed in five groups which include blood relations, wives and girl friends, prostitutes, servants, and for lack of a better division topic, others.

Among the profile sketches of blood relatives there are ten mothers, six sisters, two aunts, and eleven children. The contrast between Billy Brown and Dion Anthony in The Great God Brown is foreshadowed in the speeches of their mothers in the first scene of the drama. Billy Brown's mother is sure that he will make a good architect because "Billy used to draw houses when he was little,"¹ and Dion Anthony's mother tells her son, "You

¹"The Great God Brown," Nine Plays, p. 309.

ought to make a wonderful architect, Dion. You've always painted pictures so well."² Another interesting insight into the boys' future behavior is Mrs. Brown's practical comment about the June weather compared to Mrs. Anthony's romantic recollection, "I could feel the night wrapped around me like a gray velvet gown lined with warm sky and trimmed with silver leaves!"³

The brief appearance of Rachel, Lazarus' mother, and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, at the beginning of Lazarus Laughed serves merely to illustrate Lazarus' contention throughout the play that there is no death; there is only life and laughter. Even though these are the members of his immediate family, Lazarus views their deaths as occasions for laughter and rejoicing, rather than for sorrow, because he knows their souls are immortal.

Kate Mayo is the mother of Robert and Andrew in Beyond the Horizon. At the beginning of the drama, Mrs. Mayo, formerly having been a school teacher, retains a refinement of expression and emotion. The labors of a

²Ibid., p. 311.

³Ibid.

farm wife "have bent but not broken her."⁴ Three years later, after having experienced the heartbreak of seeing both sons go against their destinies and her husband die without forgiving the older boy, Mrs. Mayo has changed. Her face has "become a weak mask wearing a helpless, doleful expression of being constantly on the verge of comfortless tears."⁵

Charles Marsden's mother never appears in Strange Interlude but her influence is felt throughout the play. Marsden feels that at the age of sixteen he defiled his mother and himself forever by copulating with a "thick ankle"⁶ Italian girl in the slums of Naples while he was on Easter vacation from prep school. Marsden spends his entire life trying to overcome his obsession of guilt over that youthful indiscretion. A platonic relationship thereafter is the only relationship with which Marsden can be comfortable. After his mother's death, Marsden's sister moves into the house with him to continue the mothering.

⁴"Beyond the Horizon," Ah, Wilderness and Two Other Plays. (New York: Modern Library, 1960), p. 217.

⁵Ibid., p. 240.

⁶"Strange Interlude," Nine Plays, p. 488.

From Mat Burke in Anna Christie, the reader learns that his Catholic mother died when Mat was just a lad. Before her death she gave him a cross and told him to always keep it with him for luck. Mat believes the cross saved him from death when his last ship sank, and it is this cross upon which Mat insists Anna swear. Mat wants Anna to vow that she has never loved another man and that she will change and never even think of her recent life of whoring.

And I'm warning you now, if you'd swear an oath on this, 'tis my old woman herself will be looking down from Hivin above and praying Almighty God and the Saints to put a great curse on you if she'd hear you swearing a lie!⁷

There is a touch of humor in the situation which proves Mat's mother is a comforting and convenient memory rather than an awesome dominating force within his life. Upon discovering that Anna is not Catholic, Mat decides it is not an oath at all: "I'll have to be taking your naked word for it and have you anyway, I'm thinking--I'm needing you that bad!"⁸

⁷"Anna Christie," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie and The Hairy Ape (New York: Modern Library, 1948-64), pp. 173-174.

⁸Ibid., p. 175.

James and Mary Tyrone's mothers are recalled in Long Day's Journey into Night. Tyrone remembers his mother ". . . was left, a stranger in a strange land,"⁹ after his father returned to Ireland to die. The living conditions of Mrs. Tyrone and her six children were miserable. Twice they were evicted with their "few sticks of furniture thrown out in the street, and my mother and sisters crying."¹⁰ The poor woman spent most of her life washing and scrubbing, and her older daughters sewed while the younger two kept house. "We never had clothes enough to wear, nor enough food to eat."¹¹

Mary Tyrone's mother was strict and pious. Her daughter accused Mrs. Cavan of being jealous of the fact that her father once told her "to buy anything I wanted and never mind what it cost."¹² Mary recalls her mother scolding her father:

She'd grumble, "You never tell me, never mind what it costs. When I buy anything! You've spoiled that

⁹Long Day's Journey into Night, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 147.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., p. 148.

¹²Ibid., p. 114.

girl so, I pity her husband if she ever marries. She'll expect him to give her the moon. She'll never make a good wife."¹³

Certainly the influence of the past is essential to the plot development in Long Day's Journey into Night.

The mother and sister in All God's Chillun Got Wings may be seen as dramatic foils for Ella Harris after she and Jim return from Europe. Hattie and her mother are diametrically opposed in philosophy, and the furniture in the apartment is of two separate eras; the flat is "a queer clash."¹⁴ The older furniture is cheaply ornate and gaudy while the new pieces are "severe to the point of somberness."¹⁵ Illustrative of their divergent views are their ideas concerning the interracial marriage of Jim and Ella. Mrs. Harris says, "De white and de black shouldn't mix dat close. Dere's one road where de white goes on alone; dere's ~~an~~udder road where de black goes on alone--"¹⁶ Since they did persist in being

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴"All God's Chillun Got Wings," Nine Plays, p. 112.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 113.

married, Mrs. Harris thinks Jim and Ella's compromise of living in Europe is wise. Hattie vehemently objects.

No! They were cowards to run away. If they believe in what they've done, then let them face it out, live it out here, be strong enough to conquer all prejudice!¹⁷

Of course, these conflicts in the apartment and between Mrs. Harris and Hattie heighten Ella's sense of frustration.

Even the unfeeling businessman in Fog has some tenderness concerning womanhood. He admits that he would not have been on the European cruise in the first place had it not been that his wife and girls insisted. When the businessman is told that the peasant woman will not understand what they are saying about her dead child because she does not know the language, he replies:

She'd know we were talking about the kid just the same. Mothers have an instinct when it comes to that. I've seen that proved in my own family more than once.¹⁸

One of the two aunts among O'Neill's profile sketches is Sam Evans' Aunt Bessie in Strange Interlude.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 114.

¹⁸"Fog," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 96.

Although she lives on the top story of the old Evans homeplace, because of his mother's maneuvering Sam has not seen her since he was eight, and he is unaware that "she's out of her mind."¹⁹ His mother gives this account of Aunt Bessie:

She just sits, doesn't say a word, but she's happy, she laughs to herself a lot, she hasn't a care in the world. But I remember when she was all right, she was always unhappy; she never got married, most people around here were afraid of the Evanses in spite of their being rich for hereabouts. They knew about the craziness going back, I guess, for heaven knows how long.²⁰

Aunt Bessie may well be one of O'Neill's most sympathetically drawn characterizations and the other aunt is perhaps the least complimentary profile he presents. Mildred Douglas' aunt in The Hairy Ape is described as "a gray lump of dough touched up with rouge."²¹ The most repugnant description of the aunt is Mildred's. This is what she says:

Do you know what you remind me of? Of a cold pork pudding against a background of linoleum tablecloth

¹⁹"Strange Interlude," Nine Plays, p. 541.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹"The Hairy Ape," Nine Plays, p. 50.

in the kitchen of a--but the possibilities are wearisome.²²

The elderly aunt is pompous, fat, and decidedly overdressed, "as if afraid her face alone would never indicate her position in life."²³

The list of profile sketches of relatives would be incomplete without Ann Culver's mother in Ah, Wilderness! Mrs. Culver's rheumatism improved to such an extent that she was able to go wading on the Fourth of July and to the chagrin of Essie Miller, the fact that she claims "salt water's the only thing that really helps her bunion,"²⁴ is recounted at the Miller dinner table.

William Wordsworth's statement, "The child is father of the man" is just as true in the female gender. O'Neill's Abraham Bentley put it this way in The Rope: "As is the mother, so is her daughter!"²⁵ Girl children as well as childlike women play significant roles in O'Neill's writings. There are eleven preadolescent

²²Ibid., p. 51.

²³Ibid., p. 50.

²⁴"Ah, Wilderness!" Ah, Wilderness and Two Other Plays (New York: Modern Library, 1947-60), p. 58.

²⁵"The Rope," Long Voyage Home, p. 183.

female youngsters in his forty-five published dramas. Nine of these eleven appear on stage, at least briefly. The youngest of these little girls is the "pretty but sickly and anemic-looking child,"²⁶ Mary Mayo, who is only two, in Beyond the Horizon. Mary's characterization is quite believable; she is avidly "Daddy's girl" and is definitely in the typical two-year-old "no" stage. Mary "no's" no less than eight times. Three-word sentences are the extent of her capability. These two directed toward Robert, her father, are illustrative: "Play wif Mary"²⁷ and "Mary loves Dada."²⁸ The admiration is mutual between father and daughter, for her Uncle Andy remarks, "Gosh, I never saw a father so tied up in a kid as Rob is!"²⁹

For a brief period Ruth, Mary's mother, thought that the child might make her tragic mistake of a marriage meaningful, but soon Ruth began to view Mary as a chore rather than a joy. Ruth tells Robert, "All

²⁶"Beyond the Horizon," Ah, Wilderness and Two Other Plays, p. 244.

²⁷Ibid., p. 260.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid., p. 272.

right, take care of her then, if you think it's so easy."³⁰ Ruth's habitual attitude toward Mary is obvious in this line:

A good spanking's what you need, my young lady--
and you'll get one from me if you don't mind better,
d'you hear?³¹

Robert had a reason to keep on trying during his daughter's lifetime, but when at age seven Mary died, Robert's one raison d'être died, too.

The deaths of two little girls greatly influenced the lives of their parents in The First Man. While Curt and Martha Jayson were visiting some friends one Sunday afternoon in winter, their babysitter fell asleep and their two daughters, ages two and three, "sneaked out in their underclothes and played in the snow."³² A week later both girls were dead of pneumonia. Martha recounts the effect their deaths had on them:

We were real lunatics for a time. And then when we'd calmed down enough to realize--how things stood with us--we swore we'd never have children again--to steal away their memory. It wasn't what

³⁰Ibid., p. 250.

³¹Ibid., p. 249.

³²"The First Man," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, II, 557.

you thought--romanticism--that set Curt wandering-- and me with him. It was a longing to lose ourselves--to forget.³³

The influence of other little girls is not nearly as drastic as the three just mentioned. Little seven year old Ruth Roylston is simply the reason for her mother's early arrival home from the city in Servitude. Ruth ate too much candy at the theatre and became ill, but now she announces, "I feel puffictly well this morning, Mother."³⁴ Liking candy is typical of O'Neill's children. Lizzie and Sue Knapp have a strong affinity for it, also, in Warnings. Despite their father's spinelessness and their mother's destructive nature, the three Knapp daughters appear to be quite normal. Mrs. Knapp has used bribery to manage Lizzie and Sue, the two younger girls, and as a result they are not as well behaved as one might wish, but otherwise Lizzie and Sue favor candy, pencils, and staying up past their bedtime just as most children do. The oldest daughter, Dolly, has a boyfriend. After she is tattled on by her own brother for being in the hallway with the boyfriend, this

³³Ibid.

³⁴"Servitude," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 258.

is what Dolly has to contend with from Mrs. Knapp:

And you, miss! Don't you let me hear of you bein' in any dark hallways with young men again or I'll take you over my knee, so I will. The idea of such a thing! I can't understand you at all. I never was allowed out alone with anyone--not even with your father, before I was engaged to be married to him. I don't know what's come over you young folks nowadays.³⁵

Mary and Nora Carmody are the eight and eleven year old daughters of Bill Carmody in The Straw. Mary in her looks and sensitivity is a carbon copy of her oldest sister, Eileen, and their deceased mother. "She is a delicate, dark-haired, blue-eyed, quiet little girl."³⁶ Nora is representative of the Carmody side of the house, vivacious, and "pretty after an elfish, mischievous fashion."³⁷ Nora's idea of fun is to pinch her brother Tom from her hiding place under the table and then slip out at the other end of the table to avoid retribution, pulling her little sister's hair on the way. Eight months pass and Mr. Carmody marries Mrs. Brennan. Mary has changed:

³⁵"Warnings," Ten "Lost" Plays, pp. 63-64.

³⁶"The Straw," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Random House, Inc., 1951), p. 38.

³⁷Ibid., p. 39.

The sweetness of her face has disappeared, giving way to a hangdog sullenness, a stubborn silence, with sulky, furtive glances of rebellion directed at her stepmother.³⁸

The changed home atmosphere has no appreciable effect on Nora. "And Nora--there's the divil for you! Up to everything she is and no holdin' her high spirits. As pretty as a picture, and the smartest girl in her school,"³⁹ according to her father.

Mary Sweeney is the skinny, carrotty headed, overgrown ten year old in The Rope, and her grandfather holds her in high esteem. "Spawn o' Satan"⁴⁰ and "Spawn o' the Pit,"⁴¹ are two of his favorite labels for the child. These names are applied to Mary because Grandfather did not approve of her mother's marriage to a Catholic Irishman. Mary's own father says of his offspring, "It's soft-minded she is, like I've always told you, an' stupid."⁴² Mary's eventual gleeful throwing of twenty-dollar gold pieces into the sea causes the audience

³⁸Ibid., p. 100.

³⁹Ibid., p. 104.

⁴⁰"The Rope," Long Voyage Home, p. 182.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 189.

to put some credibility on Pat Sweeney's diagnosis.

Girl number eleven among O'Neill's creations is Ella Downey. Because Ella is a twenty-one year old as well as an eight year old in the course of the drama, All God's Chillun Got Wings, Ella's complete characterization will appear later in Chapter III.

Two traits are predominant in most children--selfishness and helplessness. The tragedy occurs when these traits are not outgrown.

Only two of the twelve wives and girl friends mentioned in the following section ever appear on stage and yet these profiles clarify the eventual consequences of major characters. The Sniper mentions two women; one is the wife of Rougon--Margot--and the other is Louise, the fiancée of Rougon's son. The son has returned home from the front lines earlier to try to persuade his family and Louise's family to evacuate to Brussels. Soon after the departure of everyone except his father, the son is shot. After his son's death, Rougon feels that he must survive now so that he can comfort Margot and Louise in their time of sorrow. Word comes that the women have been killed in an ambush along the road to Brussels. This news sounds a death knell to Rougon's happiness and he becomes a sniper, thereby insuring his own death, too.

The first two marriages of both Abraham Bentley in The Rope and Ephraim Cabot in Desire Under the Elms were disastrous. According to Annie, Bentley's first wife was driven to her early death by his "naggin, and pinchin' and miser stinginess."⁴³ Then he married "that harlot that was the talk o' the town."⁴⁴ The second Mrs. Bentley ran around with "this farmer and that, and even men off the ships in port."⁴⁵ Finally, she left Abraham altogether. Both of these marriages were based on deception, treachery, and miserliness, and they failed miserably. Ephraim Cabot's first two marriages lacked communication. Of the first Mrs. Cabot, Ephraim says, "She helped but she never knowed what she was helpin'. I was allus lonesome."⁴⁶ After her death, Ephraim took a second wife, perhaps out of economic necessity. "Her folks was contestin' me at law over my deed t' the farm--my farm!"⁴⁷ This second wife was pretty and soft but a

⁴³Ibid., p. 184.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 185.

⁴⁶"Desire Under the Elms," Nine Plays, p. 173.

⁴⁷Ibid.

mutual compassion and understanding was missing between the two. "She never knowed me nor nothin'. It was lonesomer 'n hell with her."⁴⁸

The spirits of two lost wives have haunted Harry Hope's hotel for several years when the drama, The Iceman Cometh, begins. One of the women is Harry's own Bessie. Harry went into mourning over Bessie's death twenty years earlier and he has not ventured outside the hotel since.

Once she'd gone, I didn't give a damn for anything. I lost all my ambition. Without her, nothing seemed worth the trouble.⁴⁹

One of the boarders offers a more realistic picture of Bessie. "Isn't a pipe dream of yesterday a touching thing? By all accounts Bessie nagged the hell out of him."⁵⁰ But Harry knows that Bessie would appreciate his grief. He is assured that she was too good to want to keep him "cooped up in here"⁵¹ all his life; so each

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹"The Iceman Cometh," Masters of Modern Drama (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), p. 599.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 600.

year on his birthday, he makes plans to walk around the ward, but he never does.

Harry gets a childish delight in doing two things he couldn't possibly have gotten away with during Bessie's lifetime. He continues to allow Bessie's worthless brother to live off him there at the hotel and he allows some female clientele to move in.

Never thought I'd see the day when Harry Hope's would have tarts rooming in it. What'd Bessie think? . . . I'll bet Bessie is doing somersaults in her grave!⁵²

The ambivalence of Harry's attitude toward his wife is apparent when he says to Hickey, "Close that big clam of yours, Hickey. Bejees, you're a worse gabber than that nagging bitch, Bessie, was."⁵³

The second lost wife in The Iceman Cometh is Marjorie Cameron. This unfaithful wife of Jimmy Tomorrow is the reason for Jimmy's "boozing and ruin"⁵⁴ until Hickey forces him to admit that his wife's adultery was

⁵²Ibid., p. 602.

⁵³Ibid., p. 631.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 618.

only an excuse, rather than the real reason behind his alcoholism. Jimmy finally acknowledged discovering early in life that living frightened him when he was sober.

In the play Hughie, the only insight into the life of Irma Hughes, Hughie's wife, is through the eyes of Erie. Apparently Hughie and his wife have a comfortable relationship, even though Irma is not particularly pretty.

His wife is a bum--in spades! Oh, I don't mean cheatin'. With her puss and figure, she'd never make no one except she raided a blind asylum.⁵⁵

Irma had done much to "doll up"⁵⁶ their tiny flat and she tried to protect their children from the glittering aspect of a gambler's life. "She put me down as a bad influence,"⁵⁷ Erie admits. But after Hughie's death, Erie felt sorry for Irma. "She looked like she ought to be parked in a coffin, too."⁵⁸ Perhaps there

⁵⁵"Hughie," The Later Plays of Eugene O'Neill (New York: Random House, Inc., 1952-67), p. 267.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 280.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 279.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 286.

was more to the marriage than resignation or the attitude which Erie accuses each of them of having toward the other: "Well, what more could I expect?"⁵⁹

There was almost a wife in Erie's life too, "A doll nearly had me hooked for the old shotgun ceremony!"⁶⁰ It was the closest Erie "ever come to being played for a sucker."⁶¹ Her name was Daisy, "But I was no fall guy even in them days. I took it on the lam,"⁶² he brags.

Edith is Smitty's girl in the play, In the Zone. She lives only through her letters which Smitty has lovingly placed in the little black box which is the root of all the conflict among the crew aboard the Glencairn. Smitty keeps these letters as a remembrance of what once was and can never be again. In Edith's last letter are these words:

You have shown that your drunkenness means more to you than any love or faith av mine. I am sorry--for I loved you Sidney Davidson--but this is the end.⁶³

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 279.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 269.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³"In the Zone," Long Voyage Home, p. 113.

Edith is unwilling to marry a man who makes drink his crutch. She prefers to allow him to destroy only himself.

There are two girl friends who appear on stage briefly: Irene in The Dreamy Kid and Evelyn Sands in Abortion. Irene is loyal. She tries to prevent Dreamy's coming to his grandmother's house because she is aware of the police trap which is being set up there. When she finally locates Dreamy she vows, "I'se gwine stay right here at de door. You might s'well lemme in."⁶⁴ The only way Dreamy is able to convince her that she should leave him is to send her for nonexistent help.

Evelyn Sands is the fiancée of Jack Townsend in Abortion. It is probably the following speech by Evelyn which differentiates most clearly in Jack's mind his reputation from his character.

You were so cool, so brave. It struck me as symbolic of the way you would always play, in the game of life--fairly, squarely, strengthening those around you, refusing to weaken at critical moments, advancing others by sacrifices, fighting the good fight for the cause, the team, and always, always, whether vanquished or victor, reserving a hearty, honest cheer for the other side. Oh, Jack dear, I loves you so!⁶⁵

⁶⁴"The Dreamy Kid," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 31.

⁶⁵"Abortion," Ten "Lost" Plays, pp. 149-150.

This speech causes Jack to contrast his image with his reality and it sickens him.

In addition to the many "ladies of the evening" who fill essential major roles in the dramas of O'Neill, there are numerous minor roles. Included in this section are "them brown native women," four madams, a fat piano player, countless "Follies' Dolls" and three tarts.

"Them brown women" are influential in Diff'rent, Moon of the Caribbees and to an extent, Mourning Becomes Electra. In Diff'rent Emma is assured that "they don't count like folks. They ain't Christians--nor nothin'"⁶⁶ by her closest girl friend. Then the three most important men in her life give their descriptions. Brother Jack says, "They're purty as pictures . . . and mighty accommodatin' in their ways."⁶⁷ Her fiancé offers this account:

A man don't think of 'em as women--like you . . . at night they sings--and its all diff'rent like something you'd see in a painted picture.⁶⁸

⁶⁶"Diff'rent," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 208.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 214-215.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 219.

Emma's father, Captain Crosby, claims to know them "like a book. And I tells you, after a year or more aboard ship, a man'd have to be a goll-durned geldin' if he don't--"⁶⁹

There are "brown women" in Moon of the Caribbees. Bella, the oldest, stoutest, and homeliest, serves as their chieftain. She answers to the sobriquet of "Mrs. Old Black Joe." Three more girls are named Suzie, Pearl, and Violet, or as Davis so aptly states it, "This way, Rose, or Pansy, or Jessamine, or Black Tulip or Violet or whatever the hell flower your name is."⁷⁰ Actually, their individual identities matter little. Bella has brought along five girls ("two swate little slips av things, near as white as you an' me are")⁷¹ for the officers plus the three girls already mentioned. Upon observing that Smitty, clearly the most refined member of the crew, is repelled by the shipboard activities, Donkeyman attempts to soothe him: "All depends on how you was brung up, I s'pose."⁷²

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 217-218.

⁷⁰"The Moon of the Caribbees," Long Voyage Home, p. 23.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 15.

⁷²Ibid., p. 23.

Pearl, the youngest and prettiest of the Negresses, makes a play for Smitty, which he vehemently rejects. Donkey-man offers advice on how to handle the situation. "They're all the same--white, brown, yeller 'n' black. A whack on the ear's the only thing'll learn 'em."⁷³

Mourning Becomes Electra presents opposing views of the South Sea island natives. Orin recalls, "The naked women disgusted me. I guess I'm too much of a Mannon, after all, to turn into a pagan."⁷⁴ And yet his own sister's reaction is surprisingly different, particularly when one realizes that Emma Crosby is of the same era as Lavinia Mannon. Lavinia says. "I loved those islands . . . the natives dancing naked and innocent--without knowledge of sin!"⁷⁵

Benny in Diff'rent has had experience with French women and says, "They're some pippins! It ain't so much that they're better lookin' as that they've got a way with 'em--lots of ways."⁷⁶ Benny is such a cosmopolite that he

⁷³Ibid., p. 26.

⁷⁴"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 831.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 834.

⁷⁶"Diff'rent," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 230.

can, of course, hand exactly the right line to the local harlot, Tilly Small, to induce her to furnish a bottle. Another madam who plays an intricate part in plot development is the madam in The Dreamy Kid who sends Irene for a bottle of gin. It is while Irene is on the errand that she learns of the trap which is being set up for Dreamy. Mollie Arlington, the madam of Hickey's Hoosier hometown cathouse, furnishes the initial investment for Hickey's venture into selling in The Iceman Cometh. Mollie has a great deal of faith in Hickey.

Hell, I'll stake you, Kid! I'll bet on you. With that grin of yours and that line of bull, you ought to be able to sell skunks for good ratters!⁷⁷

Min, the "scarlet woman" in Desire Under the Elms, underlines the disastrous consequences of the ungoverned will to possess. Min has been "purty fur twenty year!"⁷⁸ and all four of the Cabot men can verify her beauty and charm. In fact, during the first act of the play Eben is still enthralled.

⁷⁷"The Iceman Cometh," Masters of Modern Drama, p. 637.

⁷⁸"Desire Under the Elms," Nine Plays, p. 144.

She's like t'night, she's soft 'n' wa'm, her eyes
 kin wink like a star, her mouth's wa'm, her arms're
 wa'm, she smells like a wa'm plowed field, she's
 purty . . . Ay-eh! By God A'mighty she's purty, an'
 I don't give a damn how many sins she's sinned afore
 mine or who she's sinned'em with, my sin's as purty
 as any one of 'em!⁷⁹

In A Moon for the Misbegotten, Jim Tyrone re-
 counts the reason for his never receiving his Bachelor of
 Arts diploma--her name was Dutch Maisie. Jim made a bet
 that he could pass off a tart as his sister at an official
 university function.

It was a memorable day in the halls of learning.
 All the students were wise and I had them rolling
 in the aisles as I showed Sister around the grounds,
 accompanied by one of the Jebbs. He was a bit sus-
 picious at first, but Dutch Maisie--her professional
 name--had no make-up on, and was dressed in black,
 and had eaten a pound of Sen-Sen to kill the gin on
 her breath, and seemed such a devout girl that he
 forgot his suspicions. Yes, all would have been
 well, but she was a mischievous minx, and had her
 own ideas of improving on my joke. When she was
 saying good-bye to Father Fuller, she added inno-
 cently: "Christ, Father, it's nice and quiet out
 here away from the damned Sixth Avenue El. I wish
 to hell I could stay here!" But she didn't, and
 neither did I.⁸⁰

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 145.

⁸⁰"A Moon for the Misforgotten," The Later Plays
 of Eugene O'Neill, p. 324.

In contrast to the frolicsome college lad is the mature Jamie Tyrone in Long Day's Journey into Night. Mamie Burns' dump is the place Jamie visits when he feels completely dejected. After knowing for a certainty that his brother has tuberculosis and that his mother is using narcotics again, Jamie goes to see Mamie. Mamie meets Jamie at the door with her sad story of "how rotten business was."⁸¹ She also tells Jamie of her intention to fire "Fat Vi" because lately Vi has been too drunk to play the piano. Her piano playing was the reason Mamie hired Vi in the first place. Jamie feels so sorry for Fat Vi that he escorts her upstairs, "with no dishonorable intentions whatever. I like them fat, but not that fat."⁸² Jamie makes love to her because he feels sorry for her.

Pah! Imagine me sunk to the fat girl in a hick town hooker shop! Me! Who have made some of the best-lookers on Broadway sit up and beg!⁸³

Jamie feels the responsibility to preserve his image with Edmund. Erie feels the same obligation in Hughie. In

⁸¹Long Day's Journey into Night, p. 159.

⁸²Ibid., pp. 159-160.

⁸³Ibid., pp. 160-161.

order to maintain his image with Hughie, Erie has to be very discriminating in his choice of female companions.

Every tramp I made got to be a Follies' doll. Hughie liked 'em to be Follies' dolls. Or in the Scandals or Frolics. He wanted me to be the Sheik of Araby, or something that any blonde'd go round-heeled about.⁸⁴

The "three ladies of the pavement that room on the third floor"⁸⁵ at Harry Hope's in The Iceman Cometh feel a sense of duty to keep their good names from being besmirched. Rocky and Chuck, the men who keep them from being picked up by the police, are not pimps. They have regular jobs as bartenders. Besides, the ladies insist, "we wouldn't keep no pimp, like we was reg'lar old whores. We ain't dat bad. No. We're tarts, but dat's all."⁸⁶ Margie, Pearl, and Cora are minor characters who reflect the "pipe dream" theme throughout the drama. The philosophy at Harry Hope's is close to the idea of Mary Cavan Tyrone in Long Day's Journey into Night when she says,

⁸⁴"Hughie," Later Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 283.

⁸⁵"The Iceman Cometh," Masters of Modern Drama, p. 596.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 603.

"The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too."⁸⁷ At Harry Hope's the situation is a trifle more pessimistic. "Worst is best here, and East is West, and tomorrow is yesterday."⁸⁸ One of the girls, Cora, and Chuck cling to the dream that some day he will stop drinking and they will be married and move out to live on a farm in Jersey. All three of the girls pathetically hold to the belief that they are not whores at all--only tarts.

For the most part O'Neill's women servants are quite ordinary. Margaret in Strange Interlude is a faithful, dependable maid as are the maid, Mary, and the cook, Emmy, in Days Without End. The Mannon servants in Mourning Becomes Electra, Hannah and Annie, are not unusual either except "that durned idjut Hannah, . . . says she felt ha'nts crawlin' behind her"⁸⁹ in the Mannon cellar. In addition to the malicious Gene in Recklessness, there is a second maid, Mary, whose dialogue consists of "Yes sir, yes sir," and one cannot help but wonder if her next line will be "three bags full."

⁸⁷Long Day's Journey into Night, p. 87.

⁸⁸"The Iceman Cometh," Masters of Modern Drama, p. 598.

⁸⁹"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 846.

Norah, the Millers' maid in Ah, Wilderness! and Cathleen in Long Day's Journey into Night are strikingly similar. Both are rather buxom Irish peasant types who tend to be clumsy and a bit dense. Even though both are slightly exasperating to their mistresses at times, they are basically good natured, well-meaning individuals. Norah does have to be reminded of the direction to pass the plates and is warned repeatedly not to slam the pantry door.

Bridget, the Tyrones' cook in Long Day's Journey into Night, is a character who is parallel to Mary Tyrone. Bridget is addicted to whiskey and Mary is addicted to dope. Mary complains of the rheumatism in her once beautiful hands and because the "damp is in Bridget's rheumatism . . . she's like a raging divil."⁹⁰ Both Bridget and Mary are lonely. In Act I Bridget keeps Cathleen in the kitchen with her by telling her lies about her relations. In Act II Mary keeps Cathleen with her all afternoon, going for a drive in the car and chatting in the living room when they return home, just for companionship.

One servant has the distinction of becoming a member of the household. After Eileen's departure for

⁹⁰Long Day's Journey into Night, p. 99.

the hospital in The Straw, Mrs. Brennan is hired as the Carmody housekeeper. Very shortly, Bill Carmody marries her. Judging from his miserly attitude concerning Eileen's hospital costs, Bill was probably motivated by the fact that he would not have to pay her wages after the wedding. Even with the monetary saving, Carmody most likely gets the worst end of the bargain because Mrs. Brennan has an habitual expression of "fuming irritation."⁹¹ After only two weeks of marriage Mrs. Brennan is threatening to leave and Carmody is threatening a monumental drunk.

One of the most beautiful minor characterizations in the dramas is Miss Gilpin, a nurse in The Straw. Because she suffered through the same experience many years ago, she recognizes Eileen's suffering over her lost love. It is Miss Gilpin who supplies the plan for Murray that will keep Eileen "happy to the very last."⁹² She implores Murray, "Don't you think that's something you can give in return for her love for you?"⁹³ When Murray

⁹¹"The Straw," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 100.

⁹²Ibid., p. 116.

⁹³Ibid.

puts the plan into effect, he realizes that he does love Eileen and he accuses Miss Gilpin of giving him a "hopeless hope." She replies:

Isn't all life just that--when you think of it? But there must be something back of it--some promise of fulfillment--somehow--somewhere--in the spirit of hope itself.⁹⁴

Miss Howard and Mrs. Turner are the other two nurses in The Straw. Both of them are conscientious and capable. Although Mrs. Turner has been suspicious of the relationship of Eileen and Murray and the harm that an emotional entanglement might do to Eileen's health, she quickly dismisses this notion when Eileen tells her that she is engaged to Fred Nicholls. Perhaps Mrs. Turner is too gullible in handling Eileen's case. Miss Howard exhibits a seriousness and dedication to her job that is commendable.

In addition to the three nurse characterizations in The Straw, trained nurses appear in The First Man at the time of the birth and in Days Without End when Elsa Loving's influenza turns into pneumonia. In Long

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 121.

Day's Journey into Night James Tyrone claims to have always provided Mary with a nurse to assist with the children and to keep her company while they were touring with "The Count of Monte Cristo."

The most influential nurse in plot development is, of course, Marie Brantome in Mourning Becomes Electra. "She was always laughin' and singin'--frisky and full of life."⁹⁵ It was this same low Canuck nurse girl, Marie Brantome, with whom both Mannon brothers fell in love and thereby precipitated all the feelings of hate, revenge, and guilt in the Mannon family. These devastating emotions eventually brought about the total ruin of the house of Mannon.

With the listing of three nuns from Mary Cavan Tyrone's past in Long Day's Journey into Night, twenty women patients at the Hill Farm Sanitarium in The Straw, and the townswomen who function as part of the chorus in Mourning Becomes Electra the profile sketches will be complete. In Long Day's Journey into Night the three nuns whose influences are most vividly remembered years later by Mary are Sister Theresa, who was her piano instructor, Sister Martha, who was in charge of the school

⁹⁵"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 728.

infirmary, and Mother Elizabeth, whose "kind blue eyes look right into your heart."⁹⁶ Starting alphabetically with the tubercular patients in The Straw, there is Mrs. Abner, an unfeeling middle-aged woman who is so overjoyed at her own weight gain that she is insensitive to Eileen Carmody, who has just discovered that she has lost three pounds. Next is Miss Bailey, who spitefully claims she is being treated unfairly because she is sent back to bed and Eileen is not, when both of them have lost weight. The only information available on the remaining patients at the Hill Farm Hospital is their names. These women file across the stage at regular intervals to be weighed by the doctor. Their names are included to serve the author's purpose of offering a complete list of O'Neill's women characters. Doctor Stanton's voice is heard calling the following names:

Miss Doeffler, Mrs. Elbing, Miss Finch, Miss Grimes, Miss Haines, Miss Hayes, Miss Jutner, Miss Linowski, Miss Marini, Mrs. McCoy, Miss McElroy, Miss Nelson, Mrs. Nott, Mrs. O'Brien, Mrs. Olson, Miss Paul, Miss Petrovski, Mrs. Quinn, Miss Robersti, Mrs. Stattler, Miss Unger.⁹⁷

⁹⁶Long Day's Journey into Night, p. 175.

⁹⁷"The Straw," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 82.

Four women serve as members of the Greek chorus for two parts of Mourning Becomes Electra. Before Act I of "Homecoming" three townspeople come "to look and listen and spy on the rich and exclusive Mannons."⁹⁸ In this same group are Amos Ames, his wife Louisa, and her cousin Minnie. Their function is to inform the audience of the Mannon family past. This is the startling revelation Louisa makes concerning Christine:

Folks all hates her! She ain't the Mannon kind. French and Dutch descended, she is. Furrin lookin' and queer. Her father's a doctor in New York, but he can't be much of a one 'cause she didn't bring no money when Ezra married her.⁹⁹

In Act I of "The Hunted" the chorus consists of "a different stratum of society."¹⁰⁰ There are two couples--the Bordens and the Hills--and the town doctor in this group. Borden is a businessman and Hills is the minister of the First Congregational Church. Mrs. Borden is a know-it-all, "her manner defensively sharp and assertive."¹⁰¹ It is Mrs. Hills' recalling her husband's

⁹⁸"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 689.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 690.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 753.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

private comment in public that keeps this group from oblivion. Mrs. Hills' letting the cat out of the bag offers a bit of humor at the expense of her very uncomfortable husband.

Mrs. Hills: Maybe it is fate. You remember, Everett, you've always said about the Mannons that pride goeth before a fall and that some day God would humble them in their sinful pride.

Hills: (flusteredly) I don't remember ever saying--¹⁰²

These profile sketches are indeed sketchy, but it is obvious that with a few well chosen words, O'Neill captures a personality. These glimpses into the lives of relatively insignificant characters conclude the presentation of the minor female characters with one exception--the mare in A Touch of the Poet. The mare has been omitted because the mare is a manifestation of Con Melody's masculine pride and therefore, beyond the limitations of this paper. From this point, attention will be centered on the "Eves" and "Marys" in O'Neill's writing. Hopefully, the path of the soul from defeat to victory will emerge as the major feminine characterizations are examined in the final two chapters.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 755.

C H A P T E R I I I

THE PHYSICAL MOTHER--EVE

The Biblical account, as well as John Milton's expanded version of the fall of man in "Paradise Lost," shows our physical mother, Eve, in at least four separate roles during her sojourn on earth. First there is the Eve who is childlike in her naivete, capable of being beguiled by the serpent; then comes Eve, the annihilator, whose action brings about the destruction of paradise. Eventually the superficial woman evolves who exists without real significance, and finally, Eve, the woman of compassion, emerges. A great number of Eugene O'Neill's creations illustrate these separate phases in the development of woman.

The playwright's childlike women will be discussed first. These females, who according to chronological age should have achieved a degree of maturity, are consistent in demonstrating the typically childish qualities of selfishness and helplessness. Nina Leeds, called by some critics "Everywoman," exhibits selfishness throughout the drama, Strange Interlude. In the course of

the drama, the audience sees Nina progress from romantic love, promiscuity, wifehood, and adultery, to maternal love, and in the end she is "leaning wearily toward peace."¹ Nina is incapable of viewing anything or anybody except in relationship to herself. At the beginning of the drama she is a child who cannot forgive herself for lacking the courage and maturity to accept the responsibility of giving herself physically to her fiancée, Gordon Shaw, before he went to war. Gordon's plane was shot down, he died, and Nina, seeing herself as "Gordon's silly virgin!"² is unable to reconcile her grief and emptiness. As a child might do, Nina places the blame for her unfulfilled dream on her father. Professor Leeds accepts this blame. He recounts how he took Gordon aside and told him that since he would be involved in extremely hazardous situations as an aviator, a marriage previous to his safe return from the war would be unfair to Nina. Mr. Leeds also pointed out that Nina could be left a widow, with a baby perhaps, if he were killed; "and all this while she was still at an age when a girl . . . should have all of life before her."³

¹"Strange Interlude," Nine Plays, p. 669.

²Ibid., p. 501.

³Ibid., p. 493.

Even her father's becoming the scapegoat is not sufficient to placate Nina. She persists in her guilt. "I must pay! It's my plain duty!"⁴ Nina decides that the only hope she has to regain her own life is to give herself for a man's happiness "without scruple, without fear, without joy except in his joy!"⁵ Nina puts this plan into effect, giving herself to every war-maimed victim she can find. Dr. Ned Darrell specifies the results of her action.

She's piled on too many destructive experiences. A few more and she'll dive for the gutter just to get the security that comes from knowing she's touched bottom and there's no farther to go!⁶

After the death of Professor Leeds, Marsden, "dear ole Charlie"⁷ a longtime family friend, assumes the role of father for the childlike Nina. Good naturedly, Marsden recalls an incident from their past:

As I've often reminded you, what can I expect when the first word you ever spoke in this world was an insult to me. "Dog" you said, looking right at me-- at the age of one!⁸

⁴Ibid., p. 500.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 517.

⁷Ibid., p. 496.

⁸Ibid.

Marsden rarely refers to Nina other than by "Nina, Cara, Nina," her childhood pet name. The terms "little girl" or "child" designating Nina are forever cropping up in the dialogue. "She's had a hard day of it, poor child! I'll carry her up to her room"⁹ is a prime example of the more than twenty times "child" appellations are used throughout the lines of the play.

Other attributes that Nina has in common with most children are hero-worship and egotism. She thinks of Gordon Shaw continually. She goes so far as to write a book about him and name her son for him. Her egotism is evidenced by the fact that she rarely speaks of anyone without the singular possessive pronoun preceding the person's name. This is the classic example:

My three men! . . . I feel their desires converge in me! . . . to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb . . . and am whole . . . they dissolve in me, their life is my life . . . I am pregnant with the three! . . . husband! . . . lover! . . . father! . . . and the fourth man! . . . little man! . . . little Gordon! . . . he is mine too! . . . that makes it perfect!¹⁰

⁹Ibid., p. 528.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 616.

On three separate occasions Nina comments that the child is not Ned's or Sam's but "mine! . . . I feel my child live . . . moving in my life."¹¹ Eventually, she shares her son with her hero, "mine!--and Gordon's!--Gordon is Gordon's--he was my Gordon!--his Gordon is mine!"¹² Nina's possessiveness will not allow any of her men to leave her. When Darrell, the biological father of her child, suggests that he might have had a meaningful life had she not called him back after he became engaged to another woman, and asks whether she would do it now, Nina admits, "Yes--I suppose the thought of a wife taking you away from me would be too much--again!"¹³

At the end of her life Nina wishes to return to her childhood. Her thoughts are these:

Charlie will come in every day to visit . . . he'll comfort and amuse me . . . we can talk together of the old days . . . when I was a girl . . . when I was happy . . . before I fell in love with Gordon Shaw and all this tangled mess of love and hate and pain and birth began!¹⁴

¹¹Ibid., p. 591.

¹²Ibid., p. 663.

¹³Ibid., p. 624.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 673.

Fittingly, Darrell departs with these words of farewell to Nina and Marsden, "Bless you, my children!"¹⁵

Abbie Putman, the heroine of Desire Under the Elms, is childlike also. She resembles Nina Leeds in her desire for possessions. As soon as she arrives at the Cabot place, Abbie announces, "This be my farm--this be my hum--this be my kitchen--!"¹⁶ A further line illustrates the absurd extent of her longing to own things. "I'll wash up my dishes, now."¹⁷ Abbie is torn between desires for the farm, which represents security to her, and for her stepson, Eben, with whom she falls in love. Abbie exercises the judgment of a child when she is faced with the possibility of losing Eben. Thinking she is doing what Eben has suggested, she murders their baby. This is her explanation to Eben:

I didn't want t' do it. I hated myself fur doin' it. I loved him. He was so purty--dead spit 'n' image o' yew. But I loved yew more--an' yew was goin' away . . . ye said ye hated me fur havin' him--an' wished he was dead--ye said ye hated him an' wished he was dead--ye said if it hadn't been fur him cumin' it'd be the same's afore between us.¹⁸

¹⁵Ibid., p. 679.

¹⁶"Desire Under the Elms," Nine Plays, p. 161.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 197.

Eben interprets the murder as a further move on Abbie's part to make certain that the farm will eventually belong solely to her. He anticipates a plot in which he will be accused of the baby's murder. Had Eben viewed Abbie objectively, he would have realized that she did not have the mental capacity to formulate such an intricate plan. Abbie was motivated solely by her childish desire to please him. After Eben's having gone to summon the sheriff, Abbie's childlike innocence in committing the crime suddenly dawns upon Eben and he accepts his role as her accomplice.

Emma Crosby in Diff'rent breaks her engagement because reality is not identical to the childish fantasy she nurtured concerning Caleb, her intended husband. Emma explains her position.

Ever since we was little I guess I've always had the idea that you was--diff'rent. And when we grewed up and got engaged I thought that more and more. And you was diff'rent, too! And that was why I love you. And now you've proved you ain't. And so how can I love you any more? I don't, Caleb, and that's all there is to it. You've busted something way down inside me--and I can't love you no more.¹⁹

¹⁹"Diff'rent," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, pp. 220-221.

Part of the tragedy of Emma Crosby is that she lacks the grace to accept maturity. O'Neill describes Emma at fifty as "a mockery of undignified age snatching greedily at the empty simulacra of youth."²⁰ The fifty-year-old Emma relishes the compliments of the twenty-three-year-old sycophant Benny Rogers, "You ain't old. That's all bunk. . . . You're a regular, up-to-date sport--the only live one in this dead dump."²¹ Benny, who is Caleb's nephew, gives quite a different account of Emma's action and appearance to his mother:

Honest, Ma, this here thing with Aunt Emmer ain't my fault. How can I help it if she goes bugs in her old age and gets nutty about me? Gee, Ma, you oughta see her today. She's a scream, honest! . . . Wait till she comes down and you git a look! She'll put your eye out--all dolled up like a kid of sixteen and enough paint on her mush for a Buffalo Bill Indian.²²

In addition to selfishness, a second predominant characteristic of the child is helplessness. Both Ella Downey in All God's Chillun Got Wings and Mary Cavan Tyrone in Long Day's Journey into Night exhibit this trait.

²⁰Ibid., p. 224.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 233.

Actually, their characterizations are very similar. Ella, who is white, cannot reconcile her feelings toward the Negro race, in general, with the fact that she loves a particular black man enough to be married to him and Mary Cavan Tyrone is unable to accept the fact that she gave up her dream of becoming a nun in order to marry the dash-ing matinee idol, James Tyrone. Both of these women be-come helplessly dependent. Ella goes insane and Mary be-comes addicted to narcotics. In Ella's psychotic solilo-quy, the voices of her illusions as well as the truth about her relationship with her husband, Jim, are evident. She is addressing a Congo mask as she utters these words:

What're you grinning about, you dirty nigger, you? How dare you grin at me? I guess you forget what you are! That's always the way. Be kind to you, treat you decent and in a second you've got a swelled head, you think you're somebody, you're all over the place putting on airs; why it's got so I can't even walk down the street without seeing niggers, niggers every-where. Hanging around, grinning, grinning--going to school--pretending they're white--taking examinations-- That's where he's gone--down to the mail-box to see if there's a letter from the Board--telling him--But why is he so long? Jim! Maybe he's passed! Maybe he passed! (In a frenzy) No! No! He can't! I'd kill him! I'd kill myself! (Threatening the Congo Mask) It's you who're to blame for this! Yes, you! Oh, I'm on to you! But why d'you want to do this to us? What have I ever done wrong to you? What have you got against me? I married you, didn't I? Why don't you let Jim alone? Why don't you let him be happy as he is--with me? Why don't you let me be happy? He's white, isn't he--the whitest man that ever lived?

Where do you come in to interfere? Black! Black!
 Black as dirt! You've poisoned me! I can't wash
 myself clean! Oh, I hate you! I hate you! Why
 don't you let Jim and I be happy?²³

In her confused state of mind, Ella feels that the only resolution to her dilemma is to revert to the safe relationship she and Jim had as children when she could honestly want Jim and she was unaffected by what outsiders said or thought. Ella flees from reality, content in the role of her former self, the eight year old child, "Painty Face," who blacked her face in order to be like Jim.

Mary Cavan Tyrone's philosophy of life is reminiscent of Christine Mannon's speech about her loss of innocence in Mourning Becomes Electra. Even at the age of fifty-four Mary maintains "an innate unworldly innocence"²⁴ and she contends:

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.²⁵

²³"All God's Chillun Got Wings," Nine Plays, p. 129.

²⁴Long Day's Journey into Night, p. 13.

²⁵Ibid., p. 61.

While Mary is under the influence of the drugs, she poignantly reveals her fears. She feels she was not being true to herself and her potentialities when she renounced her spiritual aspirations to be a nun and surrendered to her physical passions by marrying. "The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us."²⁶ Edmund discusses Mary's painful plight with his father:

The hardest thing to take is the blank wall she builds around her. Or it's more like a bank of fog in which she hides and loses herself. Deliberately, that's the hell of it! You know something in her does it deliberately--to get beyond our reach, to be rid of us, to forget we're alive! It's as if, in spite of loving us, she hated us!²⁷

Completely divorced from reality in a state of drug-induced limbo, Mary relives her girlhood again and again, "I'm going to be a nun--that is, if I can only find--What is it I'm looking for? I know it's something I lost."²⁸

Perhaps Eve's sense of reality was as clouded by the serpent as Mary's was by the narcotics. Nevertheless,

²⁶Ibid., p. 87.

²⁷Ibid., p. 139.

²⁸Ibid., p. 172.

Eve succumbed. Yielding to her selfish desire for fruit from the tree of knowledge, Eve prostituted her moral integrity before Satan, and became Eve, the annihilator.

Before looking closely at the annihilators among O'Neill's characterizations, a general consideration of prostitution from an O'Neillian standpoint will be presented. Contrary to the accepted Puritanical concept of prostitutes at the bottom rung of the social ladder is O'Neill's generally sympathetic handling of their characterizations. Interestingly enough, in his value system there are prostitutes all along the way, from the lowest, most depraved individuals to the most admirable among his feminine creations. One of the most delightful speeches concerning women of this type in O'Neillian writing is the lecture Nat Miller gives his seventeen year old son, Richard, in Ah, Wilderness! who had his first encounter with a loose woman the previous evening.

Well, you're a fully developed man, in a way, and it's only natural for you to have certain desires of the flesh, to put it that way--I mean, pertaining to the opposite-sex--certain natural feelings and temptations--that'll want to be gratified--and you'll want to gratify them. Humm--well, human society being organized as it is, there's only one outlet for-- unless you're a scoundrel and go around ruining decent girls--which you're not, of course. Well, there are a certain class of women--always have been and always

will be as long as human nature is what it is--It's wrong, maybe, but what can you do about it? I mean, girls like that one you--girls there's something doing with--and lots of 'em are pretty, and it's human nature if you--But that doesn't mean to ever get mixed up with them seriously! You just have what you want and pay 'em and forget it. I know that sounds hard and unfeeling, but we're talking facts and--But don't think I'm encouraging you to-- If you can stay away from 'em, all the better--but if--why--humm--Here's what I'm driving at, Richard. They're apt to be whited sepulchres²⁹--I mean, your whole life might be ruined if--so darn it, you've got to know how to--I mean, there are ways and means-- But, hell, I suppose you boys talk all this over among yourselves and you know more about it than I do. I'll admit I'm no authority. I never had anything to do with such women, and it'll be a hell of a lot better for you if you never do!³⁰

Other general remarks made concerning the prostitute are included in Anna Christie. Mat Burke says, "The only women you'd meet in the ports of the world who'd be willing to speak you a kind word isn't a woman at all."³¹ He continues, saying that they are a wicked lot who are interested only in stealing a man's money. The same

²⁹"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." Matthew 23:27.

³⁰"Ah, Wilderness!," Ah, Wilderness! and Two other Plays, pp. 136-137.

³¹"Anna Christie," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape, p. 116.

sentiment is echoed in The Hairy Ape, "A slut, I'm sayin'! She robbed me aslape--"³² Later on in the play Anna Christie, after having been told of his beloved Anna's past, Mat Burke makes a plea for God's help:

I'm destroyed entirely and my heart is broken in bits! I'm asking God Himself, was it for this He'd have me roaming the earth since I was a lad only, to come to black shame in the end, where I'd be giving a power of love to a woman is the same as others you'd meet in any hookers shanty in port, with red gowns on them and paint on their grinning mugs, would be sleeping with any man for a dollar or two.³³

Cybel in The Great God Brown offers this philosophy on her profession: "When you got to love to live it's hard to love living."³⁴ Jamie takes credit for having "made whores fascinating vampires instead of poor, stupid, diseased slobbs they really are"³⁵ in a conversation with his younger brother, Edmund, in Long Day's Journey into Night which may explain, at least partially, O'Neill's ambivalent feelings toward prostitutes.

³²"The Hairy Ape," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape, p. 187.

³³"Anna Christie," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape, pp. 151-152.

³⁴"The Great God Brown," Nine Plays, p. 331.

³⁵Long Day's Journey into Night, p. 165.

Specifically, The Long Voyage Home offers a couple of the most despicable harlots among O'Neill's creations, Freda and Kate. These two must be classified among the annihilators because nothing is sacred to either of them. Working in a seaside dive, Freda pretends to be Swedish and a friend to the sailor Olsen. She plays the Delilah until she uncovers Olsen's great ambition, which is to leave the sea and go back home to Sweden to see his eighty-two year old mother before her death. Freda also discovers Olsen's overpowering weakness for drink. Tricking him into drinking a drugged toast to his own success and happiness, Freda allows the unconscious Olsen to be shanghaied aboard the Amindra. Before the drug takes effect Olsen comments concerning the Amindra.

I know dat damn ship--worst ship dat sail the sea.
Rotten grub and dey make you work all time--and the
Captain and Mate wus Bluenose devils. No sailor who
know anything ever ship on her.

.
Py yingo, I pity poor fallers make dat trip round
Cape Stiff dis time year. I bet you some of dem
never see port once again.³⁶

Freda tries to keep back some of Olsen's money for herself. Her deception is discovered by Bartender

³⁶"The Long Voyage Home," Seven Plays of the Sea, p. 79.

Joe, who proceeds to knock her down. Finding Freda crumpled on the floor, Kate, Freda's working mate, has one consoling line, "Pore dearie! Been 'ittin' 'er agen, 'ave yer, yer cowardly swine!"³⁷ but the impression made by Kate is that generally she is no better than Freda. O'Neill offers no excuses for either Freda or Kate in their roles as annihilators. Perhaps surprising to the average reader, Freda and Kate are the only two prostitutes among the more than thirty prostitutes mentioned by O'Neill who exist with absolutely no redeeming qualities.

The wife, Mrs. Alfred Rowland, is as destructive as a woman could possibly be in her role as the only character in the one-act "Before Breakfast." Even though the play is a soliloquy, Alfred and Helen emerge as Mrs. Rowland whines, complains, belittles, berates, badgers, accuses, imputes, denounces and criticizes. Helen is the other woman in the eternal triangle: "This Helen must be a fine one if she knew you were married. What does she expect then? That I'll divorce you and let her marry you?"³⁸ The audience knows that Helen is expecting Alfred's child.

³⁷Ibid., p. 81.

³⁸"Before Breakfast," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 11.

Does she think I'm crazy enough for that--after all you've made me go through? I guess not! . . . No one can say I've ever done anything wrong. She deserves to suffer, that's all I can say.³⁹

The audience is aware that Alfred married Mrs. Rowland because she was expecting his child. What happened to that child one can only speculate. From all appearances, death at birth would have been preferable for any child rather than to have to grow up surrounded by an atmosphere of hate. The caustic tongue continues, "I'll tell you what I think; I think your Helen is no better than a common streetwalker, that's what I think."⁴⁰ The maligning goes on until Mr. Rowland decides that life is not worth living. The last sound the audience hears is Mrs. Rowland's shriek when she discovers that what she heard and mistook for dripping water is actually the trickling of Alfred's life blood.

Mrs. Knapp in "Warnings" is identical to Mrs. Rowland in her inability to see anyone's situation other than her own. Instead of reacting with sympathy and love to the announcement of her wireless operator husband that

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

an ear specialist has told him that he is about to go stone deaf, she selfishly considers only herself. Then she accuses Mr. Knapp of doing exactly what she, herself, is doing.

Can't you think of others besides yourself? How about me and the children? . . . You'll get other work? Remember the last time you tried. We had to pawn everything we had then and we was half-starved when you did land this job. You had to go back to the same old work, didn't you? They didn't want you at any telegraph office, did they? You was too old and slow, wasn't you? . . . And this is all the thanks I get for slavin' and workin' my fingers off! What a father for my poor children! Oh, why did I ever marry such a man? It's been nothin' but worryin' and sufferin' ever since.⁴¹

Although Mr. Knapp is keenly aware of the injustice he is committing toward his employer by not telling him of his impending deafness, he consents to go on one more cruise. Mrs. Knapp's harangue drives him to the point of forfeiting his own integrity.

When the climax comes and the ship is lost because of the radio operator's inability to hear the warning of a derelict in its path, Mr. Knapp admits his responsibility and feebly explains, "I wanted to give up

⁴¹"Warnings," Ten "Lost" Plays, pp. 72-73.

the job this time but she wouldn't let me. She said I wanted them to starve."⁴² As the ships sink, Mr. Knapp presses a revolver against his temple and fires.

Another annihilator, in Lazarus Laughed, is Tiberius Caesar's mother, Livia, whose ambition caused her to destroy those closest to her. Her son realized that in order to win her love he would have to become Caesar. ". . . that strong woman, giving birth to me, desired not a child, but a Caesar--just as, married to Augustus, she loved him not but loved herself as Caesar's wife."⁴³ Livia poisoned Prince Marcellus, Gaius, and Lucius. She had Agrippina, the wife of Tiberius and the mother of Tiberius' son, killed because she saw Tiberius' contentment and she realized that a happy man might not aspire to be Caesar. Tiberius says, "Then my mother married me to a whore. Why? The whore was Caesar's daughter."⁴⁴ In the process of accomplishing her goal, Livia destroyed the man, Tiberius, and left the vile shell of self-contempt, cruelty, and dissipation known as Tiberius Caesar.

⁴²Ibid., p. 78.

⁴³"Lazarus Laughed," Nine Plays, p. 464.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 465.

It is interesting to note that Eugene O'Neill referred to the Mannon mansion in Mourning Becomes Electra as a "whited sepulchre." There had already been scandals surrounding the Mannon family but it is the mother, Christine Mannon, who brings about the total doom of the family. She commits adultery with Adam Brant and plots the murder of her husband Ezra. Upon his return from the Civil War, Ezra tries to tell Christine of his deep love for her and endeavors to put their marriage on a basis of mutual trust. He literally opens his soul before his wife. She responds by murdering him. At one point in the drama, after having been discovered in her guilt, Christine views herself realistically and she longs for her past virtue.

If I could only have stayed as I was then! Why can't all of us remain innocent and loving and trusting? But God won't leave us alone. He twists and wrings and tortures our lives with others' lives until-- we poison each other to death!⁴⁵

Christine actually poisons her husband and mentally and emotionally she poisons her son and daughter so that they are incapable of leading normal, fulfilling lives.

⁴⁵"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 759.

Mildred Douglas of The Hairy Ape is a damning individual. Posing as a social worker, she convinces the captain of a transatlantic oceanliner that she must view the coal stokers at work in the hold of the ship. Upon seeing their miserable existence and hearing the profane threats of Yank, one of the stokers, against society, in general, and the engineer who has escorted her, in particular, Mildred is crushed by the brutality of the situation. With the words, "Take me away! Oh, the filthy beast!"⁴⁶ she faints. This pronouncement against Yank is enough to destroy his self-esteem and, eventually, Yank commits suicide by climbing into the cage of a gorilla at the zoo.

Even though Mildred Douglas is an annihilator, O'Neill offers a reason for her conduct. Perhaps Mildred feels annihilated herself; hence she brings about Yank's destruction. Of herself she says:

I'm a waste product in the Bessemer process--like the millions. Or rather, I inherit the acquired trait of the by-product, wealth, but none of the energy, none of the strength of the steel that made it. I am sired by gold and damned by it.⁴⁷

⁴⁶"The Hairy Ape," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape, p. 204.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 52.

Mildred is the descendant of simple, hard working people. Her great-grandmother smoked a clay pipe and her grandfather started as a puddler. Perhaps Mildred's visit to the stokehold was an attempt on her part to recapture the sense of belonging and energy that her forebears possessed. Yank's decision to visit the zoo to regain his self-identity echoes Mildred's action. Neither of them survives the confrontation.

The Mayo farm in Beyond the Horizon is obviously intended as a symbolic Garden of Eden. There is a snake fence which sidles from left to right and passes beneath the apple tree on the opening set. The situation is happy and prosperous until Eve, in the guise of Ruth Atkin, introduces sin into the garden. Ruth entices Robert to give up his dream of going beyond the horizon with his uncle Dick Scott, the sea captain. She persuades him to remain on the farm to marry her instead. In doing this, she is unfaithful to Robert's brother, Andrew, who loves her and intends to marry her. With this turn of events Andrew determines to take Robert's place aboard Uncle Dick's ship and the total harmony and peace of the Mayo existence is ended. Robert, Ruth, and Andrew are forced into roles they do not fit and for which they were not intended.

The sensitive, intellectual dreamer Robert longs to escape the hard-working farm life he must endure. But the only escape he manages is into the world of books. The practical energetic brother, Andrew, studies to become an officer simply because he is bored.

Had to do something or I'd gone mad. The days were like years. And as for the East you used to rave about--well, you ought to see it, and smell it! One walk down one of their filthy narrow streets with the tropic sun beating on it would sicken you for life with the "wonder and mystery" you used to dream of.⁴⁸

Ruth taunts Robert with these words:

. . . living with a man like you--having to suffer all the time because you've never been man enough to work and do things like other people. But no! You never own up to that. You think you're so much better than other folks, with your college education, where you never learned a thing, and always reading your stupid books instead of working. I s'pose you think I ought to be proud to be your wife--a poor, ignorant thing like me! But I'm not. I hate it! I hate the sight of you. Oh, if I'd only known! If I hadn't been such a fool to listen to your cheap, silly, poetry talk that you learned out of books! If I could have seen how you were in your true self--like you are now--I'd have killed myself before I'd have married you! I was sorry for it before we'd been together a month. I knew what you were really

⁴⁸"Beyond the Horizon," Ah, Wilderness! and Two Other Plays, p. 263.

like--when it was too late.

I don't need you. Andy's coming.⁴⁹

Toward the close of the play Ruth admits, "I don't love anyone."⁵⁰ Later she says, "I wouldn't know how to feel love, even if I tried, any more."⁵¹ After Robert's escape into death, Ruth and Andy admit, "I--you--we've both made a mess of things."⁵² Paradise has been destroyed; part of the snake fence is down and "the apple tree is leafless and seems dead."⁵³

More Stately Mansions, which was titled from Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem, "The Chambered Nautilus," has one of the most unified themes of all the O'Neill plays. As the fourth play in his proposed cycle, A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed, More Stately Mansions ends on a note of utter pessimism with the recurring theme that humanity prostitutes itself for economic gain and that people cease to view individuals as anything more than a means toward an end--the end being satisfaction of their

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 257-258.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 282.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 302.

⁵²Ibid., p. 306.

⁵³Ibid., p. 304.

greedy and ambitious natures. Two powerful feminine characters, the mother Deborah Hartford and the wife Sara Hartford, battle for possession of the son and husband, Simon. In the first scene Deborah confesses her secret dream which is reminiscent of Livia in Lazarus Laughed.

I prefer to be the secret power behind the Throne-- a greedy adventuress who has risen from the gutter to nobility by her wit and charm--who uses love but loves only herself, who is entirely ruthless and lets nothing stand in the way of the final goal of power she has set for herself--to become the favorite of the king and make him, through his passion for her, her slave!⁵⁴

Simon's derisive laughter destroys this dream. Deborah is left alone to contemplate an escape into insanity until her husband's death causes her, out of economic necessity, to form an alliance with Simon and Sara. For an interval of four years the women cooperate to create a home atmosphere of tranquility, but Simon begins to feel insignificant, as if the women no longer need or want him. At this point, he formulates a plan whereby he may become the prize possession of each of them. Simon states his philosophy on love to his bachelor brother,

⁵⁴More Stately Mansions (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 13.

Joel, advising him never to marry, but rather to "keep a whore instead!"⁵⁵ Simon continues:

Keep your love your mistress with no right of ownership except what she earns day by day, what she can make you pay for possession. Love should be a deal forever incomplete, never finally settled, with each party continually raising the bids, but neither one concluding a final role.⁵⁶

This is exactly what Simon does; he makes his wife Sara his mistress and because of her greed for material possessions, she accepts the role. Offering the following job description, he takes her in as a secret partner in his financial empire:

You will have to learn to be shameless here. You will have to deal daily with the greedy fact of life as it really lives. You will have to strip life naked, and face it. And accept it as truth. And strip yourself naked and accept yourself as you are in the greedy mind and flesh.⁵⁷

Also, Simon takes away his four sons from their grandmother so that he may be Deborah's only son, forcing her to concentrate all her interests and desires on him.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 72.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 91.

In the final scene of the play set in the garden near the summer house which has been a symbol of the past relationship between Simon and Deborah, a relationship of escape into fantasy, bordering on insanity, Sara confronts Deborah and Simon as they are entering the summer house. Simon challenges her, "How dare you trespass here? Do you think my mother's garden is a brothel?"⁵⁸ The irony of the situation is that the garden is indeed a brothel. Sara, Deborah, and Simon have prostituted their self-respect and honor in exchange for possessions. In action resembling an auction, each woman bids, to prove her superior love for Simon, by offering a greater sacrifice than the other for possession of him. Deliberately choosing fantasy or madness, Deborah enters the summer house alone. When she reappears, it is obvious that she will never return from the realm of unreality. She is as she was at the beginning, mistress of an emperor. Simon reverts to childhood, addressing Sara as "Mother" and Sara, in her most dramatic sacrifice, plans to wreck the Hartford business empire--after she has salvaged enough for their comfortable subsistence, of course. And with that

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 186.

the cycle of plays, A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed, might have continued.

Amelia Light destroys her son Reuben as well as herself in the drama Dynamo. Because she is so jealous of the fact that her son is growing up and has an interest in a woman other than herself, she spies on him and then betrays his confidence in her by allowing her husband to hide in the closet and overhear Reuben's confession of love for Ada Fife.

Reuben faces his mother with these words:

You knew he was in that closet! You led me on to tell! I thought you loved me better'n anyone, and you'd never squeal on me to him!

.
And you called Ada a harlot--after I told you I loved her with all my heart!⁵⁹

Mrs. Light admits she still considers Ada Fife as "no better than a street walker!"⁶⁰ Reuben's reply is that now he will be able to hate her. "You're not my mother any more! I'll do without a mother rather than have your kind!"⁶¹ The relationship of trust and love which existed

⁵⁹"Dynamo," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, III, 449-450.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 450.

⁶¹Ibid.

has been broken. Henceforth Reuben's faith is in the Mother Dynamo, which was discussed at length in the first chapter of this work.

Because Lucy Hillman has been shattered herself, she wants everyone's dream to turn to rubbish in the play, Days Without End. Lucy recounts an incident at a party. Her husband, Walter, has been unfaithful on numerous occasions, but at this particular party he was deliberately flaunting his affair with another woman. Eventually, he and the other woman left together. The guests watched for Lucy's reaction.

I wanted to kill him and her, but I only laughed and had some more to drink. But I was in hell, I can tell you, and inside I kept swearing to myself that I'd show Walter--And I picked out this man--yes, deliberately! It was all deliberate and crazy! And I had to do all the seducing--because he's quite happy. I knew that, but I was crazy. His happiness filled me with rage--the thought that he made others happy. I wanted to take his happiness from him and kill it as mine had been killed!

.
I told you I was in hell, didn't I? You can't live there without becoming like the rest of the crowd!⁶²

Lucy tells all this to Elsa Loving, the wife of the man she has seduced. One can only surmise that Lucy derives

⁶²"Days Without End," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, III, 521.

some weird satisfaction and feeling of superiority over Elsa during this confession. Elsa is forever protesting the good of certain men, her own John in particular. Lucy must have enjoyed holding the psychological high trump as Elsa expounded on John's virtue. Certainly the pervading hope in Lucy's mind is that Elsa will be hurt, marred, and disfigured as she has been.

Gene, Mrs. Baldwin's maid in Recklessness, is also a revengeful young woman. She has lost her love, Fred Burgess, to Mildred Baldwin; therefore she does not wish anyone to find happiness. She informs Arthur Baldwin, Mildred's husband, of what has been going on between the lovers in his absence. Although Gene wishes revenge, she does not realize the extent of Mr. Baldwin's passion even when he almost chokes her trying to verify the truth of her account concerning his wife's unfaithfulness. Gene vows that she only wishes to get even with Mrs. Baldwin and urges Mr. Baldwin:

Will you promise to tell her--them--just how you found out--after I'm gone? I'm leaving tomorrow morning. I'd like them to know it was me who spoiled their fun.⁶³

⁶³"Recklessness," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 124.

Although Gene states, "I loved Fred,"⁶⁴ it is obvious that her hatred for Mildred motivated her tattling. Gene is an informer, but the facts that Mr. Baldwin immediately arranges Fred's demise in a "car accident" and that Mrs. Baldwin shoots herself, place Gene in the ranks of the destructive.

Margaret, the wife of Dion Anthony in The Great God Brown, is unable to accept the marriage proposal of Dion without Dion's wearing his mask. Truly, Margaret never loves the real Dion; she loves the image. Margaret never accepts Dion as he is. Dion always has to conform to the ideal Margaret has of him. She makes excuses for him; he hasn't done much with his painting lately, but there is a reason, "You see the children take up such a lot of his time. He just worships them! I'm afraid he's becoming a hopeless family man."⁶⁵ This is merely a pretense. She is the one who has allowed the children to monopolize all of her time. Once Margaret admits that she probably would not have been able to stand the years with Dion if it hadn't been for her three sons. Meanwhile,

⁶⁴Ibid. p. 125.

⁶⁵"The Great God Brown," Nine Plays, p. 327.

Dion is miserably alone. He and Simon Hartford in More Stately Mansions feel the same despair when they realize that their sons have taken their wives away from them. Margaret is willing to accept Dion as her oldest son, but not as Dion must be accepted and he cries out to her:

No! I'm a man! I'm a lonely man! I can't go back! I have conceived myself! Look at me, Mrs. Anthony! It's the last chance! Tomorrow I'll have moved on to the next hell! Behold your man--the sniveling, cringing, life-denying Christian slave you have so nobly ignored in the father of your sons! Look!⁶⁶

Margaret can't bear Dion's unmasking and she reacts just as Mildred Douglas reacted when she was faced with reality; she faints. Dion cannot exist and therefore he dies. Brown puts on Dion's mask and assumes his identity with Dion's wife and three sons. To the end Margaret clings to her romanticized dream of the perfect Dion who existed only in her mind. In the final scene she slowly takes the mask from her bosom and addresses it.

My lover! My husband! My boy! You can never die till my heart dies! You will live forever. You are sleeping under my heart! I feel you stirring in your sleep, forever under my heart.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 343.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 377.

In The Iceman Cometh Rosa Parritt and the radical political movement on the west coast were synonymous for years. In Act I her son Don says, "To hear her talk sometimes, you'd think she was the Movement."⁶⁸ In the second act Don repeats, "she was always getting the Movement mixed up with herself"⁶⁹ and in Act III "The Movement is her life."⁷⁰ Rosa Parritt is a free woman and her life style indicates her unfaltering belief in sexual revolution as well as political reform. Don is incapable of reconciling the fact that his own mother is promiscuous. Rosa's behavior "made home a lousy place. . . . It was like living in a whorehouse."⁷¹ Larry, the one man who truly loved her and whom, in all probability, she loved in return because she kept all his letters, was not willing to share her with all mankind. Don, who was seven at the time, recalls the last fight Larry and his mother had:

⁶⁸"The Iceman Cometh," Masters of Modern Drama, p. 595.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 615.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 622.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 615.

I remember her putting on her high-and-mighty free woman stuff, saying you were still a slave to bourgeois morality and jealousy and you thought a woman you loved was a piece of private property you owned. I remember that you got mad and you told her "I don't like living with a whore, if that's what you mean."⁷²

Larry moved out and left Rosa. Eleven years later Don betrayed the movement and his mother to the police. Eventually, because of his guilt feelings he commits suicide by jumping from the fire escape. Larry, her lover, exists merely in a half-life waiting for death. He cites the closing couplet of a translation of Heine's poem to morphine as his philosophy of life.

Lo, sleep is good; better is death; in sooth,
The best of all were never to be born.⁷³

Rosa Parritt's loyalty to anarchy not only destroyed her son and her lover; it also robbed her of fulfillment, respect, and the freedom which comes with selfless love.

Belle, the typical college tart of the 1920's, appears in Ah, Wilderness! She is only twenty, rather pretty, and new to the profession. At one point the

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid., p. 595.

peroxide blonde answers a statement by Richard advising her not to lead the life of a prostitute, with these words:

Nix on that line of talk! Can it, you hear! You can do a lot with me for five dollars--but you can't reform me, see. Mind your own business, Kid, and don't butt in where you're not wanted!⁷⁴

Belle is not entirely comfortable in her role. Trying to justify her own actions and attempting to destroy Richard's ideal, she attacks the virtue of Muriel, Richard's true love.

So you're faithful to your one love, eh? And how about her? Bet you she's out with a guy under some bush this minute, giving him all he wants. Don't be a sucker, Kid! Even the little flies do it!⁷⁵

In passing it is interesting to note that this idea recurs almost verbatim in Days Without End as Loving says:

As for the adultery itself, the truth is that this poor fool was making a great fuss about nothing--an act as meaningless as that of one fly with another, of equal importance to life!⁷⁶

⁷⁴"Ah, Wilderness!," Ah, Wilderness! and Two Other Plays, p. 75.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶"Days Without End," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, III, 538.

Belle is primarily interested in getting Richard's five dollars; she will play the game any way Richard calls it, just so she gets the money. Proof of her vengeful nature and destructive attitude is that she makes certain that Richard's father is aware that the bartender at the Pleasant Beach House was responsible for serving drinks to his underage son.

Not nearly as destructive as the annihilators, but nevertheless exasperating are the women who live only superficially. These women are characterized by their spiritual inadequacies. Included in this superficial group of females are the Jayson relatives, Emily Jayson and Esther Sheffield, who eventually corrupt Lily Jayson, too, in The First Man; Mildred Baldwin, the adulterous wife in Recklessness; Donata, the childhood sweetheart in Marco Millions; Annie Sweeney, Bentley's daughter in The Rope; Harriet Williams, Caleb's sister in Diff'rent; Sarah Atkins, mother of Ruth in Beyond the Horizon; Pompeia, Caesar's mistress in Lazarus Laughed; and Ethel Frazier, the emancipated woman in Servitude.

Emily Jayson and Esther Sheffield are little, insensitive gossips. Their petty jealousy causes their entire family to believe their silly, baseless innuendos

concerning the father of Martha Jayson's expected baby. They have nothing within themselves upon which to build meaningful lives; therefore they tear down the reputation of one who is active, happy, and creative. Emily and Esther cannot be content until they have totally poisoned Lily Jayson's mind. Encouraged by the male members of the Jayson clan, the three women wallow in the ugliness of whispered insinuations and smut.

At the beginning of The First Man, Lily Jayson admits that she hates narrow small town ethics as much as the next one, but that as a matter of comfort she has had to make compromises. Proof that Lily's existence is shallow and uneventful is this comment, "The only live people are the ones in books, I find, and the only live life."⁷⁷ Lily hides her depression with flippant remarks: "I love to serve drinks. If I were a man, I'd be a bartender--in Mexico or Canada."⁷⁸ After attending her sister-in-law's funeral Lily offers an astute and baffling observation, "That stupid minister--whining away through his nose! Why does the Lord show such a partiality for

⁷⁷"The First Man," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, II, 561.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 565.

men with adenoids, I wonder!"⁷⁹ Lily realizes how weak a character she has become and she knows how easily influenced she has been. "Oh, I hate you, all of you! I loathe your suspicions--and I loathe myself because I'm beginning to be poisoned by them, too."⁸⁰ Even though she has this insight, she demonstrates no fortitude in fighting against the pettiness of the other members of the Jayson tribe. Her last line in the play is, "Oh, I hate you--and myself!"⁸¹

Mildred Baldwin, the strikingly beautiful young wife in Recklessness, is aware that it was for her youth and glamorous appearance that Arthur married her. The dissipated fifty-five year old Arthur is enthusiastic about only two things, his racing car and his wife--in that order. Mildred comments concerning their relationship:

He has looked upon me as his plaything, the slave of his pleasure, a pretty toy to be exhibited that others might envy him his ownership.⁸²

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 603.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 604.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 619.

⁸²"Recklessness," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 115.

Arthur justifies his behavior by offering this explanation, "If I have regarded you as a plaything I was only accepting the valuation your parents set upon you when they sold you."⁸³ It is not surprising that with such a self-image as that, Mildred decides that death is preferable to life.

Donata first appears as a girl of twelve when the fifteen year old Marco Polo departs Venice for Cathay in the drama Marco Millions. Even at this tender moment of farewell, monetary values are uppermost in her mind. Presenting a going-away gift to Marco, Donata says, "It's a medallion of me painted by an artist who owed Father for spices and couldn't pay with money."⁸⁴ Twenty years later Marco doubts not that Donata will wait for his return. As he says, "Her family needs an alliance with our house."⁸⁵ When the suggestion is made that in the intervening twenty years Donata will have become middle-aged, fat, and stupid, Marco replies,

Well, I don't mind a wife being a bit plump--and who wants a great thinker around the house? Sound common

⁸³Ibid., pp. 134-135.

⁸⁴"Marco Millions," Nine Plays, p. 221.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 281.

sense and a home where everything runs smooth, that's what I'm after.⁸⁶

Upon Marco's return to Venice, Donata is indeed old, quite "fat in the hips,"⁸⁷ and bovine looking. Does Donata's appearance halt Marco's marriage plans? Of course not. Nothing will stand in the way of bringing "the two firms into closer contact."⁸⁸

Annie Sweeney's main concern in The Rope is to get as much money from her demented father, Abraham Bentley, as she possibly can. Perhaps Annie's shallow interests are traceable to her shallow-mindedness. Her ten year old daughter, Mary, as well as her father, is certainly no mental giant. Pat, her husband, tells Annie on one occasion, "You're not too firm in the head yourself at times, God help you!"⁸⁹

Especially eager to see that her half brother Luke is cut out of Mr. Bentley's will, Annie remarks to

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 292.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 220.

⁸⁹"The Rope," Long Voyage Home, p. 189.

Pat, "Don't folks break wills like his'n in the courts?"⁹⁰
 The two of them are scheming to find a way to locate a thousand dollars in twenty dollar gold pieces which they feel certain Mr. Bentley has hidden somewhere in the house when the long-lost brother appears on the scene. Probably the best indication of Annie's character is in the greeting she receives from Luke, who is fifteen years younger and whom Annie has looked after in childhood. Luke says to Annie:

I remember you and me used to get on so fine together--like hell!

.
 You ain't changed, that's sure--on'l yuh're homlier'n ever.

.
 You're as stinkin' mean as ever.⁹¹

Harriet and Caleb Williams, sister and brother, grew up just next door to the Crosby family in Diff'rent. When Emma Crosby decides to break her engagement with Caleb because of his indiscretion with one of "them brown women"⁹² while he was on a cruise in the south seas, the twenty year old Harriet Williams speaks with the boldly appealing vitality of self-confident youth:

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 194.

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 196-197.

⁹²"Diff'rent," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 214.

As for me, I wouldn't give a darn about a man that was too goody-goody to raise Cain once in a while-- before he married me, I mean. Why look at Alf Rogers, Emmer. I'm going to marry him some day, ain't I? But I know right well all the foolin' he's done-- and still is doing, I expect. I ain't saying' I like it but I do like him and I got to take him the way he is, that's all. If you're looking for saints, you got to die first and go to heaven.⁹³

Thirty years have proved that Harriet's concept of easy morality didn't work out. Wearing a careworn, "continuously irritated expression"⁹⁴ the fifty year old Harriet addresses her son: "You're a worthless loafer, Benny Rogers, same as your Pa was."⁹⁵ Something apparently went sour with the Alf and Harriet love match because on another occasion Harriet tells Benny, "You've got the same filthy mind your Pa had."⁹⁶ Eventually Harriet becomes so incensed with her son's behavior that she tells him to leave.

And don't never come to see us again till you've got rid of the meanness and filth that's the Rogers part of you and found the honesty and decency that's

⁹³Ibid., p. 213.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 232.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 233.

⁹⁶Ibid.

the Williams part--if you got any of me in you at all, which I begin to doubt.⁹⁷

Harriet's shallow notions of romance ruin her life. Caleb offers this amplification of her bitterness. "Bein' married to Alf Rogers for five years'd pizin' any woman's life."⁹⁸

The partially paralyzed mother of Ruth, Mrs. Sarah Atkins, who is confined to a wheel chair in Beyond the Horizon, is another of the women who never delves beneath the surface level. Though not as malicious as either Mrs. Rowland or Mrs. Knapp, Sarah Atkins thinks first of Sarah Atkins. "She has developed the selfish, irritable nature of the chronic invalid."⁹⁹ Early in the action of the play she feels that her daughter and son-in-law only wish her dead and out of their way. A snide creature, Mrs. Atkins is eager to point out the mistakes of everyone else after it is too late to do anything about them. After Ruth and Robert's marriage Mrs. Atkins has this to say, "It was a crazy mistake for them two to get

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 234.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 243.

⁹⁹"Beyond the Horizon, Ah, Wilderness! and Two Other Plays, p. 240.

married."¹⁰⁰ She knows now exactly what should have taken place. "Andy was the one would have been the match for her."¹⁰¹ Further insight into the charm of Mrs. Atkins may be gained from Robert's plea to Ruth after the death of their two year old Mary.

You tell that mother of yours she's got to stop saying that Mary's death was due to a weak constitution inherited from me. It's got to stop, I tell you!¹⁰²

Mrs. Atkins wants full credit for everything she does. When Robert's lung condition worsens, she reminds her daughter.

You know very well, Ruth Mayo, if it wasn't for me helpin' you on the sly out of my savin's you'd both been in the poor house--¹⁰³

Contrary to what one might think, Mrs. Atkins relishes the self-importance she achieves in this martyrdom role. "A nice thin' for me to have to support him [Robert] out of what I'd saved for my last days--and me an invalid with no one to look to!"¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 282.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., pp. 286-287.

Pompeia, the favorite mistress of Tiberius Caesar in Lazarus Laughed, is one of O'Neill's distinctively drawn feminine characters. She wears a half mask of dissipation, of "intense evil beauty, of lust and perverted passion."¹⁰⁵ Beneath the mask is a mouth "set in an expression of agonized self-loathing and weariness of spirit."¹⁰⁶ She is fascinated by the laughter of Lazarus and decides she loves Lazarus. Caligula, first in line to succeed Tiberius as Caesar, wagers that Lazarus will laugh at her amorous advances. Pompeia determines that she shall murder Miriam, Lazarus' wife, and then Lazarus will be hers. Her feelings for Lazarus reflect the feelings of mass humanity toward one who has been raised from the dead. Her attitude is "To believe that, I must have seen it, Caesar!"¹⁰⁷

Pompeia persuades Caesar that Lazarus's faith in immortality must be put to the test. She offers Miriam a poisoned peach. Following Miriam's death the laughter of Lazarus stops as he realizes his aloneness. Pompeia

¹⁰⁵"Lazarus Laughed," Nine Plays, p. 444.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 445.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 451.

sees herself as the conqueror. Then Miriam in a voice of unearthly sweetness answers back from the dead, "Yes! there is only life! Lazarus, be not lonely!"¹⁰⁸ Pompeia reacts with bewildered happiness.

I am glad he laughed, Caligula! Did I say I loved him before? Then it was only my body that wanted a slave. Now it is my heart that desires a master! Now I know love for the first time in my life!"¹⁰⁹

Even so Pompeia does not fully understand what is going on. She has clung too long to worldly passions to crawl immediately from her cocoon of ignorance to the new life and hope Lazarus' faith offers. She is too accustomed to sensual affection to accept spiritual love until the very last moment. She then joins Lazarus in the consuming fire, realizing finally that there is no death; there is only life and love.

Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors must have furnished O'Neill inspiration for Servitude; it is a delightful series of reversals. Though the characterizations are secondary to plot development, there are a few most

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 456.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 460.

revealing lines by and about the females in the play. Ethel Frazier is a beautiful young wife, who recently has thrown off "the stifling environment of married life."¹¹⁰ Actually she is play-acting. Ethel has identified with a character in one of Mr. David Roylston's plays, a Mrs. Harding. In the Roylston play this Mrs. Harding dramatically leaves her husband with the words, "I have awakened!"¹¹¹ Ethel leaves her husband, of course.

It dawned upon me gradually that the life he and I were living together was the merest sham; that we were contented because he was too busy and I was too lazy to analyze our position.¹¹²

Ethel elaborates on her marital relationship, "All the time I felt myself being ground smaller and smaller day by day."¹¹³ She continues in this pose until she meets the playwright's wife, Alice. Alice Roylston's life is based on the philosophy, "Love means servitude; and my love is my happiness."¹¹⁴ More than once throughout the

¹¹⁰"Servitude," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 238.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 240.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 239.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 270.

play the admonition is given to refrain from analyzing home relationships. By the end of the play Ethel Frazier has become an advocate of Alice's doctrine. She propounds fervently, "Happiness is servitude."¹¹⁵ Mr. and Mrs. Frazier are reunited and Mrs. Frazier's new value system is put into effect. Ethel Frazier admits that now she will know the difference between appearances and reality. She does not achieve this maturity without a few bruises-- "Yes, bruises on the soul,"¹¹⁶ nor is the serious reader of Servitude likely to come through unscathed. Had it not been for the wise counsel of Alice Roylston, Ethel Frazier might well have found herself in a situation similar to that of Rosa Parritt in The Iceman Cometh.

The most admirable of the women who exist on the physical level are those women who minister to creature comforts. These women are sympathetic people who have adjusted to their own situations and have enough compassion left over to encourage those with whom they come in contact. Among these amiable women is Fanny, the only woman named in Bound East for Cardiff. Yank, in his death bed

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 294.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 279.

conversation with Driscoll, says, "One thing I forgot: You know Fanny the barmaid at the Red Stork in Cardiff?"¹¹⁷ Driscoll answers, "Sure, and who doesn't?"¹¹⁸ implying that Fanny is renowned. Yank recounts her offering to lend him money when he was broke and he orders Driscoll to buy her the biggest box of candy in town after his death.

Marthy Owen from the play Anna Christie is another delightfully benevolent creature. Marthy is well into middle age, her figure is fat, her nose has "interlacing purple veins,"¹¹⁹ and her get-up, composed partially of a pair of "man's brogans several sizes too large"¹²⁰ is outlandish. Even so, "there still twinkles in her blood shot blue eyes a youthful lust for life which hard usage has failed to stifle."¹²¹ Marthy has been living on a coal barge with Chris Christopherson. She is amused at

¹¹⁷"Bound East for Cardiff," Long Voyage Home, p. 53.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 53.

¹¹⁹"Anna Christie," The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape, p. 69.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 70.

¹²¹Ibid., pp. 69-70.

Chris' consternation over how to get rid of her after he learns that his daughter, Anna, is coming to see him. Marthy stares at Chris, "taking in his embarrassment with a malicious twinkle of amusement in her eye."¹²² For a while she gives him a rough time; then unable to control her mirth she says:

A square-head tryin' to kid Marthy Owen at this late day!--after me campin' with barge men the last twenty years. I'm wise to the game, up, down, and sideways. I ain't been born and dragged up on the water front for nothin'. Think I'd made trouble, huh? Not me! I'll pack up me duds an' beat it. . . . There's plenty of other guys on other barges waitin' for me. Always was, I always found.¹²³

When Chris gets a bit nostalgic and says, "You vas good gel,"¹²⁴ Marthy continues.

Good girl? Aw, can the bull! Well, yuh treated me square, yuhself. So it's fifty-fifty.

 In all my time I tried never to split with a guy with no hard feelin's. But what was yuh so scared about--that I'd kick up a row? That ain't Marthy's way.¹²⁵

¹²²Ibid., p. 75.

¹²³Ibid., pp. 75-76.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid.

She handles this situation with diplomacy many politicians would envy. She closes the topic with, "Blow me to another scoop, huh? I'll drink your kid's health for yuh."¹²⁶

Ceely Ann finds herself in a difficult situation in The Dreamy Kid. Mammy Saunders, her mother, is dying and nothing will do except that she see Dreamy, her no-account grandson, before she dies. Dreamy is in hiding from the police because he killed a white man the previous night. Dreamy does come after Ceely Ann puts out word all over town that Mammy is dying. When Ceely Ann hears about the crime he has committed, she admonishes:

May de good Lawd pardon yo' wickedness! Oh Lawd!
What yo' po' ole Mammy gwine say if she hear tell--
an' she never knowin' how bad you's got.¹²⁷

Being a God-fearing woman, she is indignant when Irene, Dreamy's girl, appears on the scene. "Yo' bad 'oman! Git back ter yo' bad-house whar yo' b'longs!"¹²⁸ Ceely Ann does everything in her power to make Mammy Saunders' last hours comfortable ones.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 77.

¹²⁷"The Dreamy Kid," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 21.

¹²⁸Ibid., p. 17.

The best of these obliging women take pride in their common sense and practical approach to situations. Included at the top are Mrs. Crosby, Emma's mother in Diff'rent; old Mrs. Elizabeth Davidson, Curt's aunt in The First Man; Essie Miller, Mildred Miller, and Muriel McComber in Ah, Wilderness!; and Mrs. Townsend and her daughter Lucy in Abortion. Emma Crosby's mother is a woman who weighs over two hundred pounds, but despite her massive bulk, she is active and efficient. "She exudes an atmosphere of motherly good nature."¹²⁹ Mrs. Crosby has provided a happy home life for her sea captain husband, and for their son and daughter. She knows and understands each member of her family quite well. This insight into the personality of her brood causes her to accept each as he is without badgering him to change. When Emma, one of her chickens, flies at her resentfully because she has discovered that everyone in town knows about Caleb's rendezvous and she has not been told, Mrs. Crosby consoles her.

If you was like most folks I'd told it to you. Me,
I thought it was a good joke on Caleb . . .

¹²⁹"Diff'rent," Six Short Plays of Eugène O'Neill, p. 211.

.
 I kept my mouth shet. I knowed you was touchy and
 diff'rent from most.¹³⁰

Mrs. Crosby realizes that Emma is about to break her engagement and she does everything possible to make her daughter see the consequences of that action. Because Mrs. Crosby realizes that Emma is deeply hurt over Caleb's behavior and that no one can dissuade Emma from her decision to break the engagement, Mrs. Crosby tries to prevent Emma's embarrassment of having to discuss it with everyone.

Aunt Elizabeth Davidson, the seventy-five year old Jayson relative who lives out in the country, has not been affected by the pettiness of small town existence as Emily Jayson and Esther Sheffield are in the play The First Man. Aunt Elizabeth has some very strong beliefs about the role of a woman. "Every woman who is able should have children"¹³¹ is one example. Upon visiting in the home of Curt and Martha Jayson and observing Martha's scurrying to Curt's every beck and call, Aunt Davidson remarks:

¹³⁰Ibid., p. 212.

¹³¹"The First Man," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, II, p. 564.

I have heard much silly talk of this being an age of free women, and I have always said it was tommyrot. She is an example. She is more of a slave to Curt's hobbies than any of my generation were to anything but their children.¹³²

Later when Martha dies in childbirth and the baby's father insists that Aunt Elizabeth take the child and rear him in the country away from the littleness and gossip that has overtaken the other Jayson relations, the audience understands the reason for some of Aunt Elizabeth's pronouncements. She answers Curt's request for her guardianship of his newborn son: "It will be a great happiness. He will be--the one God never granted me. God has answered my prayer at last."¹³³ Before leaving the child, Curt exacts a promise of her. "And you, Aunt, swear to keep him with you--out there in the country--never to let him know this obscene little world."¹³⁴

Essie Miller is a perfectly contented, happy matron in Ah, Wilderness! although she is a bit scandalized when her husband Nat by way of a greeting, "slaps her

¹³²Ibid., p. 565.

¹³³Ibid., p. 617.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 618.

jovially on her fat buttocks"¹³⁵ in front of their two youngest children and the maid. Essie is concerned with exactly the right thing in the eyes of Aunt Elizabeth Davison, which is the welfare of the members of her family and this takes precedence over all else. Essie is not beyond a bit of chicanery. For years Essie has been pawning off bluefish as weakfish to Nat because "he says there's a certain oil in it that poisons him."¹³⁶ When Essie is asked point blank by Nat at the dinner table if the fish is bluefish, she replies without hesitation, "Of course not. You know we never have bluefish, on account of you."¹³⁷ By the time Nat gets out his reply: "Yes, I regret to say, there's a certain peculiar oil in bluefish that invariably poisons me"¹³⁸ the entire family has convulsed into hysterical laughter. After being labeled "Lucretia Borgia" by her inebriated brother, Essie admits the hoax, "You've eaten bluefish for years and thrived on it. and it's all nonsense about that peculiar oil."¹³⁹

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 49.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 40.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 55.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 56.

Essie is not beyond snooping around either, especially when she is protecting the morals of her children. She is a bit perturbed over certain books she found hid on the shelf of Richard's wardrobe. Among the books she found were Carlyle's French Revolution, Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray and The Ballad of Reading Gaol, two George Bernard Shaw books--one of his plays and the other The Quintessence of Ibsenism--Poems and Ballads by Swinburne, a book of Ibsen plays, and then there was a Kipling book--"but I suppose he's not so bad"¹⁴⁰ and The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam. Nevertheless Essie is the first to overlook Richard's faults after he has been out with Belle and gotten quite intoxicated. She tells Nat:

Well, if you ask me, I think after the way I punished him all day, and the way I know he's punished himself, he's had about all he deserves. I've told you how sorry he was, and how he said he'd never touch liquor again.¹⁴¹

When all the family seems to be happily and romantically occupied, Nat reports to his wife, "We seem to be completely surrounded by love!"¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁴²Ibid., p. 133.

"Well, we've had our share, haven't we? We don't have to begrudge it to our children,"¹⁴³ is Essie's reply.

There are two additional young ladies in Ah, Wilderness! who are cut in the same mold as Essie Miller; one is her fifteen year old daughter, Mildred, and the other is her son's girl friend, Muriel McComber. "I know nothing about your Mildred except that she's known all over as a flirt,"¹⁴⁴ is one highly harassed father's view of Mildred, but her brother Richard sees Mildred as a loyal ally. Muriel McComber is daring and provocative with an adorably demure charm. Although Muriel's family background is a bit more conservative than the Miller's, Richard absolutely worships her.

Mrs. Townsend and her vivacious nineteen year old daughter, Lucy, who appear in Abortion, are the same type of characters as Essie and Mildred Miller. All four of them are beautiful to behold, diverting to hear, and generally delightful to have around.

The playwright's archetypes of Eve have emerged through childishness, havoc, and shallow-mindedness, to

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 26.

the level of compassion. From a purely physical standpoint, this constitutes victory, but man does not live by bread alone. What of the unspoken longings of the heart? What of the times of loneliness and despair? The soul cannot be lulled permanently to ease by mere creature comfort.

Had O'Neill been content to present women of the Miller or Townsend mold as feminine ideals, the full dimensions of man's soul might never have been exposed in his dramas. The world would have accepted him at best as a talented playwright, but he would not have been recognized internationally in 1936 as the author of the most remarkable literary work of idealistic inspiration. Those characterizations which place him among the Nobel Prize Winners appear in the final chapter.

C H A P T E R I V

THE SPIRITUAL MOTHER--MARY

The women from O'Neill's writings who are participants in the fall of man and who exist solely in the physical realm, reminiscent of the physical mother Eve, have been described in detail; now those O'Neill feminine creations who exhibit spiritual insight and act as instruments for man's redemption will be examined. Within the course of events in her life, Mary, the mother of Christ, showed three dominant attitudes--despair, acceptance, and inspiration. Specific examples of these same three qualities are evident in O'Neill's writing.

Desperation is manifest in the lives of at least five female characters. Anita Fernandez in The Movie Man, Elsa Loving in Days Without End, Mrs. Annie Keeney in Ile, the dancer in Thirst, and Rose Thomas in The Web are among those women who despair.

Even though the play, The Movie Man, may be classified as a farce, a very sincere and beautiful young lady, Anita Fernandez, is characterized in it. According to Devlin, the photographer, "She had the swellest lamps [eyes]

I've ever seen on a dame; and a figure--my boy! my boy!"¹

In addition to being physically attractive, Anita is a good person. Anita is the daughter of a captured Mexican general who is scheduled to be shot at eight o'clock the following morning. The execution has been set for eight because the light for motion picture taking is most favorable at that hour. Anita comes to the army camp ready to sacrifice anything in order to save her father's life. "I would keel myself to save him!"² is Anita's position in this hour of despair.

Elsa Loving in Days Without End sinks to the extreme of hopelessness when she realizes that her husband, John, has deliberately destroyed the trust upon which their marriage was built. The following lines are Elsa's recital of faith in John and their marriage, which were delivered to Lucy Hillman, John's co-conspirator, before Elsa became aware of John's unfaithfulness.

I know he loves me. I know he knows how much I love him. He knows what that [unfaithfulness] would do to me. It would kill forever all my faith in life--all truth, all beauty, all love! I wouldn't want to live!

 He said he loathed the ordinary marriage as much as

¹"The Movie Man," Ten "Lost" Plays (New York: Random House, Inc., 1964), p. 174.

²Ibid., p. 178.

I did, but that the ideal in back of marriage was a beautiful one, and he knew we could realize that ideal.

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

.
 And I think we've lived up to that ideal ever since. I hope I have. I know he has. It was his creation, you see.

.
 And our marriage has meant for us, not slavery or boredom but freedom and harmony within ourselves--and happiness.³

Later when the truth surfaces, Elsa accuses John, "You made our love a smutty joke. . . ."4 She feels that the deception proves that all along John was waiting for a chance to kill their happiness and love. Her agony is unbearable.

I only know I hate life! It's dirty and insulting--and evil! I want my dream back--or I want to be dead with it!⁵

In probably the strongest affirmation of faith in God's forgiveness of mortal sins in all of O'Neill's dramas,

³"Days Without End," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, III, 523-524.

⁴Ibid., p. 549.

⁵Ibid., p. 550.

Elsa claims the promise of Matthew 6:14, thereby achieving her own forgiveness, as she forgives John.

The desperation of another character, Annie Keeney, comes because she discovers that her husband will not be true to his word. Annie is "as sweet a woman as ever was"⁶ according to the crew of her husband's whaling ship. She is held in high regard by each of them. "Aye, she was good to all of us. 'Twould have been hell on board without her."⁷

Annie has had an inkling of her husband's great pride previously. She goes on the whaling trip primarily because at home there is not enough to occupy her mind, not being able "to go back teaching school on account of being Dave Keeney's wife."⁸ This same pride that could not allow his wife to teach after their marriage could not permit even the thought of his going home without a full load of whale "ile" either. After two years at sea, Annie begs Dave to take her home.

⁶"Ile," Long Voyage Home (New York: Modern Library, 1946), p. 121.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 133.

If I don't get away from here, out of this terrible ship I'll go mad! Take me home, David! I can't think any more. I feel as if the cold and the silence were crushing down on my brain. I'm afraid. Take me home!

.
If you've a heart at all you've got to turn back. . . .
I'll go mad, I know I will.

.
Take me home, David, if you love me as you say. I'm afraid. For the love of God, take me home!⁹

When the ice breaks to the south and they can go home, Arnie insists that they do. Captain Keeney promises, "I'll do it, Annie--for your sake--if you say it's needful for ye."¹⁰ Then the moment of truth comes for Dave Keeney, the ice breaks "to no'the'ard,"¹¹ and the captain breaks his word of honor to his wife. As a result Annie's mind breaks. Annie Keeney's hour of desperation ends in insanity.

Perhaps Herman Melville's line which states that the only voice of our God is silence was in Eugene O'Neill's mind when he wrote of the plight of both Annie Keeney and the dancer in Thirst. There are only three characters in the play, a gentleman, a mulatto sailor, and the dancer. They are on a raft, surrounded by shark-infested waters. The dancer has lived in a dream world up until the time of

⁹Ibid., pp. 134-139.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 140.

¹¹Ibid.

the shipwreck. She has been pampered, fought over, and loved by numerous men, but now she is reduced to a soul in anguish, afraid to die. Throughout the drama the dancer calls out for God and repeatedly she bemoans that the only sound is the sound of silence. "My God! My God! This silence is driving me mad! Why do you not speak to me?"¹² is the dancer's first line in the play. In the hour of extreme terror and thirst, the dancer offers her body to the mulatto sailor in exchange for a drink of water.

Do you not understand? I will love you, Sailor!
Noblemen and millionaires and all degrees of gentlemen have loved me, have fought for me. I have never loved any of them as I will love you.¹³

The sailor has no water and the dancer momentarily realizes the depth of her despair, "Great God, have I abased myself for this?"¹⁴ and then she lapses into madness. The gentleman's comment "God knows we are all in the same pitiful plight"¹⁵ is the key to understanding Thirst. Everybody

¹²"Thirst," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 4.

¹³Ibid., p. 27.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 9.

who exists on a spiritual level questions, at times of extreme anguish, the "why" of man's misery. The stage directions indicate the dramatist's final protest: "The raft floats in the midst of a vast silence. The sun glares down like a great angry eye of God."¹⁶

Rose Thomas, the prostitute in The Web, knows the same feeling of hopelessness that the dancer experienced. Rose Thomas' first line is "Gawd! What a night! What a chance I got! What a life!"¹⁷ and her last line in the play is "Gawd, Gawd! why d'yuh hate me so?"¹⁸ It is obvious that "Gawd" is not merely an oath to Rose Thomas, as she uses the word fourteen times. Rose's protest is against the cruelty of a world and a God who will allow such unrelieved suffering as hers. She has no health, no money, no help, and no hope. At the time of her unjustified arrest for the murder of the only person who has been kind to her, ". . . she seems to be aware of something in the room which none of the others can see--perhaps the personification of the ironic life force that has crushed her."¹⁹ The dejection

¹⁶Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁷"The Web," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 36.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁹Ibid.

of Rose Thomas is complete when she realizes that even her child will be taken from her.

Certain women characters in Eugene O'Neill's writing have a peaceful acceptance of what life offers. These women do not despair in periods of hardship and crises; they endure. Because of specific actions the following women will be presented as characters who manifest an inner peace and calm. The list includes Nellie Murray in Abortion, Lily Miller in Ah, Wilderness!, Mrs. Evans in Strange Interlude, Lavinia Mannon in Mourning Becomes Electra, Alice Roylston in Servitude, Anna Christie in Anna Christie, Nora Melody in A Touch of the Poet, Evelyn Hickey in The Iceman Cometh, and Eleanor Cape in Welded.

The characterization of Nellie Murray, who never appears on stage, is what makes the play, Abortion, a tragedy. Nellie is a stenographer and she falls in love with the all-American sports hero, Jack Townsend. The outcome of their romance and Nellie's subsequent attitude is recounted by her brother, Joe, to Jack.

Yuh thought yuh was safe, didn't yuh, with me away from home? Yuh c'd go out and pitch the championship game--and she lyin' dead! Yuh c'd ruin her and throw her down and no one say a word because yuh're a swell college guy and captain of the team, and she ain't good enough for yuh to marry. She's goin'

to have a kid, your kid, and because yuh're too rotten to act like a man, yuh send her to a faker of a doctor to be killed; and she does what yuh say because she loves yuh; and yuh don't even think enough of her to answer her letter when she's dyin' on account of you!²⁰

Even though Nellie's purpose in life was diverted and her hope destroyed, her love for Jack and her loyalty to him does not falter in the hour of death. Jack asks if Joe were told all the facts of the matter by Nellie and Joe continues proudly:

Not a word! She died game; she wasn't no coward. I tried every way I knew how to git her to tell me but she wouldn't. Not a word outa her against you.²¹

Nellie's great love and loyalty give her a dignity which is lacking in women of lesser spiritual insight.

Lily Miller in Ah, Wilderness! and Evelyn Hickey in The Iceman Cometh share a common interest. They both have the misfortune of loving alcoholics. Lily Miller realizes that Sid will not change and she will not marry him, but Evelyn "was stubborn as all hell once she'd made up her mind."²² Evelyn made up her mind to love Hickey

²⁰"Abortion," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 160.

²¹Ibid., p. 160.

²²"The Iceman Cometh," Masters of Modern Drama, p. 637.

and forgive him; even when he admitted his faults, she made excuses for him.

No, sir, you couldn't stop Evelyn. Nothing on earth could shake her faith in me. Even I couldn't. She was a sucker for a pipe dream.²³

Hickey tries to talk her into forgetting him. He says, "I'm no good and never will be,"²⁴ but Evelyn is tenacious-- "nothing but death could stop my loving you."²⁵ They are married. Evelyn's attitude is that their love will be Hickey's salvation. ". . . once you're happy you won't want to do any of the bad things you've done any more."²⁶ Hickey recalls that even after he contracted venereal disease and Evelyn was infected, too, "she did her best to make me believe she fell for my lie about how traveling men get things from drinking cups on trains."²⁷ When Hickey returned home after one of his sprees, he remembers, "I could see disgust having a battle in her eyes with love. Love always won."²⁸

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., p. 638.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

This is the very attitude that caused Hickey to kill his wife. He explains his action.

I couldn't forgive her for forgiving me. I even caught myself hating her for making me hate myself so much. There's a limit to the guilt you can feel and the forgiveness and the pity you can take!²⁹

The message that was written all over Evelyn's face, "sweetness and love and pity and forgiveness,"³⁰ weighed so heavily that he decided the only way out "for her sake"³¹ would be that she "never wake up from her dream."³²

Lily Miller continues in her life. She takes a personal interest in the boys and girls she teaches in school. Her joy is to see them grow up to be good men and women. Lily loves her brother's children, too, and she feels completely at home in his house, and not a bit like such a useless old maid, after all. Lily has broken her engagement more than sixteen years ago and she still feels that it was the best thing to do under the circumstances, but after all the years, the love Lily had is not

²⁹Ibid., p. 639.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

dead. Sid ruins Lily's plans for going out the evening of the Fourth of July by coming in drunk; he begins to get maudlin, saying, ". . . no good to myself or anybody else! --if I had any guts I'd kill myself, and good riddance!"³³

Lily replies:

There! Don't cry, Sid! I can't bear it! Of course, I forgive you! Haven't I always forgiven you? I know you're not to blame--So don't, Sid!³⁴

The forgiving attitude of both Lily and Evelyn causes them to be more than ordinary people. They live by the scripture which commands that we forgive seventy times seven. Evelyn Hickey and Lily Miller love with a love that is more divine than human.

Mrs. Evans, Sam's mother, in Strange Interlude propounds a theory of selflessness. She tells her daughter-in-law that she will learn to love her son if she gives up enough for him. Speaking from her own experience, Mrs. Evans says:

Why, I even love that idiot [Aunt Bessie] upstairs, I've taken care of her so many years, lived her

³³"Ah, Wilderness!," Ah, Wilderness! and Other Plays, p. 92.

³⁴Ibid., p. 93.

life for her with my life, you might say. You give your life to Sammy, then you'll love him same as you love yourself. You'll have to! That's sure as death!³⁵

Mrs. Evans' acceptance comes from this selflessness. Her life echoes Matthew 23:11, "Let the greatest among you be servant to all." She advises, "Being happy, that's the nearest we can ever come to knowing what's good! Being happy, that's good!"³⁶ Mrs. Evans offers one secret to her own happiness: one must not remember one's suffering. "People forget everything. They got to, poor people!"³⁷

Alice Roylston in Servitude bases her life on the same principle as Mrs. Evans. She accepts her role with such grace that others (see Ethel Frazier, Chapter III) are converted to her "Happiness is servitude" philosophy. Alice and her husband have a successful relationship because of their awareness of each other. Nora Melody in A Touch of the Poet and Eleanor Cape in Welded have successful marriages, too. All three of these marriages have foundations of service. Nora says that pride keeps some people from

³⁵"Strange Interlude," Nine Plays, p. 544.

³⁶Ibid., p. 546.

³⁷Ibid.

real love. Nora warns her daughter against pride, ". . . it'll kape you from ivir givin' all yourself, and that's what love is."³⁸ Sara, the daughter, maintains that she could give all of herself if she wanted to and Nora's reply is this:

If! Wanted to! Faix, it proves how little of love you know when you prate about if's and want-to's. It's when you don't give a thought for all the if's and want-to's in the world! It's when, if all the fires of hell was between you, you'd walk in them gladly to be with him, and sing with joy at your own burnin', if only his kiss was on your mouth! That's love, and I'm proud I've known the great sorrow and joy of it!³⁹

Eleanor Cape states her love for her husband in these terms:

There's only one way we can give life to each other.

 By releasing each other.

 I'll still love you. I'll work for you! We'll no longer stand between one another. Then I can really give you my soul.⁴⁰

Nora, Alice, and Eleanor are married to men they love not in spite of their weaknesses, but because of them. In their

³⁸A Touch of the Poet, p. 25.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰"Welded," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 300.

selflessness they are happy accepting their men without constantly trying to reform them.

Mrs. Evans' advice to forget suffering is demonstrated vividly in the play Anna Christie. Anna Christie accepts herself as she has been and as she is now, since her spirit has been cleansed by the healing sea (see Chapter I). She is willing to swear to Mat Burke that she has never loved before and that she will forget her former life as a prostitute. After seeing the evidence of Anna's renewal, the reader has every indication that Anna is strong enough spiritually to be true to her vow.

In addition to accepting faults in others as Nora Melody and Alice Roylston were capable of doing, Anna Christie is O'Neill's portrayal of a successful life based on knowing and accepting oneself.

Lavinia Mannon in Mourning Becomes Electra is caught in an exasperating, horrifying situation. Her mother, Christine, (see Chapter III), has committed adultery and murdered Lavinia's father. Lavinia and her brother, Orin, kill Brant, their mother's lover. Then Christine commits suicide. Lavinia and Orin try to find escape and peace on a South Sea Island, but Orin becomes more and more haunted with his guilt, haunted to the point of actual physical and

mental illness. Lavinia decides she must bring Orin home. Orin cannot live with reality and therefore he shoots himself. Of the great house of Mannon, only Lavinia is left and briefly it seems that she will marry Peter Niles and be able to survive normally. Hazel Niles, Peter's sister, confronts Lavinia with proof of a change in Peter's personality. When Peter comes, Lavinia is able to view the change for herself and she addresses him with these words:

Peter! Let me look at you! You're suffering!
Your eyes have a hurt look! They've always been
so trustful! They look suspicious and afraid of
life now! Have I done this to you already, Peter?
Are you beginning to suspect me?⁴¹

Peter affirms his love for her, but in the same breath he questions the past. Lavinia knows what she must do and she gives her reason to Peter.

I couldn't bear to watch your eyes grow bitter and
hidden from me and wounded in their trust of life!
I love you too much!⁴²

Because of Lavinia's penetrating intellectual ability to see and come to terms with the truth, she understands and

⁴¹"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 863.

⁴²Ibid., p. 864.

accepts her destiny as the last Mannon. Her acceptance is her salvation. As she enters the house, these are her words:

I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment. And there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself! Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison! I'll never go out or see anyone! I'll have the shutters nailed closed so no sunlight can ever get in. I'll live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die!⁴³

Lavinia's acceptance of the role into which she has been cast by fate constitutes her nobility. All of the women in this section on acceptance recall by their lives John Milton's beautiful sonnet, "On His Blindness." Particularly apropos is the last line, "They also serve who only stand and wait."

In the first two divisions of this chapter characterizations of the Virgin Mary in despair and in acceptance have been presented. The third and final section will deal with those women among O'Neill's characters who furnish inspiration. These include Princess Kukachin in Marco Millions, Miriam in Lazarus Laughed, Martha Jayson in

⁴³Ibid., pp. 866-867.

The First Man, and Eileen Carmody in The Straw, who offer their greatest inspiration in death, as well as Maria de Cordova in The Fountain, Yvette in A Wife for Life, Sue Bartlett in Gold, Hazel Niles in Mourning Becomes Electra and Josie Hogan in Moon for the Misbegotten, whose lives inspire.

Princess Kukachin in Marco Millions believes that Marco has a soul. Her belief is an affirmation of the existence of the soul in every man. When the princess is questioned about the reality of Marco's soul, she answers her grandfather with these words:

I have seen it--once, when he bound up my dog's leg, once when he played with a slave's baby, once when he listened to music over water and I heard him sigh, once when he looked at sunrise, another time at sunset, another at the stars, another at the moon, and each time he said that Nature was wonderful.⁴⁴

It is because of her belief that Marco has a soul, that the Princess Kukachin loves him, but the ambitious, materialistic Marco is totally insensitive to the princess even when she tells him, "See my eyes as those of a woman and not a Princess! Look deeply! I will die if you do not see what

⁴⁴"Marco Millions," Nine Plays, p. 261.

is there!"⁴⁵ Marco, like the teeming herd of humanity, is too selfish, too busy accumulating wealth, and too blind to accept the invaluable gift of her love. The Princess Kukachin dies of unrequited love, but her death offers inspiration to mankind. "She loved love, she died for beauty."⁴⁶ Kukachin's death motivates some of O'Neill's most poetic writing. The beautiful tribute given by her grandfather follows.

Know in your heart that the living of life can be noble! Know that the dying of death can be noble! Be exalted by life! . . . Be immortal because life is immortal. Contain the harmony of womb and grave within you! Possess life as a lover--then sleep requited in the arms of death! If you awake, love again! If you sleep on, rest in peace!⁴⁷

Miriam, Lazarus' wife, in the drama Lazarus Laughed provides whatever Lazarus needs. Even at the hour of her impending death, her thoughts are of Lazarus. She turns to him to comfort him.

But, dearest husband, why do you take it so to heart? Why do you feel guilty because you are not

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 279.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 302.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 301.

like other men? That is why I love you so much. Is it a sin to be born a dreamer? But God, He must be a dreamer, too, or how would we be on earth? Do not keep saying to yourself so bitterly, you are a failure in life! Do not sit brooding on the hill-top in the evening like a black figure of Job against the sky! Even if God has taken our little ones--yes, in spite of sorrow--have you not a good home I make for you, and a wife who loves you? Be grateful, then--for me! Smile, my sad one! Laugh a little once in a while! Come home, bringing me laughter of the wind from the hills!⁴⁸

It is a complete selflessness that pervades Miriam's existence. After she dies, Miriam answers Lazarus' sorrow with assurance and inspiration. In a voice of unearthly sweetness, she says, "Yes! There is only life! Lazarus, be not lonely!"⁴⁹

Martha Jayson in The First Man is another woman who has lost her children and subverted her own desires in order to fulfill the wishes of her husband. "I've spoiled you by giving up my life so completely to yours. You've forgotten I have one,"⁵⁰ Martha says to Curt. It is only after Martha dies, giving birth to their son, that Curt has an inkling of her true worth. "Teach him his mother was

⁴⁸"Lazarus Laughed," Nine Plays, p. 455.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 456.

⁵⁰"The First Man," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, II, 588.

the most beautiful soul that ever lived,"⁵¹ are Curt's instructions to his son's guardian.

Eileen Carmody, who is dying of tuberculosis in The Straw, offers strength to the young author Stephen Murray with her self-forgetfulness. She becomes so engrossed in plans to hasten Murray's convalescence that she does not even consider her own precarious health. As the curtain falls, Eileen is saying, "I'll have to look out for you, Stephen won't I? From now on? And see that you rest so many hours a day--"⁵² Her magnanimous spirit inspires Murray to cling to the threads of renewed hope and faith.

In The Fountain, Maria de Cordova sends her daughter Beatriz to Juan Ponce de Leon in Puerto Rico with the instructions to "Bring him tenderness. . . . That will repay the debt I owe him for saving me for you."⁵³ Maria de Cordova realizes that Juan might have killed her husband, rather than merely wounding him, had he desired, in a duel they fought years earlier. The duel precipitated Juan's disfavor at the court of Spain and his eventual exile as

⁵¹Ibid., p. 618.

⁵²"The Straw," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 122.

⁵³"The Fountain," The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, I, 405.

governor of Puerto Rico when Juan wanted more than anything a patent to continue his search for Cathay. Beatriz brings the long-awaited patent and these words of inspiration from her mother.

Yes! And you can find it where the others failed, I know! You were my dear mother's ideal of Spanish chivalry, of a true knight of the Cross! That was her prophecy, that you would be the first to reach Cathay!⁵⁴

Because of Maria's trust and faith in him, Juan is capable of finding the fountain and understanding its beautiful message:

Love is a flower
 Forever blooming
 Beauty a fountain
 Forever flowing
 Upward into the source of sunshine,
 Upward into the azure heaven;
 One with God but
 Ever returning
 To kiss the earth that the flower may live.⁵⁵

Although no woman appears on the set of the one act play A Wife for a Life, there is a vivid portrait of a lovely lady. Yvette, the daughter of poor French people,

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 448.

was forced to marry an old miner twenty years her senior when she was too young to know her own mind. From all accounts the husband was a drunkard who left her alone most of the time. Jack, the young man who loves her, gives the following account of Yvette:

In the corrupt environment of a mining camp she seemed like a lily growing in a field of rank weeds. . . . She looked at me with great calm eyes but her lips trembled as she said: "I know you love me and I--I love you; but you must go away and we must never see each other again. I am his wife and I must keep my pledge."⁵⁶

When an older miner doubts Jack's veracity concerning Yvette's faithfulness to her husband, a letter as "proof positive of her innocence and noble-mindedness"⁵⁷ is produced. The letter reads, "I must keep my oath. He needs me and I must stay. To be true to myself I must be true to him."⁵⁸ Soon after Jack leaves Yvette, her husband returns home but he sets out on Jack's trail "for vengeance, refusing to believe in her innocence."⁵⁹ Jack reveals that

⁵⁶"A Wife for Life," Ten "Lost" Plays, p. 217.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 219.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 220.

Yvette has promised to marry him if at the end of five years, her husband has not returned. The irony of the situation is that the old mining partner is none other than Yvette's no-account husband who has been among the missing these past five years. As the curtain falls, the old man quotes, "Greater love hath no man than this, that he giveth his wife for his friend."⁶⁰ Yvette's purity prompts the old miner's noble, selfless spirit which preserves not only Jack's life, but also his hope for happiness.

Sue Bartlett in Gold is the only practical, sensible member of the family left after her mother's death. Captain Bartlett is not content in his own madness; he feels he must convince his son Nat of the existence of buried gold on that far distant island. Sue personifies the feminine instinct for goodness at its best, as her father and her brother become more and more involved with their dreams of buried treasure. Between them and reality, Sue is the one connecting link. In her father's fleeting moments of lucidity, she pleads for the sake of Nat's sanity and with the help of her mother's dying words, "keep Nat clear o' this"⁶¹--and she wins. Her stoic tenacity

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 223.

⁶¹"Gold," Six Short Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 192.

causes Bartlett to confess his responsibility for the murders of two men and to admit that the "gold" is actually brass. It is through Sue that Nat's sanity is preserved and Captain Bartlett's soul is cleansed.

Hazel Niles in Mourning Becomes Electra is much the same type of character as Sue Bartlett. Christine Mannon recognizes Hazel for what she is. "You are genuinely good and pure of heart."⁶² Hazel's consideration for others before self is evident in several incidents. She is concerned over Lavinia's grief stricken condition and over the effect that the news of Ezra Mannon's death will have on Orin. After her deciding to spend the night with Christine Mannon, who has been left all alone, Hazel's first action is to inform her mother of her plans. Although these are minor examples, they indicate the type of care Hazel has for those around her. But it is through the inspiration of Hazel, acting almost as Lavinia's conscience, that Lavinia knows what she must eventually do. Hazel recounts the discord that has come to her family and the change in her brother, Peter, particularly, since his total absorption in marrying Lavinia has apparently erased his loyalty

⁶²"Mourning Becomes Electra," Nine Plays, p. 759.

to his own family. These are Hazel's words of admonition to Lavinia:

Look in your heart and ask your conscience before God if you ought to marry Peter!

.
All I can do is trust you. I know in your heart you can't be dead to all honor and justice.

.
I know you're suffering, Vinnie--and I know your conscience will make you do what's right--and God will forgive you.⁶³

Hazel's faith furnishes Lavinia an unclouded vision of the consequences of her selfish marriage to Peter. As a result of Hazel's trust, Lavinia has the courage to do what she must do--accept her role as the last Mannon.

Josie Hogan is the last of Eugene O'Neill's feminine creations and she is also the best, for her characterization encompasses the finest from all those heroines who have gone before. Josie Hogan is the most intelligent as well as the most sensitive of all O'Neill's women. She is physically large, "five feet eleven in her stockings and weighs around one hundred and eighty"⁶⁴ and spiritually big enough to be more than any other heroine has been.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 861-862.

⁶⁴"A Moon for the Misbegotten," The Later Plays of Eugene O'Neill, p. 301.

Besides that, "there is no mannish quality about her. She is all woman."⁶⁵

Even though Josie strives to maintain her reputation as a wanton woman, Jim Tyrone recognizes her purity in his greeting, "And how's my Virgin Queen of Ireland?"⁶⁶ It hurts Tyrone for Josie to perpetuate the hoax that she is "the scandal of the countryside, carrying on with men without a marriage license."⁶⁷ In a plot development which is indeed masterful, O'Neill unmaskes the souls of Jim Tyrone and Josie Hogan depicting the most inspirational relationship in any of his dramas. Josie loves Jim and she is placed in a situation to forgive him for a temporal injustice as well as free him from eternal guilt.

A love exists between these two which is far greater than mere physical magnetism. In an intricate web of circumstances, Josie is convinced by her father that after having promised them the right to buy the land which they have tenanted for twenty years, Jim Tyrone has decided to sell the farm to someone else for an additional five

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 325.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 311.

thousand dollar profit. As a result Josie goes along with her father's scheme to force Jim to marry her, but in the process the unmasking occurs. Jim reveals his feelings of guilt concerning his behavior at the time of his mother's death. Josie plays three symbolic roles in the drama: first she is the lover forgiving Jim's imagined disloyalty to her family in the land transaction, and secondly, she assumes the role of Jim's mother, forgiving his sordid drunken actions at the time of her death. The third role is highly stylized as Josie and Jim assume the position of Michelangelo's sculpture Pieta. As a personification of the spiritual mother, the Virgin Mary, Josie holds one who has borne the awful guilt of the world. Jim addresses Josie:

She was simple and kind and pure of heart. She was beautiful. You're like her deep in your heart. That's why I told you.⁶⁸

In her final role, she forgives him eternally, ridding him forever of his guilt and furnishing his absolution. She promises him "a dawn that won't creep over dirty windowpanes but will wake in the sky like a promise of God's

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 393.

peace in the soul's dark sadness."⁶⁹ Further emphasizing the Pieta effect, Josie makes painful reference to the scripture Isaiah 66:7-9 when she tells her father that the greatest miracle of the night was "A virgin who bears a dead child in the night, and the dawn finds her still a virgin."⁷⁰ Josie's final speech is a prayer of supplication for Jim, "May you have your wish and die in your sleep soon, Jim, darling. May you rest forever in forgiveness and peace."⁷¹

Now what has been proved by the arbitrary classification of O'Neill's women characters as prototypes of either Eve or Mary? The basic truth which reverberates throughout the study is that man must lose his life, to gain it. In O'Neillian philosophy selflessness is the secret of joy, purpose, and fulfillment. Contrast the horror within the characterizations of Mary Rowland, Mrs. Knapp, and Livia, who lived only for self, with the joy associated with the selfless personalities of Cybel, Alice Royston, Essie Miller, Nora Melody, and Josie Hogan, for

⁶⁹Ibid., pp. 394-395.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 398.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 409.

example. At the same time, one must be true to oneself. Recall the folly of Sara and Deborah Hartford in More Stately Mansions who prostitute their integrity for greedy ambition. Next, consider Mrs. Evans, Nellie Murrery, and Annie Christie who prove that one must forget the failures of the past, and forgive oneself as well as others. Paramount in the search for fulfillment should be a reliance on the "glue" O'Neill mentions in The Great God Brown, which is, of course, the grace of God.

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