

THE FORMATIVE EFFECT OF PAST ON THE PERCEPTION OF TIME AND SELFHOOD

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**ABSTRACT**

*No matter which school is taken into consideration, the relation between time and selfhood has always been one of the major problematic issues in the psychoanalytic field. That the perception of time shapes the individual's present and, therefore, future increases the formative effect of time on selfhood. It has become inevitable to see the reflections of this problematic taking considerable attention in the psychoanalytic field on literary works and many authors have focused on the conflict between self and time. In this study, the formative effect of time on the present and future of the individuals is discussed within the perspective of object relations school by focusing on Eugene O'Neill's trilogy, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, and it is argued that the perception of time and objects is the most significant factors in the formation of self.*

**Keywords:** Eugene O'Neill, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, object relations, time, the formation of self

GEÇMİŞİN ZAMAN VE KENDİLİK ALGISI ÜZERİNDEKİ BİÇİMLENDİRİCİ ETKİSİ

**ÖZET**

*Psikanalitik alanda hangi ekol dikkate alınırsa alınsın zaman ve kendilik arasındaki ilişki her zaman temel sorunsallardan biri olmuştur. Zaman algısının bireyin geçmişini, bugününü ve dolayısıyla geleceğini belirlemesi, zaman olgusunun kendilik üzerindeki biçimlendirici etkisini arttırmaktadır. Psikanalitik alanda son derece dikkat çeken bu sorunsalın yazınsal yapıtlarda yansımalarını görmek ise kaçınılmaz olmuş ve pek çok yazar bireyin kendilik ve zaman algısı arasındaki çatışma üzerinde odaklanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, Amerikan oyun yazarı Eugene O'Neill'in *Mourning Becomes Electra* üçlemesinde zamanın bireylerin bugününü ve geleceklerini biçimlendirici etkisi nesne ilişkileri ekolü çerçevesinde tartışılmakta; zaman ve nesne algısının kişilik oluşumundaki en önemli unsurlar olduğu ileri sürülmektedir.*

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Eugene O'Neill, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, nesne ilişkileri, zaman, kendilik oluşumu

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## INTRODUCTION

Henry F. Smith questions whether it is past, which is timeless and imprisons present, or whether it is the other way around; that is, present and future determine and imprison past (xv). The nature of memory and the act of remembrance are foundational problems of psychology in general and of psychoanalysis in particular since their beginnings. The fact that the moment one is aware of *being in the present* is already the moment one is *being in the past* raises questions on whether time is in a relation of dichotomy with timelessness and, if so, how one perceives time. Psychoanalytic discourse deals with the relation between temporality and psychological development that lies behind the neurotic and psychotic development by focusing on the repetitive time and its perception by self.

This relation has been among the major themes in the plays of the prominent American playwright, Eugene O'Neill, who is no doubt one of the modern authors posing this question in an informed way. Towards the end of the second act of his play "Long Day's Journey into Night", the protagonist, James Tyrone, tells his depressed and morphine-addict wife, Mary, to forget past. Mary's reaction, "Why? How can I? The past is present, isn't it? It is the future, too", (O'Neill, 1956, p. 87) seems to foreshadow the playwright's sense of tragedy. In order to reflect this sense of tragedy, O'Neill chooses to write a classical tragedy set in the modern world, following Aristotle's description. His trilogy "Mourning Becomes Electra" (1931) consisting of "Homecoming", "The Hunted", and "The Haunted", is written with this concern and follows the structure of Aeschylus' tragedy "Oresteia". However, such an effort in modern times and in a land where, as William Dean Howells mentioned, there is "large, cheerful average of health and success and happy life" (Stegner, 1958, p.302) leads the playwright to investigate what he can use to represent the Greek concept of external fate; as a result, he has focused on the modern portrayal of self in conflict with itself. In the modern version, the playwright translates the legend of the house of Atreus in the ancient period into that of the Mannon house in the late nineteenth century. In both cases, the emphasis is put on the concept of fate. While Gods are at work in the ancient world, self in conflict with itself becomes dominant as the determining factor in the modern world. The replacement of the Greek concept of external fate by the pathological structures that determine the psychological fate will be studied within the context of the Object Relations School in O'Neill's creation of classical tragedy in the modern sense.

### Expression of the Tragic View of Life in Modern Times

Eugene O'Neill's ambition to express the tragic view of life in "Mourning Becomes Electra" results in his search for a suitable setting and atmosphere which will serve his purpose. The setting should not only be a *physical* background but involve the necessary *psychical* atmosphere where human will clashes with external fate. As the background which fulfills these conditions, O'Neill chooses New England where there was once hope of building "a city upon a hill" and notes that it is "the best possibility for a 'Greek plot of crime and retribution, chain of faith' because of the 'Puritan conviction of man born to sin and punishment'" (quoted in Gatta Jr, 1979, p.227; P. O'Neill, 1963, p. 485). In this way, he can depict individuals who struggle with the clash of inner conflicts and external realities by benefiting from historical characteristics of Puritanism that imprisons the individual will within the restrictions of the society. For there are no gods interfering with human

affairs in the modern world, he needs other means which will set the ground for such clashes. For this purpose, O'Neill determines these means as Puritan rules that shapes the lives of people to the degree of shaping their subconscious as well: ". . . if we have no Gods, [sic] or heroes to portray, we have the subconscious, the mother of all gods and heroes" (quoted in P. O'Neill, 1963, p. 489). The playwright depicts characters in conflict with each other and with their selves. The conflicts are the major determining factors in their lives and mostly result from the exposition of all deep, hidden secrets of family life throughout time in a strict Puritan town. Depending on the view that man is neither simply free nor purely determined, he views fate as a factor independent of gods and argues that fate is shaped by the concrete, physical environment and the psychological factors effective in the formation of self.

O'Neill focuses on the clashes among family members on the surface. However, it can be seen the Puritan society and its inhibitions on people are at the center of these conflicts. The pathological self formations of the characters should be considered as the major problem though the Puritan inhibitions and the oedipal motif are on the foreground. The problematic object relations give way to such pathology which determines how the characters' past experiences shape their present and future. By constructing a family structure with a strong resemblance to the one in the house of Atreus, O'Neill can focus on the psychological fate in the Puritan society. In his "Working Notes", he expresses this resemblance as below:

Aegisthus bears strong facial resemblance to Agamemnon and Orestes—his resemblance to Orestes attracts Clytemnestra—his resemblance to his father attracts Electra—Electra adores father, devoted to brother (who resembles father), hates mother—Orestes adores mother, devoted to sister (whose face resembles mother's) so hates his father—Agamemnon, frustrated in love for Clytemnestra, adores daughter, adores daughter, Electra, who resembles her, hates and jealous of his son, Orestes. . . (Clark, 1947, 531).

In "Mourning Becomes Electra", Ezra Mannon, a colonel who has just returned from the Civil War, stands for of Agamemnon; Christine Mannon, his wife, is Clytemnestra; their children, Lavinia and Orin, are Electra and Orestes, respectively. Captain Adam Brant, the lover of Christine, bears some resemblances to Aegisthus with some significant differences. While Aegisthus is Agamemnon's brother, Captain Adam Brant is Ezra's nephew whose father is exiled from the house because of his affair with a nurse, Captain Brant's mother. Abe Mannon, the father, demolishes the house and builds a new one with the hope that past will be forgotten and the Mannons will have a "pure" life again after this affair. Still, the description of the house at the beginning of each act gives the impression that the burden of past is on the new house now. Christine's words of hatred on the Mannon house are no doubt the clearest expression of both the Mannon house and the curse on it:

I have been to the greenhouse to pick these. I felt our tomb needs a little brightening. (She nods scornfully toward the house) Each time I come back after being away it appears more like a sepulcher! The "whited" one of the Bible—pagan temple front stuck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness! It was just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity—as a temple for his hatred. (O'Neill, 1959, 237)

In the first play, "Homecoming", the reader is introduced into the uncanny impression, which Christine and Lavinia give, through the conversation between Seth Beckwith, their gardener, and the townspeople; this conversation can be considered as an indication that the strange, dead, cursed house has already occupied the lives of the Mannons. O'Neill's description of Christine's face as one which gives the strange impression of "being not living flesh but a wonderfully life-like mask, in which only the deep-set eyes, of a dark-violet blue, are alive" (O'Neill, 1959, p.230) depicts the similarity between the Mannons and the house are in terms of being

*non-living*. Such impression leads the townspeople to think there is a *crypt* both the Mannons and the house want to keep, and they are not entirely wrong. It should be noted that there are certain differences among the family members' perceptions of the house and its unknown or unthought secret. The difference between Christine's and Lavinia's perceptions is exceptionally contrasting: While Christine defines the Mannon house as a sepulcher, a place which kills her gradually, Lavinia calls it home and sees as the only place where she feels content. From this moment on, O'Neill starts giving the signs of strong hatred between the mother and the daughter and emphasizes the differences between their perceptions and actions continuously. Lavinia's response to Peter's marriage proposal strengthens this judgment. She rejects the proposal for two reasons: her hatred of love and her opinion that her father, Ezra, needs her more than anyone else in the world. Both reasons hint at Lavinia's complex oedipal conflicts and raise the question whether she is an innocent victim of love and of hatred in the Mannon house or whether she is an *evil* person jealous of her mother and wishing to take her place.

This question can be answered from two perspectives: On the one hand, she has internalized the Puritan heritage of the Mannon house and transferred Puritanism's destructive effects and condemnation on love and marital adjustments to her mother in order to prevent her happiness; on the other hand, she becomes a victim of Puritan poisoning of love. In the last play, "The Haunted", her efforts to leave the Mannon identity behind and to become alive and happy are prevented by her brother, Orin, who represents the Puritan conscience. While it is debatable whether she is a victim or not, one can say Orin is surely the victim of the Oedipus complex. Christine has focused all her attention and love on him and this condition has caused him to accept the role of being both a son and a husband.

In the case of Lavinia, it is not possible to talk about such a clear obligation. Her oedipal conflict arises from his hatred towards her mother or vice versa, but not Ezra's demand from her to become his wife. However, it should be noted that Ezra's condensation of his love for Lavinia, which Christine rejects, may have strengthened her feelings of hatred and rivalry. Still, it will be too reductive to label Lavinia as a strict Puritan maiden full of hatred and revenge. It is seen especially in the last play that she becomes the victim of values she represents as well as the oedipal conflict which she cannot bear. At this stage, it will be meaningful to question what makes the oedipal process so traumatic and how oedipal conflicts of both Orin and Lavinia burden them with the curse of the Mannon house.

### **A Revised Version of the Oedipus Complex as the Force Determining Much of the Family Love and Hatred in the Mannons**

In her essay, "Psychological Fate in Mourning Becomes Electra" (1953), Doris M. Alexander argues that O'Neill uses a non-Freudian version of the Oedipus complex as the force determining much of the family love and hate in the Mannons and adds that "[a]ll of the main characters in the play love the parent of the opposite sex, hate the parent of the same sex, or in the case of parents, love the child of the opposite sex, hate the child of the same sex" (p.927). In their fate, the history of jealousy, hatred, and murder starts with the grandfather, Abe Mannon. As Joseph P. O'Neill points out that all the Mannons, including Abe Mannon, are "*able to meet and conquer the hard realities of life except life itself*" (1963, p.489). In this respect, it can be argued that their search for pure and innocent love, prevented by pathological self formation structures, makes the curse unavoidable for them despite all efforts. The continuous need for love and desire result in

dissatisfaction and disappointment since they are not met under any condition. This condition causes hatred not only among family members but also against life.

In Kleinian theory, the main object of all desires—that is, the father for the girl and the mother for the boy—is the source of hatred and wish for revenge at the same time since these desires can never be satisfied (1937, p.310). The resulting disappointment and dissatisfaction cause the release of the oedipal tendencies, which Melanie Klein claims to start from the frustration the infant experiences in weaning. Consequently, the receptive aim changes in both sexes as turning to father in the case of girls or mother in the case of boys as love objects. Klein argues that a sense of guilt is produced only after the formation of superego; then, she expresses the characteristics of the “femininity-phase” experienced by both girls and boys: “[T]he femininity-phase is characterized by anxiety related to the womb and the father’s penis, and this anxiety subjects the boy to the tyranny of a super-ego which devours, dismembers and castrates and is formed from the father and mother alike” (1928, p.190).

In both sexes, the prohibitions that determine the individual’s life is the anxiety, which leads to a sense of guilt, is directly associated with the femininity-phase in the Kleinian view. The frustration experienced in weaning results in the lack of gratitude—an important factor in the female sexual development. For this reason, it disturbs the relation of girl with both males and females. The will to have more, especially the father’s penis, raises hatred and envy against mother:

... a powerful motive in the desire to possess [the father] springs from the hatred and envy against the mother. If the sadistic fixations remain predominant, this hatred and its over-compensation will also materially affect the woman’s relation to men” (Klein, 1928, p.194).

The boy, on the other hand, enters into a rivalry with the father to possess the mother although he has a penis. In either case, the conflicting feelings of love and hatred towards the parents determine the lives of grown-up individuals.

Within this context, it is possible to examine the unhappy marriage of Ezra Mannon and Christine Mannon in terms of their unsuccessful femininity-phase. Since the feelings of love and hatred enter into the relation between men and women as a determining factor, it can be claimed that what makes their marriage unhappy is the self structure besides the Puritan inhibitions and condemnation on love. Klein mentions that a satisfactory and stable relation in a couple implies “a deep attachment, a capacity for mutual sacrifice, a sharing in grief as well as in pleasure, in interests as well as in sexual enjoyment” (1937, p.313). So, it is striking that the Puritan inhibitions on Ezra and Christine remain complementary when their relation is analyzed from a Kleinian perspective.

After experiencing the war, Ezra seems ready to restore what he has missed all his life. Seeing his life before the war as a failure because he counts death over life, he wishes to leave the Mannon behavior; however, Christine disagrees to comply and his efforts to start his life over end in disappointment. He hopes to set both Christine and himself free after explaining how sad he is because of Christine’s fondness of Orin and how this led him to condensate all his love on Lavinia and hatred on Orin. However, this does not help attain Christine’s love and a happy marriage. Towards the end of the last act of “Homecoming”, his words can be read as a confession: “This house is not my house! This is not my room nor my bed. They are empty—waiting for someone to move in! And you are not my wife! You are waiting for something!” (O’Neill, 1959, 274). He feels defeated once more as he senses there is someone other than Orin in Christine’s life.

What Christine waits for is Ezra's death and she reaches her desire after she has confessed her relation with Captain Brant and murdered her husband. Thus, Ezra's metaphorical death is followed by an actual one. From a theoretical perspective, his attempt to restore his *unsuccessful* relation with his internalized image of mother by replacing a satisfactory one with his wife is missed as Christine cannot fulfill what he has always found lacking in his mother. Therefore, he never feels as an adult because he could never overcome the rivalry between himself and the father, neither being able to possess his mother's nor his wife's love and appreciation. Finally, his death completes symbolic one in terms of missing the chance to become a happy individual because he could never attain the love he needed and desired in the rivalry with Adam Brant.

### **Oedipal Curse Transferred to the Next Generation: The Tragedy of Lavinia and Orin**

Ezra Mannon's death holds different meanings for each member of the family. While Christine and Orin feel themselves set free and become alive, Lavinia feels abandoned by her only love object. Her way of taking his death seems as if she lost everything except for the desire to get revenge from her mother. Because of her own destructive instinct, the unconscious image of the mother as a murderess leads her to feel aggression towards mother and when Christine becomes a real murderess, her aggression is justified according to the theory of conflict. Because of Christine's infidelity to her husband, Lavinia's sole love object, she can justify her hatred against the mother and free herself from the fear that her aggression will annihilate "the maternal giver at the center of deep sensual care"; she no longer thinks consciously whether Christine deserves such annihilation or not. The rules of the Puritan society as well as the requirements of being a Mannon support her feelings of revenge and hatred in her mind; yet, her need for mourning is not met by either revenge or hatred.

What she mourns after her father's death is not only the loss of her love object but also that of the possibility of reconciliation with the maternal giver, Christine, despite the negative mother-daughter relation. This can be considered as the major factor that increases her destructive impulses towards the mother and her jealousy for the strong, close bond between Christine and Orin. She devalues her mother by accusing her of the loss of love which she thinks as stolen from her, imprisoning her in the oedipal curse. It is almost impossible to free herself from this curse as she does not have the capacity to replace her love towards her father and brother in this imprisonment. She strongly needs Christine's love and care, her first object, which she has not been able to obtain: "The unconscious mind of children very often corresponds to the mother's unconscious mind, and whether or not they make much of this store of love prepared for them, they often gain great support and comfort through the knowledge that this love exists" (Klein, 1937, p.320).

In the healthy development of personality, some love for parents is preserved while love for other objects is added in time. Such a diffusion of love lessens the burden of the oedipal conflict for children. Due to the unsuccessful development of this process, both Lavinia and Orin lack such a capability. As opposed to Lavinia feeling lost and drowned in the feeling of revenge, Orin feels a hidden happiness and satisfaction after his father's death. In addition to this opposition, the relation between Lavinia and Orin does not satisfy either of them. In Kleinian view, the healthy relations between brothers and sisters help them detach from parents and form a new type of relation that will provide them with the means to overcome their emotional conflicts in an easier way. In the case of Lavinia and Orin, the relation has been determined by the Oedipus complex and has become increasingly pathological.

Lavinia's relation with her mother is predetermined at the beginning of her life. When she learns she was born of Christine's disgust for Ezra, she believes "[i]t is only right [she] should hate her" (O'Neill, 1959, 249). Since then, she does all she can in order to take revenge from her mother for love she has stolen from her. Correspondingly, Christine accuses her daughter of stealing the love she deserves from her. When Christine confesses that she has fallen in love with Adam Brant, and that the lack of love has led her into adultery, both mother and daughter are suffering from the same conflict:

Christine: . . . You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always schemed to steal my place!

Lavinia: (*wildly*) No! It's you who have stolen all love from me since the time I was born! . . . (O'Neill, 1959, 251)

This quarrel seems to be usual and hints at Lavinia's frustration due to the lack of maternal care. In a deeper analysis, one can see her unconscious will to be loved by her mother. However, since this is unattainable, the relation between the two has turned into a battle for possessing Ezra and Orin. Undoubtedly, Christine's falling in love with Adam Brant is a devaluation of Lavinia's most precious love object, Ezra, while Orin remains the only one to be possessed by both the mother and the daughter. Therefore, the relation between Lavinia and her mother becomes the dominant factor determining her relation with Orin implicitly. Yet, it should be noted that the oedipal bond between Orin and Christine is definitive on the same level.

After Ezra Mannon's death, the rivalry between the mother and the daughter takes its harshest form. First, it is Orin's reaction to his father's death that disappoints Lavinia to the utmost degree. Although Orin obeys her just as he has obeyed Ezra, Lavinia can never attain the close relation she wishes to have with Orin. She threatens Christine with informing Orin about her adultery and she thinks that this will certainly ruin the bond between the mother and son. Against this, Christine counteracts by reminding Orin their little world and its password, "No Mannons allowed!" and tries to convince him Lavinia is out of her mind after the death of Ezra to such a degree that she can even raise the accusation of adultery. Lavinia, proud of being a Mannon, has no chance to enter into this land of happiness and love. Orin's dream of marrying Lavinia with Peter so staying alone with his mother is the sign of his deep attachment to the mother and a factor lessening Lavinia's *intrusion* into this land of happiness for him and his mother. Only after Lavinia proves Christine's adultery, thus ruining the land of happiness once again, she gets the opportunity to take her place.

Lavinia thinks that a new life will start after she takes revenge from her mother with Orin's help, and she will become both the mother and lover of Orin. However, the murder of Adam Brant by Orin leads Christine into committing suicide and this becomes "the expressions of the chief doom of the Mannons, their fated frustration in love" as Doris M. Alexander notes (1953, 933). After Orin kills Brant, he realizes the physical resemblance among him, his father, and Ezra and attracts Lavinia's attention to this point: "Do you remember me telling you how the faces of the men I killed came back and changed to Father's face and finally became my own. (*He smiles grimly*) He looks like me, too! Maybe I've committed suicide!" (O'Neill, 1959, 322). This time Lavinia seems to lose Orin forever; it is no longer Christine whom she has to fight against but the metaphorically dead Orin and the haunting past full of death, hatred and guilt.

### The Past Haunts the Present and Becomes the Future

Orin's feeling of guilt and Lavinia's intense desire to become alive dominate the last play, "The Haunted". As the title suggests, the lives of the dead Mannons, specifically those of Ezra and Christine, haunt and determine the present of Orin and Lavinia. Just as at the beginning of the first play, O'Neill emphasizes the striking resemblance between Ezra and Orin as well as that between Christine and Lavinia. While Lavinia is dressed in green like Christine and seems healthier and livelier than ever, Orin's resemblance to Ezra hints at the transformation which has turned him into a ghost:

[Orin] now wears a close-cropped beard in addition to his mustache, and this accentuates his resemblance to his father. The Mannon semblance of his face in repose to a mask is more pronounced than ever. He has grown dreadfully thin and his black suit hangs loosely on his body. His haggard face is set in a blank lifeless expression. (O'Neill, 1959, 340)

The *liveliness* of Lavinia is in opposition to the *lifelessness* of Orin. Lavinia's consideration of her mother's suicide as an act of reparation as opposed to Orin's sense of guilt is the dominant dichotomy determining the structure of "The Haunted". While Lavinia tries to leave her Mannon identity behind and thinks that she has achieved this, Orin imprisons himself into the darkness in the daylight.

In this concluding play of the trilogy, the whole oedipal motif is continued as a subplot as in the preceding two plays. Both Lavinia and Orin cannot make a displacement for their love for the parents of the opposite sex, which turns life into hell for each. Lavinia's efforts to establish a world of two people where past has gone and happiness has come fails because of the vindictive conscience of Orin. When she feels more alive and wants to marry Peter, whom she sees as the symbol of purity and innocence, Orin does all he can in order to prevent the marriage since he believes Mannon's love poisons innocent people. He thinks of his love in the same category as well; in his dialogue with Hazel, Peter's sister, he expresses his own love as a curse inherited from the previous generations:

Hazel: You don't want her to marry Peter?

Orin: No! She can't have happiness! She's got to be punished! (Suddenly taking her hand—excitedly) And listen Hazel! You mustn't love me any more. The only love I can know now is the love of guilt for guilt which breeds more guilt—until you get so deep at the bottom of hell there is no lower you can sink and you rest there in peace! (He laughs harshly and turns away from her) (O'Neill, 1959, p.360-61)

At a first glance, these words seem to be expressed with the concern of protecting Peter and Hazel. This protection, which is Orin's revenge from Lavinia at the same time, can be related to Orin's feeling of unmourned sense of guilt. The obstacles to love come from "unmourned guilt, spoiled and devalued internal objects with envy, and disowned aggressive objects that constantly invaded one's internal world when guilt could not be tolerated and mourned" (Kavalier-Adler, 1993, p. 190). In the Kleinian theory, love, guilt and aggression are primarily connected with the original maternal giver. In the case of Orin, Lavinia becomes the target of both love and aggression. Though he feels the need for love, he has the tendency to destruct Lavinia just like an infant in the paranoid-schizoid position. While he mentions that Lavinia is all he has in the world at the moment, he expresses his way to punish his sister harshly: He will become the prison Lavinia is chained to. He begins writing "a true history of all the family crimes" and defines Lavinia as the most interesting criminal among them because "so many strange hidden things out of the Mannon past combine in [her]" (O'Neill, 1959, p.354). This



turns his punishment into torture for her and strengthens her will to throw out past. While Klein argues that the “paranoid-schizoid” and “depressive” positions are alternating, Orin’s paranoid-schizoid mentality is very strong as he sees his mother’s suicide not as an act of reparation but as a consequence of Lavinia’s envy. The only alternation into depressive position in Orin’s case occurs not with the instinct to restore love but with the will to annihilate himself and indirectly Lavinia, resulting in his suicide.

While the events in the history of the Mannon family cause Orin’s regression into paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions respectively, Lavinia tries to overcome the same trauma by the defense mechanism of manic denial. She thinks that she and Orin can start a new life without the consequence of grief and loss caused by the recently experienced traumas. Her insistence that past is memory is the clearest reflection of her manic defense mechanism: She tells Orin “[t]hat is all past and finished! The dead have forgotten us! We’ve forgotten them! Come!” (O’Neill, 1959, p.341). At this point, she feels she can overcome the burden of the past and become *happy* and *pure*. She still feels the need to justify herself through her strong manic defense mechanism. Her words to Peter, “I have done my duty by them! They can’t say I haven’t” (O’Neill, 1959, p.348), shows that she still feels a sense of duty towards them and that she is still in dialogue with the past. These words can also be interpreted as that she sees it her natural right to marry Peter.

It can be argued that both Orin’s and Lavinia’s defense mechanisms are indeed related to their unmourned grief for their most important, perhaps their only, love objects—Christine for Orin and Ezra for Lavinia. Therefore, they are stuck either in the paranoid-schizoid position followed by the depressive position or in the manic defense mainly composed of denial. Even after the death of the parents, the children are still bound by the parent figures internalized in a strong way. Since they cannot get rid of these internalized images, it becomes impossible to free themselves from past. Besides, Lavinia’s recovery from the manic denial process and Orin’s recovery from the paranoid-schizoid process fail and result in Lavinia’s depression and Orin’s suicide. Orin’s act of suicide is his attempt to take revenge from his sister in the most self-destructive way. He clearly expresses his anger towards Lavinia because of her opposition to going to the police and confessing the murder: “You’ll find Lavinia Mannon harder to break than me! You’ll have to haunt and hound her for a lifetime!” (O’Neill, 1959, p.365). That is the exact moment Lavinia wishes for his death keeping the hope that she can start a new life without the shadow of the dead Mannons. She claims that “she will live in spite of the Mannons” and “she is no more a Mannon” but she realizes and accepts her fate only after she calls Peter as Adam just at the moment she is trying to convince him of the fact that their love will drive the dead away no matter what happens.

From this tongue-slip on, it is seen that Lavinia alternates once more from the manic denial phase to the paranoid-schizoid position. She understands that she is Christine Mannon’s daughter after all and has the same object of desires as her; thus, she feels the obligation to punish herself since she has turned into Christine and she is the last Mannon carrying the family curse. As she thinks it is the harshest punishment to chain herself to the Mannons, she imprisons herself in the Mannons house with loneliness and all dead Mannons: “Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison!” (O’Neill, 1959, p.376).

## **CONCLUSION**

Except Lavinia, all characters face physical death mostly because of their inability to cope with their present haunted by the previous generations. While gods are “ready recipients of what Kleinians call projective

identification in classical tragedy (Alford, 1993, p.7), each generation since Abe Mannon becomes the recipient of the next one in O'Neill's trilogy. Due to the strong oedipal conflicts between the parents and children, each side seems to be destined to end in the destructive paranoid-schizoid position. The strong destructive instincts of the characters makes impossible for them to reach a unity of self. Although Lavinia struggles against her unconscious sense of guilt by insisting that Adam's death and Christine's suicide are *justice*, her defense mechanisms collapse after Orin's suicide.

In this respect, O'Neill achieves replacing psychological fate by external fate; thus, he succeeds at his aim in creating a modern approximation of a classical tragedy. However, as Joseph P. O'Neill (1963) points out that "his play lacks a final redemptive solution that is found in the greatest tragedies" (p.498) because the tragic recognition of characters has never been achieved. Neither Lavinia nor Orin can get a tragic recognition as a consequence of their pathological formation of self. In order to achieve a true recognition, the children should experience a successful separation-individuation process. However, in the case of Lavinia and Orin, the oedipal instincts are so strong that they can never feel themselves at ease and transfer their love for parents to other people. The presence of Peter and Hazel, seen as the symbols of purity and innocence, is significant in terms of showing Lavinia and Orin's pathological self-development. Even when they have intense desire to marry Peter and Hazel, they never appear to them as love objects in reality. Recognition of their destructive instincts leads both to protect Peter and Hazel from themselves. Since they cannot reconcile with either their parents or themselves, they cannot establish healthy relations and overcome the continuous internal warfare.

It is worth mentioning that tragic recognition remains incomplete. Lavinia's decision to renounce every hope of escaping from the Mannon behavior does not result from her understanding of her internal conflicts; she projects all guilt to the dead and punishes herself just because she is another cursed Mannon as well. So it is impossible to speak of a complete tragic recognition of fate; instead, one should focus on Lavinia's self-punishment and its masochistic character. Considering the development of characters and the plot in the trilogy, such a lack is quite comprehensible. Indeed, the problematic internalization of objects makes the psychological fate the inevitable consequence; and it is impossible to provide a sudden recognition in the trilogy of this structure which is interwoven with pathological self development.

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