TRAGEDY

in Greek, Elizabethan and Modern Theatre

Prof Ahmed H. Ubeid (PhD)

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Dedication

To the one who encouraged me to pursue my career with confidence, my dear professor Abdul-Jabbar Hashim Al-Zubaidi

Author's brief biography

Ahmed Hameed Ubeid, who was born in 1971, is a Professor of Modern English drama in the department of English, University of Anbar, in Iraq where he worked and chaired the department for more than ten years - periods. He got BA in English Language and Literature in 1993 from the University of Anbar. Then, he started his career as a teacher of English. In 2002- 2004, he got MA in English Literature from the University of Baghdad and in 2009 he got a scholarship to study PhD at the university of Pune in India. He also held a professorship in 2019.

In 2014 and 2019, Prof. Ahmed was chosen as an expert and member in a Ministerial Committee to update Iraqi English curriculum for the Departments of English in Iraq. Moreover, and according to the scientific and academic cooperation agreement between the universities of Anbar and Baghdad, Prof. Ahmed is chosen as an instructor for modern and contemporary drama course for PhD program at the University of Baghdad in 2020.

Up to 2020, prof. Ahmed has participated in more than ten international conferences; most notably are of the university of Brighton (UK), Vienna (Austria) and Pune (India). He has Published 17 articles in local and international refereed journals. Moreover, he is a scientific referee for more than 70 articles submitted for scientific promotion; participating also as a viva panel member for more than 20 MA and PhD dissertations in the field of English literature up to 2021.

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Preface

The book pursues how the concept of tragedy is understood and developed and the way it was embodied on stage through ages. The start was with the Greek then the development was with the English Elizabethan and ultimately with the modern American theatre and more specifically with Eugene O'Neill.

Presenting such type of informative book to an interested literary scholar may lead to add something to his\her literary knowledge to satisfy their needs according to their own motives. The book also aims at expressing the importance of the real meaning of "Tragedy" through its phases as a concept that depicts a world, we may find around us. We do believe that a life with a tragedy can purify one's heart and mind to be real human then to feel the sense of happiness when\ where it happens.

I hope to contribute something that may perpetuate my name after I fade away.

Ahmed Hameed

Introduction

Tragedy is a term that has been described as perennially debatable and flexible. It has a variety of meanings and applications in criticism and literary history. In drama, it refers to a particular kind of play, in which the main character is brought to ruin or suffers extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavorable circumstances.

According to Aristotle, a tragic play often recounts an important and causally related series of events in the life of a king, leader or an eminent person. Such events are usually treated with great seriousness and often culminate in catastrophe that excite people with fear and pity. Aristotle's definition remains among the best and is often used as background for later tragedies. However, many plays which have been written after Aristotle do not conform completely to his definition in terms of form and content.

Tragedy, recently, is no longer a depiction of the ordeals of kings or princes. It is now mainly concerned with the lives of those who are "like us", that is, ordinary and simple, and can reflect the type of perplexity and chaos in which modern man lives. This type of life is a result of the dangerous deterioration of manners and morals among people under the impact of the fundamental changes of beliefs and ideology in almost all fields of life. Historically, critics and scholars believe that tragedy of a high order has been created and developed throughout certain periods:

1) the Attic Age in Greece during the fifth century BC.

2) the reigns of Elizabeth and James I (1558–1625) in England.

3) twentieth century Europe when the genre developed new dimensions due to the social, political and philosophical speculations prevailing during this period.[1]

Our concern will focus on another period, America during the first half of the twentieth century, and throw light on the characteristics of modern American tragedy as seen in the works of Eugene O'Neill. (1888-1953) who, was a modern American dramatist, created works of tragedy that have won international recognition. He is described as one of the most ambitious playwrights since the period of the Greek tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides on one hand and the Elizabethan dramatists on the other.

In his intentional efforts to revive tragedy on the modern stage, O'Neill introduced the philosophies of realism, naturalism and expressionism to the American stage as modern devices to express his comprehensive interest in serious drama and to present the type of plays capable of drawing our attention as modern tragedies. On the other hand, he also adapted and reworked a few Greek tragedies, presenting his powerful adaptations with modern psychological insights, trying to dig deep into the essence of the mystery of human behaviour. It is the subconscious roots of this behaviour that interests O'Neill, which he sees as the root that leads man to a wretched struggle with external as well as internal forces, to find a way out to his crisis.

The choice of Eugene O'Neill arises from a consideration that he is recognized as a great American artist whose vision of life was essentially tragic. He appears to have developed an instinctive perception of what a modern tragedy should be. Most of O'Neill's plays are powerful tragedies though they are not tragedies in the Aristotelian sense. Their themes and subject matter may have certain features in common with those of his predecessors but their forms and interpretations are different. They are essentially modern tragedies which deal with contemporary problems that are concerned with human desires and beliefs. O'Neill stated: "The playwright must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it, the failure of science and materialism."[2]

Tragedy as a concept has evolved through different phases, in each of which it has acquired certain features and characteristics. Shakespeare was a prominent milestone in English theatre with tragic plays that still considered the best. On the other hand, Eugene O'Neill is considered to be the first playwright who aimed to revive tragedy on the modern American stage. O'Neill's generation and modern playwrights, especially American, follow the same thematic way he adopts to create tragedies that are concerned with secular and social problems. The modern tragic hero has features quite distinct and different from the hero of the classical tragedy. These features distinguished the modern hero who came to be looked upon as a type of anti-hero, especially in O'Neill's tragedies.

Modern theatre is the field where new trends and philosophies of literature mostly found fresh ground for the application of their beliefs and ideas. The application of these ideas actually help the audience and readers understand their real crisis and problems in the light of the rapid change in beliefs and behaviours.

The book aims to provide the reader with an overview of the characteristics of tragedy from the time of the Greek and British plays where it assumes new interpretations and reasons of being, with special emphasis upon this new concept of tragedy in selected plays of Eugene O'Neill as a forerunner in modern American drama. It also tries to answer certain questions about the differences that tragedy shows in each period and analyses O'Neill's plays as modern tragedies. The book also tries to identify the reasons why O'Neill presents such a new type of tragedy through the protagonists' plights in depth. O'Neill presents heroes who can achieve nothing in life and sometimes, they come face to face with death in order to draw the attention of people to their being. Moreover, the study attempts to help the reader understand and appreciate the focus of Eugene O'Neill's tragic plays which are concerned with people we can find among us. Being modern, the tragedy

lies in man's awareness of his own plight and in his consciousness of the futility of struggling against his own nature and circumstances that cripple his ambitions and desires.

End notes

1. Richard Sewell, The Vision of Tragedy, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1959) p. 5.

2. http://americantheatrefrog.com/oneill.html

CHAPTER ONE:

Greek Tragedy

Chapter One: Greek tragedy

The concept of tragedy is dealt with in terms of its early origins and its development. This chapter is divided into two sections: ancient Greek tragedy and Elizabethan tragedy. Accordingly, each section starts with a historical background about the Greek and Elizabethan eras in which tragedy started\ developed as a genre. This historical information paves the way for the reader to know the importance of each era to the development of the concept of tragedy. As Aristotle is considered a forerunner in shaping the principles of tragedy in his *Poetics*, this chapter, structurally and thematically, deals with the terms and criteria of Aristotle's definition that has been a framework of reference for all later criticism ever since. Emphasis is paid to the structural and thematic approaches that shed light on the early Greek tragedies – namely, the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; and also of the Elizabethan tragedy, namely the plays of Thomas Kyd, Christopher Marlowe and most importantly Shakespeare for his tragedies set benchmarks in drama for all times.

The chapter ends with the commonwealth when the Puritans closed the theatres in 1642. Even then, the quality of tragedy of the Jacobean dramatists, those whose works flourished during the reign of James I, was perceived as a decline if the best of the Shakespearean tragedies are taken as a standard. After that John Milton, John Dryden and Shelly tried to revive tragedy but it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, with the plays of Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg that something of the vision returned to inspire the tragic theatre.

Historical background

In recent years, several European and American writers have been inspired by the ancient Greek classics to produce works close in form and spirit to the classics, interpreting Greek myths in the light of contemporary thought. Actually, few works of the ancient Greek literature survive but they remain important due to their supreme quality and impact upon later literary works.

As we know, ancient Greek literature falls into three periods; the early or pre classical literature (to the end of the sixth century BC), the Attic classical literature (the fifth and the fourth centuries), and the decadent or Hellenistic and Greco-Roman literature (the third century BC onward). The early period begins with Homer when epic poetry flourished; the original epic was a genre which was intended to be sung and recited. Its subject was the myth that was a mixture of historical events and primitive religious speculation.[1] Thus, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are considered to represent the beginning of Greek literature, as well as the base of later tragedies that intricately connected with religious rites. Inspired by the poetry of Homer during the Attic period, poetry became the chief medium of literary art. The name Attic came from the dialect used by the Ionian who were distinguished and gifted among the main races of the ancient Greek i.e. the Aeolian and the Dorian.[2] The Attic Age presented the three most notable figures of the classical tragedy namely: Aeschylus (525-456 BC), Sophocles (496-406 BC) and Euripides (480-406 BC). The third period started when Greece was subjected to Rome. At that time, Greek writers were conscious of belonging to a world of which Rome was the centre.

Tragedy, as a branch of drama, began in Greece during the fifth century B.C. Allardyce Nicoll's *World Drama* says that Egypt may have provided an example of tragedy in the second or third millennium B.C., but the earliest texts are from Athens.[3]

The term 'Tragedy' is used today to describe any sort of disaster or misfortune, but more precisely, it refers to a work of art that examines seriously questions concerning the role of man in the universe. The ancient Attic playwrights first used the word to describe a specific kind of play, which was presented at festivals in Greece. The word tragedy is derived from Greek 'tragoidia' which is often translated into English as a 'goat-song'. It may be interpreted in several ways: a goat was sacrificed when the dithyrambs were sung; a goat might be the prize for the best song; or the goat was the symbol of Dionysus the Greek god of fertility. Sponsored and directed by the local governments for about three or four days, these plays were attended by the entire community.[4]

The atmosphere was more like that of a religious ceremony than entertainment. There were altars to the gods and the subjects of the tragedies were the misfortunes of the heroes of legends, religious myth and history. C.E. Vaughan's words can be best considered to give an image of the Attic theatre: "The eyes of all fixed upon a stage and beneath it an altar round which the chorus either stands, or moves in stately measures, doing honour to Dionysus (the god of poetry, wine, ecstatic excitement and fertility), taking part in the dramatic movement of the tragedy, invoking divine and human justice upon the deeds or words of those destinies that are at stake before the eye." [5]

For his part, Martin P. Nilsson points out that the form and style of ancient Greek tragedy was dictated by its ritual origins and performance in great dramatic competitions of the spring and winter religious festivals of Dionysus.[6] Rebecca Bushnell states that the parts of Greek tragedy were shared by the actors and the chorus, the former speaking and the latter singing. This structure marks tragedy's relationship to older forms of ritual choral song, and especially the dithyramb, a choral hymn in honour of Dionysus sung by fifty men or boys.[7]

In the first half of the sixth century B.C., the poet Arion had tried to organize the rites into a form of order and system. The dithyramb was transformed from the impromptu song or crude improvisation into a full choice hymn with musical gestures. Arion also "fixed the number of the dancers and singers at fifty and introduced some spoken verses amidst the choral odes." [8]

The dithyramb continued and its range was widened. The subjects chosen we re not only from the legends of Dionysus but also from the rich Greek mythology. The pioneer in this phase was Thespis (the father of Greek tragedy) who was born in the sixth century in Icaria which was an important centre of the worship of Dionysus. Thespis' greatest innovation was the introduction of an actor who was different from the leader or conductor of the chorus. He played the roles of gods and kings with different masks. It was then that a drama of action, not narration, was staged for the first time in the history of drama. The masks, as MacGowan and Melnitz remark, are a survival of the old religious services in which the human being must not be himself, but change his face and take the mask of a hero or a god.[9] The masks on which a fixed expression is painted or carved are used to fix the dominating trait of any character in the mind of the audience.

Tragedy became more and more popular, and many tragic playwrights submitted a number of plays at the annual exhibition. Choerilus, Pratinas and Phrynichus stood among those who followed the steps of Thespis but they did not make any remarkable contributions. It was with the appearance of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides that Greek tragedy began to offer immortal works of art. Thespis, as we have already mentioned, introduced the first actor. Aeschylus added a second and Sophocles a third. The tragic plays that were presented during the first half of the fifth century B.C. were elaborate and complicated works of art. They combined within themselves many variegated elements like rhythm in spoken

or recited poetry and vivid action. There was also music that accompanied the choral odes. In this sense Rebecca Bushnell states that "the structure of Greek tragedy is thus a powerful instrument, capable of manipulating mood, creating tension and modulating between intense personal action and lyric introspection."[10]

In Aeschylus' *Oresteia* (458 B.C.), Sophocles' *Antigone* (442 B.C.) and *Oedipus, the King* (430 B.C.) the action of the drama and the moral experience of the characters are wholly united to the metric form. Hence, Greek tragedy is sung, danced and declaimed; prose has no place in it.[11] The tragic Greek playwrights made full use of these theatrical devices in their plays in addition to the rich Greek literary and dramatic tradition that we know chiefly through Homer's masterpieces the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Werner Jaeger points out that "tragedy owes both its traditional material and ethical educational spirit to Homeric epic, not to its own Dionysian origin."[12] Aeschylus himself asserts that his plays were all "slices from the banquet of Homer."[13]

Aeschylus' *The Suppliant Women* represents in all essentials, as Kitto points out, a "single actor drama up to the point when Danaus is able to do something useful by going into Argos to ask for help of its king, Pelasgus." This drama is considered close to the form of its origin the dithyramb, because the action is kept to the minimum and the chorus, the daughters of Danaus, became a collective protagonist. Pelasgus is the only dramatic force that stands in opposition to the chorus. He has to decide between two equally decisive and at the same time dangerous courses of action; either to forsake the suppliant women, thus incurring the wrath of the gods or to fight the Egyptian suitors who came in pursuance of the women.

Nevertheless, at the hand of Aeschylus, we come to that form of Greek drama whose outward mark is the use of two actors and the chorus. It seems that Aeschylus had no inten-

tion of using the second actor as antagonist to the first one, thereby turning the tragedy into a contest between the two as is the case in Sophoclean tragedy. This comes only after the appearance of the third actor and is quite foreign to the tragic thinking of Aeschylus. As a matter of fact, the essence of old or Aeschylean tragedy was the solitary hero facing his own destiny or playing out an inner drama of his own soul, like Pelasgus in *The Suppliant Women*. It was the insertion of the second actor that enabled the plot to move in action as well as in tension. Instead of watching Pelasgus caught inextricably in his tragic dilemma, the spectators watch the interaction between the moving situation and the hero. In *Seven against Thebes* (467 B.C.) there is no sudden pit opening beneath Eteocles, but a horror growing gradually before the audience as he is offered the chance to think carefully before making up his mind. This means that, unlike the almost undifferentiated Man who was the hero of the pure lyrical tragedy, the moving plot of Aeschylus' tragedy was designed to display and test moral character, and to give room for moral choice and its outcomes.[14]

The tragic situation in the plays of Sophocles represents an interlocking of certain complex circumstances and personalities, which eventually make a pattern that cannot be avoided. Moreover, the Sophoclean tragic hero is not a single minded man; he is a complex figure who must be seen from more than one point of view. Hence, the insertion of the third actor is to illuminate the character from several points of view. This technical innovation, as Kitto remarks, brought with it "a high degree of naturalism, more detailed character drawing and more skillful use of dialogue."[15] Oedipus, as a tragic hero, is better understood if one watches how he treats / behaves towards a group of people and how these people in return treat him. This way of handling the tragic plays became later on the basis for western and American drama as well.

Structural approach

The most appropriate approach to the study of the structure of tragedy is to begin with Aristotle's famous and much quoted definition of tragedy which is based on a careful examination of the works of the three tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides), with special emphasis on Sophocles.

Tragedy, Aristotle states in definite terms is"... a representation of an action that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of a variety of artistic devices...presented in the form of action, not narration, by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions."[16] Furthermore, Aristotle finds in tragedy six essential parts: plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song (or musical lyrical element) provided by the chorus. Since traditionally tragedy begins with the chorus Nietzsche states that "tragedy arose out of the tragic chorus and was, to begin, nothing but chorus."[17] It seems appropriate to pick up this last element as a first step in the discussion. There is a general agreement among scholars and researchers that the chorus was the central nucleus and the original core out of which tragedy had developed. To its association with gods, tragedy owed its presentation of the chorus, who continued to express sentiments proper to the religious consciousness. A. Nicoll stresses the importance of focusing on the role of the chorus when reading Greek drama, for the "modifications introduced in its theatrical function provide a kind of record of the development of the tragic concept from the beginning in Aeschylus to the end of Euripides."[18]

Aristotle points out that the chorus should be regarded as "one of the actors" and "part of the whole and should assume a share in the action, as happens in Sophocles but not in Euripides."[19] This significant statement sheds light on two aspects regarding the position of the chorus: its significance as a theatrical devise and the various changes it underwent. The

members of the chorus perform several tasks. They serve as interested commentators upon the action. Sometimes, they function as a background of public opinion against which the situation of the particular play is projected. The choric songs are more than mere music. Sometimes, they are used to sound the 'leit- motif' of the play.

The death of Agamemnon in the play of that name by Aeschylus is the direct result, the chorus tells us, of the criminal sacrifice of his daughter Iphigenia and the indirect result of evil deeds in the history of the house of Arteus, whose poison taints the third and fourth generations. Thus, we are shown the invisible background of the action and of human life, and hear the echoes of the unseen spiritual forces that direct and create the tragic events on the stage.

In general, the chorus often performs the task of "communicating to us a body of common thought and a feeling without which the dialogue would be bleak and limited"[20] At the hand of Sophocles, the chorus has a significant position as Bowra sums up the usage of the chorus and its position in his plays. He writes that Sophocles' chorus "is usually an actor like the other actors, subject to error and to partial or limited understanding. It passes judgment and philosophizes, but most of its conclusions are no more valid for a final view of the play than are those of any other character."[21] Thus, in making the chorus one of the actors, Sophocles was true to the Aristotelian doctrine. What is certain in plays like *Oedipus, the King* and *Ajax* is that the chorus behaves as a person not as a 'machine'. It was his belief that there was a "canon that the chorus comments, in order, on those things of importance which have happened since it last spoke." [22]

As for Euripides, the chorus is no more than a convention that was inherited from the past theatrical practices and adapted for his own purposes. However, Euripides' method, in dealing with the chorus, tends towards making it, as Mac-

Gowan states, an "interlude entertainment" whose statements and utterances do not contribute directly to the development of the plot. In fact, Euripides in his later tragedies did make the chorus a body of 'ideal spectators'. This is evident in *The Troades* (415 BC), *Hecuba* (425 BC). In these plays, the chorus is far from being a co-actor; it takes no notice of the action and virtually becomes the ideal spectator i.e. the chorus does not obey the Aristotelian dramatic canons.

As for the plot, Aristotle states that it is the most essential element in a tragedy: "Its life-blood...representation of men, out of action and life, of happiness and unhappiness [which] are bound with the action."[23] Aristotle makes two observations about the plot of tragedy: firstly, it must be of certain structure. Secondly, that it should be "complete and whole". A complete action is that which has a beginning, middle and end. Therefore, a well-constructed plot must neither begin nor end in a haphazard way, but should follow a logical pattern of a strict law of causality. Sophocles' *Oedipus, the King* is near perfect in plot construction, Aristotle concludes. However, he considers Euripides' tragic plot the worst in respect to construction. He also points out that the structure of tragedy at its best should be complex and include "peripeteia" and "anagnorisis" i.e. reversal of circumstances and sudden discovery or awareness of the vital truth.

Moreover, in constructing their tragic plots, the dramatists, Aristotle recommends, should avoid certain stories: firstly, the presentation of an exceedingly good man passing from prosperity to misery (for this would inspire neither fear nor pity; it is merely shocking). Secondly, an evil man also should not be shown progressing from misery to prosperity. This, Aristotle considers the most untragic of all plots, for it has none of the requisites of tragedy. Thirdly, an utterly worthless man should not be seen falling from prosperity into misery for such a course of action is neither moving nor moral.

The type of plot, which is the best, in Aristotle's point of view, is the one that shows "a sort of man who is conspicuous for virtue and justice, and whose fall into misery is not due to vice or depravity, but rather to some error, a man who enjoys prosperity and a high reputation like Oedipus."[24]

Since we are discussing structure, it is appropriate to examine the various parts into which a typical Greek tragedy is to be divided. They are: prologue, parodos, episode, stasimon exode, and choral song. The prologue is the opening scene of the play. In general, it is devoted mainly to exposition in which the playwright acquaints the audience with the necessary information concerning the dramatic situation of the play. Portrayal of characters may also be included in the prologue and the action of the play may be initiated in this part. The prologue is followed by the Parodos or the first entrance hymn by the chorus. In general, the first choral lyric, Harsh points out, may often be termed the emotional exposition of the play for it normally gives further expositional background and strikes the proper emotional tone. As soon as the opening choral song has been completed, there comes the first episode. This is an exact counterpart of the act or scene in a modern play. This episode is usually followed by the stasimon, another complete choral song after which another episode occurs.[25] Thus, the choral songs interrupt the action and mark off the tragedy into "chapters" of action. The number of these 'Chapters' or 'Acts' varies from play to play. *Oedipus, the King* can be roughly divided into six acts: the prologue, four episodes, and the exode or final catastrophe.[26] As for Aeschylus, most of his plays have five acts. Eventually, it becomes customary to limit the number to five acts. Here we find the origin of the later dramatic rule of five acts in plot construction.

At the end of a Greek tragedy, especially that of Euripides, a divinity may appear, a "deus ex machina." Aristotle expresses his disapproval of Euripides' employment of this mechanical device. He believes that since the dramatist "must always aim

at an inevitable or probable order of events... the ending too, of his plot, must arise naturally out of the plot itself and not, as in *Medea* by external contrivance."[27] Although Euripides' usage of "deus ex machina" has been frequently criticized as a dramatic defect in the sense that he resorted to it to get himself out of the difficulties into which the development of the plot has led him, this is not actually the case in his plays. In fact, the main purpose behind using it was for dramatic effect. The appearance of an Athena in shining armor above the roof of the temple in *Iphigenia among the Taurians* should have been quite striking. Thus, it was to produce these startling theatrical effects that the playwright decided to use this theatrical device.[28]

Another important dramatic ingredient, which is noteworthy, is the concluding part of the tragic play or the epilogue. At the end of most of Greek tragedies, the chorus sings a short song in which a brief or a summary review of what had happened is narrated or sometimes the chorus may tell us what the playwright really thinks about his play.[29] On the other hand, in presenting his tragic plots, the Greek dramatist is limited by two important aspects: time and action. Greek tragedy, according to Aristotle endeavours to keep as far as possible "within a single circuit of the sun, or something near that."[30]

The most moving things, Aristotle observes, are "peripeteia and anagnorisis". Usually these terms are interpreted as "reversal of fortune" and "recognition" and are closely connected with the concept of "hamartia" which means a specific error which a man makes or commits. *Oedipus, the King* again is his typical example. The messenger who comes to cheer Oedipus and relieve him of his fear about his mother does the very opposite by revealing Oedipus' true identity. "He [Oedipus] suffers a reversal of fortune; he comes to recognize his terrible change of fortune; and he is left at the end in utter abjection."[31] Lucas remarks that the deepest and most effective tragedy

occurs not when men are struck down by the blow of chance or fate, nor yet when they are destroyed by their enemies, but when their destruction is the work of those who wish them good or of their own unwitting hands. Accordingly, the most poignant tragedy of human life is the work of human blindness – the tragedy of 'error'. This means that in the course of the action, the protagonist recognizes the truth of a situation, discovers another character's identity or a realization about his relationship with that person. This sudden acquisition of knowledge or insight by the hero, Lucas believes, arouses the desired intense emotional reaction in the spectators, as when Oedipus finds out his true parentage and realizes what crimes he has been responsible for.[32] Moreover, Drakakis and Liebler point out the feature of effective and real tragedy when a protagonist is inserted in a critical situation to make one of two difficult choices; between options which seem to be equally right to him. Thus, Hamartia is understood not as an optional and avoidable 'error' resulting from some inadequacy or 'flaw' in the character of the protagonist but as something that happens in consequence of the complex situation represented in the drama. [33]

Thematic approach

Greek tragedies often raise questions about man's existence, such as his position in the scheme of things and the reasons behind his suffering. Accordingly, the theme of the position of man in the universe, as Jaeger states, is the classical theme not only of the Greek tragic dramas, but also of the Homeric epics and Greek philosophy as well. The context in which this theme is presented is essentially religious: man's relationship with gods.

Gods play an important role in man's life. They are the protectors of divine laws as well as civic order. To deny the existence of a deity or to feel superior to it was to risk reprisals from the deity or from other mortals. Hence, the underlying question of all Greek tragedies concerns the laws and standards by which gods let man live. To this question, tragedies never yield definite answers. The only result in each drama is one's awareness of the unreliable and deceptive nature of human reason, the realization that the true shape of things cannot always be judged by their surface appearance, and the experience that man's view and insight can be clouded over by demonic forces. In short, the tragic conflict reflects the experience of the nothingness of man before gods.[34] No true understanding of the above-mentioned ideas can be achieved without a proper understanding of the nature of Greek religion. It is a well-known fact that Greek religion does not represent a fixed body of doctrine; rather it is based on rites and cults. The Greek had no sacred book, and the concepts regarding the nature of the gods and man's relation with them are mainly derived from mythology. Moreover, the Greek gods adopt an anthropomorphic human shape and human nature though enormous differences exist between man and gods.[35]

Each one of the three Greek tragedians has his viewpoint about man-god relationship. While Aeschylus, in his plays, is concerned with justifying the ways of god to man, Sophocles is mainly concerned with the question of human beings who live in a world in which there are intrinsic conflicts, such as that between a transcendent moral or metaphysical order and natural human desire.[36] Gods in Euripides' plays are destructive forces, irrational, and unreasonable. In fact, Euripides denies the existence and the power of gods, but at the same time he presents gods as real and powerful sources in his plays.[37]

The Greeks believe that Man's attempt to cross the barrier in thought or action leads eventually to his punishment by gods. The divine justice operates, in Leech's words, like an "av-

alanche" or an "echo in an enclosed space" and once the evil act is committed, it will bring consequences that are for more evil than the original act: there will be a train of evil acts. We may, therefore, easily understand why the theme or the motive of revenge is so common in Greek tragedy: the blood feud is the most obvious example of the kind of situation in which wrong inevitably leads to wrong; Aeschylus' trilogy *Oresteia*, Sophocles' *Electra,* and Euripides' *Medea* deal with this theme.

Divine punishment results in human suffering. The terrors of human destiny and suffering are often at the centre of the tragedian's concern. This problem again must be viewed within the context of the meaning of man's existence. Although in Aeschylus' dramas, evil is inescapable and suffering is inevitable, these dramas do confirm the fact that suffering could be a source of knowledge for the tragic hero about himself, his fellows and the conditions of his existence. In fact, Aeschylus believes that the highest knowledge could be attained only through suffering. All his tragedies are based upon that "mighty spiritual unity of suffering and knowledge." [38]

As for Sophocles, the central idea of his tragedies is that through suffering, man learns to be modest before the gods. He tries to find the meaning of human existence through tragic self-knowledge. His characters are constantly acquiring knowledge about themselves in relation to gods. This is obvious with Ajax, Creon, Oedipus and Philoctetes. This means that the Greeks have a consistent view of human life as dependent on gods for everything that matters. Human life, as the Greeks view it, is a reflection or a copy of the divine reality.

As far as this matter is concerned with Euripides, he seems to have serious doubts about the reliability of the cosmic laws and divine justice in connection with moral affairs. He makes his characters' tragic fates stem almost entirely from their own flawed nature and uncontrolled passions. So chance, disorder and human irrationality frequently result, in Euripides'

tragedies, not in an eventual reconciliation or moral resolution but in apparently meaningless suffering that is looked upon with indifference by the gods, as in the case with Pentheus in *The Bacchae* or Hippolytus in the play of that name. Thus, man is not free. He cannot determine the pattern of events, but is frequently responsible either for the initiation of the evil act or for the release of evil forces latent in a situation.

These ideas of evil, divine wrath and suffering are closely connected with the concept of sin. Sin takes many forms in Greek tragedy such as neglect of gods, the vainglorious overconfidence man expresses in his words or deeds, the refusal to bury the dead, outrage to one's parents, breaking of oaths, double dealing, and so on. Hubris is one of the main aspects of sin. It is always used in a moral sense, meaning a violation of some divine or human law. Law here means that which is laid down or established; it was the course of nature, the custom of society, and the usages of mankind. Jupiter, with cooperation of the other gods, is the author and executor of these laws; he is their guardian and avenger.

Accordingly, all laws, human and divine alike, are clothed with divine authority and violations of them are sins in the sight of the gods. One of these gods, who is responsible for blinding man's judgment, is Ate. Ate is considered the external source of folly, madness and blindness. He/she also represents the consequences of the blindness of man; that is his ruin and defeat. In this sense, Ate is sin and suffering, folly and calamity.[39] The Greek tragic plays suggest out of Ate a more appropriate term for expressing the indignation of both men and gods towards those who commit deeds forbidden by the established laws. It is "Nemesis", which in Greek mythology is:

...the goddess of divine retributive justice or vengeance..., when an evil act brings about its own punishment and a tragic poetic justice prevails. The term is also applied to both an agent and an act of merited punishment. It thus often become synonymous with Fate, although at least a latent sense of justice is almost always associated with the term.[40]

This means that nemesis is a natural opposition to all that hubris represents. Aeschylus is considered the strongest exponent of this idea. He sees nemesis as a fundamental moral law and part of the divine governance of the world. Sophocles uses it to illustrate the deep underlying moral laws that govern human life. While Euripides uses it as an artistic device to inspire fear and pity.

Another general form of misdeed in Greek tragedies was that of sacrilege. This takes place when immoral and ignorant men desecrate sacred objects or places that belong to gods proper. Agamemnon in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* does that when he walks on the purple carpet at the end of which he suffers his tragic death at the hand of his wife, Clytemnestra. In *Antigone*, Creon's refusal to give the dead Polynieces a proper burial, due to the latter's treachery, is the cause of the tragic conflict between him and Antigone, Polynieces' sister. Proper burial of the dead was a prerequisite to the soul's entrance into the underworld. It was regarded as a prime duty upon the closest surviving relatives; in this case Antigone. Denial of such burial was a sacrilege. [41]

The art of drama developed over the years, and in the Medieval Age, various dramatic forms were presented. The most important of these were Mystery and Morality plays which dealt with the loftiest of subjects in simple but often powerful eloquence. The rise of mysteries can fruitfully be related to a number of traditional, ritualistic, festive and processional activities.[42] The Mystery or Scriptural play is a medieval reli-

gious play, based on Biblical history. It originated in the Liturgy of the church and developed from the liturgical dramas into the great cyclic plays.

As for the Morality play, it was a dramatized allegory in which the abstract virtues and vices (like Mercy, Conscience, Evil, Shame etc.) appear in a personified form. The good and the bad usually engaged in a struggle for the soul of a human being. For the Middle Ages, 'tragedy' was simply "a story which ended unhappily, offering a warning that, if one were not careful, a final unhappiness would be one's own lot too."[43] In a play like *Everyman* (anon. 1500), the theme is the saving of a human being's soul and the central figure represents humanity in general.

It is noteworthy that the precarious position of man in high state formed the basis for the notion of tragedy in the Renaissance era. This notion owed much to the Latin tragedies of Seneca, which portray the Roman Goddess Fortuna turning her wheel, and thereby bringing low those that were high. This was also the tragic vision of the narrative tales in Boccaccio's *Falls of Illustrative Men*, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Monk's Tale* in the *Canterbury Tales* (1385) and Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*. However, while Chaucer and Lydgate had shown how pride, ambition and other worldly sins greased the wheel of fortune, thus leading to a disastrous outcome, the more typical Elizabethan emphasis upon moral responsibility is first reflected in *Mirror for Magistrates* (1559). This was a collection of English poems from the Tudor period by various authors which retell the lives and the tragic ends of various historical figures. Here the world of the mighty is made insecure not by the blind operations of an external force, but by their own unrestrained lusts or neglect of true allegiance. The Elizabethan tragic dramatists inherit this precise emphasis on the falls of famous men. However, instead of concentrating on the outcome of the tragic action as a just punishment of a sinful man, they show a new interest in the nature and actual working of the tragedy.

CHAPTER TWO:

Elizabethan Tragedy

Chapter Two: Elizabethan tragedy

Historical background

A considerable number of critics believe that modern drama came into being and also developed rapidly and brilliantly during the Elizabethan age; therefore, the Elizabethan era is considered as the golden age of English drama. The Elizabethan were attracted and enthused by the theatre, which was open to all. As there were neither newspapers nor novels to be read, the theatre was "the only source of intellectual pleasure." [44]

When the Elizabethan theatre flowered in the 1580s, England was in the midst of an economic expansion and national awakening. This means that a wave of change confronts the Elizabethans on every conceivable level. As a matter of fact, the Elizabethan era was in most aspects an epoch of change, which affected the individual in his most basic conceptions. The introduction of new observations, material progress and metaphysical theories made man's traditional beliefs about his place in the universe uncertain.

The outcome of the emergence of these new trends in the Elizabethan age was the establishment of two important movements. The first one is in the field of literature and culture and the second is in religion and theology; namely, Renaissance and Reformation. The Elizabethan theatre which, as a social institution still resembles, as Weimann believes, a "laboratory in which the various elements of society were mixed and worked on," reflects these changes. [45]

The long beginning of the Elizabethan popular theatre, like that of the Greek, lay in religious ceremonies and private entertainment in the halls of the English castles. Moreover, the liturgical dramas, which had often been performed in the two greatest events of the Christian year, Christmas and Eas-

ter, helped to establish basic modes of dramatizing the material of sacred history. In fact, Elizabethan tragedy began with a fusion of medieval and classical elements. The high poetic spirit of the mid-sixteenth century began to turn the old medieval forms of morality and mystery plays to new uses and to look to the ancient plays, particularly the lurid tragedies of Seneca for models. The moralists used the plots of the earliest English dramas, which had been acted by members of the clergy in the church, as an example to reinforce the importance of observing Christian values and teachings.

In the religious festivals of the early church, an exchange between two groups of choristers or between a choir and a solo voice led to the idea of dialogue, just as it had in the development of Greek tragedy. Moreover, plays are acted at high speed, without the act and scene breaks we are used to. In addition to that, there is no scenery and very few props. [46] More and more of the Biblical stories are dramatized, much as the material of the Homeric epics that were used by the Greek Tragedians. Hence, cycles of plays are performed at various religious centers in England, depicting in consequences of short dramatic episodes the whole human history from the fall of Lucifer and the Creation to the Day of Judgment.

A number of factors help to formulate the tragic vision of the Elizabethans; the most important of which is their belief that man forms "the nodal point in the great chain of being." [47] This new emphasis on 'man' helps to turn the spotlight from God to man himself in the theatre. This makes the Elizabethan drama, unlike the Greek, a secular one, interested mainly in man-man relationship instead of God-man relationship. [48]

As for the relationship between the individual and the social order, the Elizabethans staunchly believe in the correspondence between the body politic and the macrocosm where the order of the state equals that of the macrocosm or

the universe, the king that of the sun, the social classes the hierarchies of the "Great Chain of Being" and so forth. Casca in *Julius Caesar* thinks that the tempest and the angry winds are reflections of either a civil war that has started in heaven, or else the world, behaving too rudely to the gods, has provoked them to send down destruction.

I have seen tempests when the scolding winds,

Have riv'd the knotty oaks, and I have seen

Th' ambitious ocean swell, and rage, and foam,

To be exalted with the threat'ning clouds,

.....

Either there is a civil strife in heaven,

Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,

Incenses them to send destruction. (I, III)

The Elizabethan tragedies, like their antecedents, are dramatic homilies. Their plots are used as exempla to deliver a moral lesson, and this emphasis on the moral aspects determines their formal characteristics as well as their predilection for certain themes. Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton's *Gorboduc* (1562) is the first of these tragedies. Indeed, Gorboduc's division of his kingdom and the subsequent disorder invites comparison with Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Furthermore, the play is interesting, first as an attempt at native tragedy for it displays a "healthy independence and a native power of invention," [49] and second because it is written in blank verse, the unrhymed ten syllable line which was to become the basis of almost all verse drama in England.[50]

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1589) continued the tradition of 'Tragedy of Blood' with some more sophistication

than *Gorboduc* but even more blood-letting. Following the Senecan tragic features, this play was considered the pattern for English revenge tragedy. It had a significant after-effect in its own time, most famously in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. [51]

It seems suitable at this stage of our discussion to examine the influence that Seneca exerts on the evolution of the Elizabethan tragedy. Seneca (4BC - 65AD) is largely responsible for the revival of the Greek tragic tradition for he wrote at least nine tragedies, most of them adaptations of the tragedies of Euripides. In general, Seneca's plays are marked by their conventional five act division, their use of chorus to comment on the action, the presence of ghosts, the cruel tyrant, the faithful male servant and the female confidant, the presentation of violence of the theme through long narrative reports as a substitute for stage action, the employment of sensational themes drawn from Greek mythology, involving much use of blood and lust connected with unnatural crimes such as adultery, incest, infanticide, a highly rhetorical style marked by hyperbolic expressions, detailed descriptions, and 'stichomythia' (short lines of counterpoised dialogue) and finally, lack of careful character delineation but much use of introspection and soliloquy. [52]

The other Elizabethan dramatist whose plays show the influence of Seneca is Christopher Marlowe (1564 - 1593). Kyd and Marlowe's plays which combined native English tragic tradition with modified Senecan techniques led directly towards the emergence of the typical Elizabethan tragedy. Both dramatists were received by their contemporaries as great originals, inaugurating a new phase of Elizabethan tragedy. Although they reflect some of the Senecan traits in their plays, they do their best to create something new in response to the requirements of the popular Elizabethan stage. As Palmer states, they transform the drama by their invention of the ironic method and by their introduction of a plot-structure in which the final catastrophe is derived from the inner logic

of character and situation.[53] The other classical figure whose writings exert a profound impact on various aspects of the Elizabethan age is the Italian political theorist Niccolo Machiavelli. Machiavelli's political codes, which he expounded in *The Prince*, were particularly relevant to the Elizabethans as their country suffered from successive internal strife and religious dispute. Italy witnessed the same insecure conditions during the period in which Machiavelli lived. To varying degrees, his dictum that the "end justifies the means" was followed rigorously by the Italian and the English Monarchs alike.[54] As for the tragic dramatists, Machiavellianism gives rise to a new type of tragedy: the tragedy of the hero villain in which the protagonist is blatantly evil, as in Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. To sum up, there is an agreement among modern studies which have shown that the Elizabethan theatre retained many ties with the traditions of the Greek, Latin and the Middle ages as well.

Structural approach

Since the Elizabethan dramatists began on a level of close structural and thematic imitation of the classical writers of Greek and Latin, it is appropriate to begin with a discussion of the extent to which the Elizabethan dramatists adhere to the inherited dramatic traditions of the classical writers in constructing their plays. To begin with, one can say that while Aristotle's *Poetics* does not provide rigid norms for tragedy in England, it does influence the conception of the genre. Particularly important are the Aristotelian principles that the tragic fall should be caused by some error or moral weakness in the characters of the protagonists; that the plot should involve a fall from eminent success into misery marked by reversal and discoveries; that the characters should be persons of high state, and that tragedy should evoke pity and fear in the viewers, working at last to achieve a purgation or cathar-

sis of these emotions. Some of Shakespeare's great tragedies like *Othello* (1604) and *King Lear* (1606) can be analyzed in such terms, though like most other Elizabethan tragedies, they are far from being classical in their use of subplots and comic relief, their violation of the unities of time and place and their sheer expansiveness.

It is noteworthy that Aristotle's definition of tragedy is partly similar to A. C. Bradley's famous interpretation of Shakespearean tragedy. Though it is confined to the analysis of Shakespearean tragedy, Bradley's discussion could be extended to include the works of other Elizabethan tragic dramatists such as Kyd and Marlowe. In the beginning of his analysis, Bradley maintains that tragedy is a story of human action leading to exceptional calamity and ending with the death of a man of a high estate.[55] Shakespearean tragedies often present a conflict which terminates in a catastrophe. This conflict may be divided according to Bradley, into three parts.

The first part is to introduce us into the life and position of persons and their relations to one another, and to leave us keenly interested in the question as to what will come out of this condition of things. The second part deals with the definite beginning, the growth, and the vicissitude of the conflict, i.e. one notices a constant alteration of rises and falls in the tension or emotional pitch of the work; and a regular sequence of more or less exciting sections. As audiences, we can only hope that something will happen that helps to avert the disaster.

The most critical point in the series of events to be presented between the first act and the last one is the climax or the turning point. This crisis, as a rule, comes somewhere near the middle of what seems to be the third of five acts.[56] This point in the development of the plot corresponds roughly to the turning of the wheel of fortune; the outcome of which is the division of the structure into five acts instead of three. [57]

These parts show firstly, a situation not yet one of conflict; secondly, the rise and the development of the conflict; thirdly, the crisis which is followed by the fourth part, the decline of one of the two forces and the final part, the catastrophe. *Julius Caesar* is an excellent example here. The first half of the play shows Brutus rising, reaching his height in Act III, Sc. I with the assassination of Caesar. However, later in the same scene, Brutus gives Mark Antony permission to speak at Caesar's funeral and thus he sets in motion his own downfall, which occupies the second half of the play.

In most of Marlowe's plays, critics notice a rather different structural pattern. It has been said that *Tamburlaine I* (1587) and *Dr. Faustus* (1588) have a beginning and end but no middle point in the action. Both plays suffer a structural defect for both represent a series of episodes the aim of which is the definition of the central figure. "His plots were weak in construction, being just handfuls of heterogeneous scenes loosely joined together." [58] Helen Gardner argues that Macbeth's killing of Duncan, as an example, provides Shakespeare with what Marlowe found so difficult to construct: a proper middle point to both plays. [59] On the other hand, Bradbrook suggests that the plot of both Marlowe's tragedies might be called 'cumulative'. [60] In this kind of plot, the same type of incidents are repeated again and again, up to the catastrophe.

The final section of tragedy shows the issue of the conflict in a catastrophe. The tragic plays of Shakespeare usually end in the death not only of the central figure but a considerable number of persons, innocent and guilty alike. Polonius, Ophelia, Desdemona, Macduff's wife and children, and Coredelia die for no guilt of their own. C.S. Lewis remarks that the Elizabethan dramatist is preoccupied with various sorts of death. The tragic heroes almost always think of death. Lewis believes that death almost constitutes the frame of the tragic picture presented on the stage. For Brutus and Othello, suicide in the high tragic manner is escape and climax; for Lear, death is

deliverance; for Romeo and Antony, a poignant loss. For all of them, as for their writer, death is the end.[61] John Bayley's analysis of the nature of death in Shakespeare's tragedies is very much part of life, to be lived through and endured as life itself is. He adds that Elizabethan tragic decorum regards death as a ceremony in which all the players participate and are united into a whole. [62]

The discussion of the plot must eventually lead to the delineation of the tragic character whose actions form the main cause of the tragedy. Bradley states that "the tragic hero is usually a good man, certainly one who foresees the qualities of greatness or nobility; in short he is not mean or contemptible. Moreover, the tragic action is concerned always with persons of 'high degree', often kings or princes or members of great houses as in *Romeo and Juliet*. Bradley explains the reason behind Shakespeare's tendency to choose persons of high rank when he points out that "when the hero falls suddenly from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of contrast, of the powerlessness of man and the omnipotence perhaps the caprice of fortune or fate, which no tale of private life can possibly rival."[63] Moreover, as the plays show, the fate of the tragic character almost always affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire. In short, the tragic heroes in Shakespeare's tragedies are of exceptional nature and their sufferings and actions are of exceptional nature too.

However, this is not always the case in the Elizabethan theatre. The theatrical practices of Marlowe, as far as his tragic characters are concerned, run contrary to this dictum. Marlowe's heroes, except in *Edward II,* and *Dido, Queen of Carthage* are men of humble birth. Tamburlaine is a Scythian shepherd and Faustus is a scholar. However, like the other Elizabethan tragic heroes, both are representative of the Renaissance Humanism, which glorifies man and sees in him the human greatness and accomplishment which is the necessary foundation for the tragic heroes of the time.

Thus, the Renaissance interest in the human personality was an important factor in the establishment of the new tragedy of character. Unlike the Greek tragedy which is wholly religious in its nature, Elizabethan tragedy, except for few instances, is secular. The conflict is almost always between two persons or two groups. The plays of Shakespeare show his belief that man's character and his conduct are the source of his weal or woe. Craig Hardin argues that Shakespeare invented or perfected the tragedy of character and this is, perhaps, the greatest of his achievements. Shakespeare, he states, is often said to "have established the modern tragedy of character." [64]

Man's responsibility for shaping out his life is strongly connected to the question of whether man has an absolute 'free will'. Aristotle argues that a tragic destiny is precipitated by a 'tragic flaw' or an inner frailty in the personality of the tragic hero. In his plays, Shakespeare offers various viewpoints regarding this aspect. Cassius in *Julius Caesar* says "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves, that we are underlings" (I, II, 140-1) [65] In *King Lear*, Edmund ridicules a belief in fortune as the "foppery of the world" (I, II, 128). However, Hamlet in a comment on the nature of hamartia, is fatalistic when he broods on "the mole of nature", and the "one defect" that some men are born with, "where they are not guilty", and that brings them to disaster. (I, IV, 24-5)

Leech remarks that though the heroes of the Elizabethan tragedy 'seem' to enjoy a greater degree of free will than in Greek tragedy, Shakespeare and his contemporaries have gone out of their way to make the audience realize that the pattern is preordained for their characters too. [66] In some of his tragic plays, Shakespeare uses supernatural devices to indicate the course of events as in *Macbeth, Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*. In fact, the entangling events of these plays do suggest that there is only one line of conduct possible for the tragic heroes in the particular situations in which they find themselves. For them it is the doom in the character that de-

termines the end of the play. Hamlet must be killed because he, in this situation can have no other end. The same is true of Brutus, Othello, King Lear and Richard III. To quote A.C. Bradley, character is destiny.

The most important quality in Shakespeare's tragic heroes is their "unsuitability" to the action. As a matter of fact, their natures declare themselves through this unsuitability. As such they are often called "miscast" or "misfit". It is obvious, as Bayley remarks, that a man as sensitive and imaginative as Macbeth is not well suited to the tasks he sets himself to, and that Hamlet has not the temperament for an effective avenger. Moreover, the part of a romantic lover or of one who could love both wisely and well is not ideal for Othello who is black, middle-aged, and possessed of the strongest animal passions. [67]

In every case, as in the Greek plays, the destructive forces seem to combine inner inadequacies or evil, such as Lear's temper or Macbeth's ambition, with external pressures such as Lear's tiger daughters, the Witches in *Macbeth* or Lady Macbeth's importunity. Once the destructive course is set going, these forces operate with what the Greeks called 'Moira' or 'Fate'.

It is noteworthy that the Elizabethan tragic plays, unlike the Greek, are not interested in women as tragic characters. Theirs was a male-dominated tragic world. Shakespeare's tragic female characters are often characterized by submissiveness, weakness and lack of initiative. Lady Macbeth, in G.B. Harrison's words, is the real cause and the agent of Macbeth's tragedy, but once her ambition is achieved, she weakens and declines.[68]

The Elizabethan dramatists are also famous for inserting comic elements in their tragic plays, turning them in Philip Sidney's words, into 'mongrel tragic-comedies.' Consequently, the Renaissance stage saw both the clown and king shar-

ing in the effect and meaning of a single play. "Many times (to make mirth) they make a clown companion with a king; in their grave counsels, they allow the advice of fools, yea, they use one order of speech for all persons, a gross indecorum." [69] Whetstone adds that in *King Lear* the fool is seen in serious consultation with Lear, and so plays a part in "majestic matters." The middle part of *Faustus*, in Cunningham's words, is a strange "rag-bag of serious and ludicrous scraps." In fact, it consists of comic scenes which turn upon one of Faustus' servants getting hold of a book of spells and trying to conjure on his own account. These episodes, Cunningham thinks, make "surprisingly good knock-about comedy when acted." [70]

The element of reversal of fortune and discovery is noted in the case of Othello who, too late, discovers the reality of Iago and sees himself as one who has flung away, like an ignorant savage, the priceless jewel of his own happiness. The reversal in *Macbeth* lies in the sorrow that Macbeth's increased power brings; the recognition comes when he realizes the consequences of his own deeds:

I have lived long enough. My way of life
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf,
And that which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience ... friends,
I must not look to have, but, in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep...
Which the poor heart would vain deny and dare not.

(V, IV, 22-8)

The other dramatic ingredient, which the Elizabethans inherited from the classical tragic writers, is the chorus which suffers at their hands a drastic change in its quality, function

and personality. The chorus now is no longer a separate body of fifteen members; rather it constitutes a part of the dramatic personae.

In Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, the Ghosts of Andrea and Revenge play the role of the chorus. They do not actually take part in the play, but watch it from the perspective of a passionately interested spectator. The inevitability of fate is continually stressed by Revenge, while the Ghost of Andrea grows increasingly impatient with the protagonist's hesitation in fulfilling the task of revenge so that he attempts to rouse his partner into action by a passionate speech. The dramatic tension is now at its highest and the "last breathing space before the final catastrophe is very effectively marked."[71]

Marlowe imitates both Seneca and Kyd in his method of using the chorus. The chorus as a separate entity appears at the beginning of *Tamburlaine I*, *Faustus*, and *The Jew of Malta* to present an exposition of the main situation in the play that will eventually lead to the tragic end of the central figures. Except in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare employs secondary characters as a chorus. Thus, the Porter in *Macbeth* and the Fool in *King Lear* act as commentators on the action.

Finally, almost all the Elizabethan dramatists show an utter indifference to the unities of time and action as a prerequisite for an ideal tragic plot. [72] This is evident in the sprawling structure of *Tamburlaine I,* and *II*, in Faustus' ability to travel through time and space, and in the choice of Rome and Egypt as locations in *Antony and Cleopatra*.

Thematic approach

The Elizabethan tragic dramatists, and most notably Shakespeare, did not follow the models of Greek tragedy of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Their models were Roman and late-medieval. They deal with a number of themes,

the most important of which is revenge. This was due to two main reasons; the first is the influence of the philosopher and the tragic playwright Seneca who wrote ten tragedies during the first century AD, which were translated into English around the time of Shakespeare's boyhood, and the second reason is the popular tradition that considers revenge as "a kind of wild justice" as Shakespeare's brilliant contemporary, Francis Bacon called it. [73] Seneca was interested in those subjects which would yield psychological development and which permit a detailed study of passions; namely, ambition, love, and hatred. It is noteworthy that except in cases of fatal error, Seneca's criminal heroes are fully responsible, for the will to crime is present in them. Indeed, Seneca is convinced that man has a liberty of choice between good and evil. The will is all powerful.[74] This is in agreement with the Machiavellian precepts which place the 'Will' at the top of man's faculties. With varying degrees, Hamlet and Macbeth are defective in will, the former procrastinates and the latter has a moment of atrocious self-torture following each crime he commits. Because Seneca believes that death might be a last refuge and expiation, he sympathizes with suicide when it saves honour or gives an escape from a life too full of pain. Yet, he feels it is more courageous to combat misfortune than to succumb without struggle.

In this sense, Lear, Othello, and Hamlet are Senecan characters for they learn to stand up to fortune's blows and go out with dignity and a conventional gesture of resignation.

The Elizabethans believe that the right to revenge is not a matter of choice, but a binding obligation in spite of the recurrent emphasis by the religious authorities on the biblical statement: "vengeance is mine saith the Lord." Due to their interest in revenge as a criminal action, the Elizabethans attempted various analyses of the subsidiary passions which excite it. Anger and hatred are among the first causes and are important in the study of the villain-avengers of the Elizabe-

than tragedy. Iago in Othello is a case in point here. The chief reason behind his plotting against Othello is the latter's decision to side-step him military promotion in favour of Cassio.

Jealousy is another prime mover of revenge and murder. Maddened by jealousy, Othello performs the murder of Desdemona as a kind of ritual. In fact, he believes himself an agent of justice who carries out a sacred duty. Pride and ambition are also considered the forerunners of revenge. The Elizabethan tragic plays reflect a persistent myth of ambition, a myth that entails a tragic paradox. The desire to transcend oneself, to become something greater than one is born to be, is a natural and seemingly noble human tendency; yet it becomes a means of self-destruction, a betrayal of nature and origins that invites primal punishment. This can be noted in *King Lear*. Proud of his own personal capabilities and being extremely ambitious, Edmund tries to disinherit his half-brother, Edgar, by poisoning their father's mind against him. Besides these two qualities, 'envy' was perhaps considered the greatest vice and one of the most powerful of the passions inducing revenge. Cassius, out of malicious personal envy of Caesar, persuades Brutus and other Roman nobles to assassinate their benefactor, Caesar.

Elizabethan revenge tragedy properly begins with Kyd's masterpiece *Spanish Tragedy* which deals with the sacred duty of a father to avenge the murder of his son. Accordingly, the tragedy of revenge is "a distinct species of the tragedy of blood...a tragedy whose leading motive is revenge, leading to the death of the murderers and often the death of the avenger himself. [75] Since 'revenge' results from committing an evil act, an investigation of forms of evil presented in the Elizabethan tragic plays will be attempted here.

Tillyard sees tragedy as a picture of life disturbed by the intrusion of a disruptive evil force, the apparent triumph of that force, and then the reassertion of a normality which has been

strengthened through trial. [76] As far as Shakespeare's tragedies are concerned, Bradley believes that the main source of the convulsion which produces suffering and death is never good. It is almost always evil in the fullest sense of the word, not mere imperfection but plain moral evil. [77] Evil in *King Lear, Macbeth, Hamlet* and *Julius Caesar* takes the form of a violation of a natural order, the outcome of which is destruction not only on the personal level but also on the public one as well. Lear's division of his kingdom between his two daughters was a foolish act that shows his lack of understanding and wisdom. Having violated a natural law, Lear should be punished. This punishment helps Lear to realize his mistake and to acquire self-knowledge though this, unfortunately, cannot be done except by the most violent methods. This recalls the Greek principle 'Learning through suffering' and makes *King Lear* the most fatalistic, the most Aeschylean and the most heathen of Shakespeare's tragedies.[78]

Macbeth defines a particular kind of evil that results from a lust for power. In none of his other plays, has Shakespeare explored more fully and deeply the nature and effects of evil. It is portrayed in the action, in the dark oppressive images which convey the impression of evil as a "palpable substantial presence" [79] and in the character, most obviously that of Lady Macbeth. The forces of evil, which are unleashed by Macbeth and his wife gradually, spread from them to possess the whole kingdom.

This situation gives rise to two important themes in the play: the first is the theme of the reversal of values, which the first scene states simply and clearly 'Fair is foul and foul is fair' (I, I, 11) and with it are associated premonition of conflict, disorder, and moral darkness into which Macbeth will plunge himself. The second is the theme of deformation of a man through his own insistence on committing unnatural acts. Macbeth's is neither an act committed by mistake nor an error of judgment. His act is, in Helen Gardner's opinion, an error of the will.[80]

In fact, the act is so unnatural that it deforms the nature that performs it. In this respect, W.C. Curry remarks that "in proportion as the good in [Macbeth] diminishes, his liberty of free choice is determined more and more by evil inclination and he cannot choose the better course." [81] This feeling of the irreversibility of the course of evil makes Macbeth live a mood of existential despair that finds its expression in his realization that:

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury

Signifying nothing. (V, V, 24-8)

This makes the entire play a "study of absurdity with three of its central themes: the sterility of roles divorced from actions; alienation from roles and meaninglessness of the world whose order is observed only in ritual." [82]

The theme of the violation of natural order is closely connected with the concept of the 'Divine Right of kings', which the Elizabethans strongly believed in. In the sixteenth century, the authority of the king was believed to be derived from God. This belief was inherited from the medieval view that a king was to be seen as God's deputy on earth and this was in fact useful to the Tudors, since their original claim to the throne, after the Wars of Roses, was disputed. According to this, political order in the state mirrored the natural order of the cosmos. [83] In *Defence of the Right of Kings*, James I declares that kings are the "breathing images of God upon earth." [84] As such, defiance of them is a defiance of God's will. The Elizabethan tragic plays present the outcome of this defiance in the

form of violent bloody deeds as in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*; civil war as in *Julius Caesar* and disorder in Nature and in the lives of men as in *King Lear*.

Evil in Marlowe's tragic plays takes the form of "overweening pride" or "misdirected desires". One of the recurrent themes in these plays is that of the man of humble birth aspiring to higher things. His heroes are "overreachers" in the sense that they are extremely ambitious. To express his idea of the dangers of aspiring too high and rebellion against the established order, Marlowe chooses three classical figures: Icarus, Hercules, and Prometheus. Icarus, as Harry Levin in Leech's *Marlowe* points out is the archetype of the overreacher. Like Icarus, Marlowe's heroes rebel against the restrictions imposed by the established systems of their own time. Tamburlaine's ambition has no definite object; it exists in and for itself. Bradbrook remarks that "Tamburlaine's aspiring mind is drawn upward as naturally as gravitation draws a stone downward." [85]

The main theme of *Tamburlaine I* is the power and splendour of human will, which restlessly endeavours to glorify its desires. Like the Promethean Tamburlaine, Faustus rebels against the traditional beliefs of his time. Faustus' first sin is of pride, the pride of man who dares to think that he can order his destiny for himself, and ignore or trick fate. The Icarus image used in the prologue to *Faustus*, suggests that there is a soaring mounting movement before the fall. Faustus had been granted "learning's golden gifts" to the limits of human capacity and had abused them by turning to the "cursed necromancy" in order to acquire more treasures.

It is noteworthy that in almost all Elizabethan tragedies, especially Shakespeare's plays, villainy never remains victorious and prosperous at the last. The life presented in Shakespeare's, major tragedies is one which contends against evil as it would against poison, struggles against it in agony and

eventually casts it forth, though it must rend itself in so doing and must tear out much good along with the evil.

The catastrophe, which befalls the tragic hero who is, by nature, a good man, gives one the dominating impression of waste. Furthermore, Bradley maintains that in Shakespeare's plays, all human activity takes place in a world that has as its predominating features a moral order that is good. The order of the tragic universe, Bradley observes, shows itself akin to good and alien to evil.

Finally, the most important cause of the Elizabethan and more specifically of Shakespeare's tragic heroes' downfall is their passion. [86] The lovers' passionate rashness in Romeo and Juliet, Brutus' self-deluding idealist approach to life, Macbeth's overweening ambition, and Othello's credulous trust in appearances result in their deaths. Meanwhile, the tragedies of Marlowe are seen to be the result of "uncontrolled, misdirected and diseased passion."[87] This passion is translated into unnatural thirst for power, wealth, political authority and mastery of the world.

The eclipse of tragedy

From Shakespeare's tragedies to the closing of theatres in England by the Puritans in 1642, the quality of tragedy steadily declines if the best of the Greek and Shakespearean tragedies are taken as a standard.

Among the leading dramatists of the period are: John Webster, Thomas Middleton, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Cyril Tourneur, and John Ford. The Jacobean dramatists, those whose works flourished during the reign of James I were obsessed by death. They become superb analysts of moral confusion and of the darkened vision of humanity at cross purposes, preying upon itself, of lust, hate, and intrigue engulfing what is left of beauty, love, and integrity.

As a result, periods of creation of high tragedy were few and short lived. The inevitable materials of tragedy such as violence, hate and lust etc., lose their symbolic role and became perverted to the uses of melodrama and sensationalism and mixed for relief with the broadest comedy or farce.

Twenty nine years after the closing of the theater, John Milton attempted to bring back the classical spirit and tone of tragedy which he called "the gravest and most profitable of all other poems." [88] His *Samson Agnoistes* (1671) is modeled on the legend of Prometheus. It recalls Aeschylus' tragedy, both in its form, in which the immobilized hero receives a sequence of visitors and in its theme, in which there is resurgence of the hero's spirit under stress.

After the vicissitudes of the Civil War, John Dryden tried to revitalize the tragic form by writing *All for Love* (1678) in blank verse as a re-working of the legendary love of Antony and Cleopatra. The play fails to inspire us. Instead of Shakespeare's worldwide panorama, and his rapid shifts of scene and complex characters, we have the last hours of the tragic lovers presented according to the unities of time, place and action in a neatly symmetrical plot.[89] Dryden described his attempt as follows:

The death of Anthony and Cleopatra is a subject which has been treated by the greatest Wits of our Nation, after Shakespeare; and by all so variously, that their example has given me the confidence to try myself in this Bowe of Ulysses amongst the crowd of suitors; and, withal, to take my own measures, in aiming at the mark. I doubt not but the same motive has prevailed with all of us in this attempt; I mean the Excellency of the moral: for the chief persons represented, were famous patterns of unlawful love; and their end accordingly was unfortunate. [90]

In spite of the large number of plays, which their authors called tragedies, the form as the Greeks and the Elizabethans have defined it went into eclipse during the late seventeenth, eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries. Reasons that have been suggested for the decline include: the politics of the Restoration; the rise of science and with it, the optimism of the Enlightenment throughout Europe; the developing middle-class economy; the trend towards reassuring deism in theology and in literature, the rise of the novel and the vogue of satire.

The genius of the age was discursive and rationalistic. Moreover, the belief in evil was reduced to perception of evil which was looked upon as institutional and therefore remediable. [91]Those who felt themselves called upon to write tragedies produced little but weak imitation. Percy Bysshe Shelly tried it once in *The Cenci* (1819). However, his optimistic concept of tragedy may be better seen in *Prometheus Unbound* (1820) in which Zeus is overthrown and man enters upon a golden age, ruled by the power of love.

It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century, with the plays of the great European writers- Henrik Ibsen from Norway, Antoine Checkov from Russia and August Strindberg from Sweden that something of the vision returned to inspire the tragic theatre. These dramatists presented "the conflict between the alienated individual, who aspires to some alternative world of the imagination, and narrow social conventions, designed to crush such aspirations." [92]

On the other side, bourgeois tragedy came into being as a form that was developed in the 18th century. It comes as a fruit of the Enlightenment and the emergence of the bourgeois class and its ideals. George Lillo's *The London Merchant* which was first performed in 1731 is considered as the first true bourgeois tragedy.

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CHAPTER THREE:

Modern Tragedy

Chapter Three: Modern tragedy

This chapter falls into different sections: modern British tragedy and its diversity of philosophy, the development of the American drama, modernism and the new trends of realism, naturalism and impressionism, and finally, the concept of modern American tragedy and its development. It shows the extent of impact that each of the following aspects had on O'Neill's tragic vision to find new form and content for modern tragedy. These aspects are: the change in the structure of society, the impact of wars, the years of depression, the adoption of scientific and rational approaches in tackling man's problems which resulted in the questioning of man's proper position in the universal scheme of things. Modern man's feeling that he no longer constitutes a meaningful part of the universe leads him to be dominated by a sense of bewilderment, anxiety, alienation and existential vacuum. O'Neill as a playwright holds a mirror up to reflect all these influences on his society in tragic plays that proved his artistic skill and ensured his position as a master in the world of tragedy as the following chapters will show.

Modern British tragedy: Diversity in philosophy

As we have seen earlier, tragedy as a dramatic genre in English drama went through a period of steady decline from the end of the Jacobean period (1603-1625) until the middle of the nineteenth century. Melodrama with its substitution of sensation for emotion, situation for structure and spectacle for nearly everything had taken the place of tragedy. The decay of religious faith and observance, a disregard for discipline, a dismissal of authority, and a gross slackening of personal and general standards are considered as possible reasons for the decay of tragedy. Tragedy, as we have indicated in Chapter

Two, was developed out of a sense of theological or metaphysical stability. Man was dignified; he had some direct or personal relationship with forces of the cosmos. Consequently, tragedy is ruined when the illusion of man's personal connection with superhuman processes is lost, when he is looked upon as a mere species of animal that happens to inhabit the earth for a certain number of years between its birth and death, according to Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution.

Raymond Williams points out that the French Revolution in 1789 is a decisive step in changing the premises upon which tragedy is based. He remarks that "since then, the idea of tragedy can be seen as a response to a culture in conscious change and movement." [1] Tragedy, which had traditionally dealt with the fate of a singular individual from the privileged aristocratic class of society, has to cope with the fact that the destiny of a nation is no longer being shaped exclusively or even predominantly by a dynasty or an aristocracy. Hence, we can find tragedies that are based on the reduction in status of the conventional tragic hero to the lower level of the social classes: the lay or common man. In fact, the most obvious reason for the disappearance of the 'larger than life' tragic hero and his replacement by the 'slice of life' victimized hero is the change wrought in the structure of society as Evans points out. [2]

The destruction of deeply rooted beliefs results in the questioning of man's proper position in the universal scheme of things. In fact, modern man's feeling that he no longer constitutes a meaningful part of the universe, leads him to be dominated by a sense of bewilderment, anxiety, alienation and existential vacuum. Hence, his constant engagement in strife and bloody struggles to survive in a world that continuously alienates him from his true self can be viewed as attempts, if partially successful, to assert his value as a human being.

This feeling necessitates a reconsideration of the questions of good and evil and their role in determining modern

man's life. In modern times, these crucial terms have been institutionalized in the sense that, in so many plays, the conflict is between an individual or group and a threatening system. Accordingly, the systems predominant in a society, whether political, economic, or religious are to be blamed for the downfall of modern common man.

Evil in post Freudian era is largely regarded as a sickness for which the individual is not responsible. Accordingly, wrongdoing is often attributable to deprivation, sometime by environment, sometimes by neglect, not to any personal shortcoming, and as a result the wrong-doer is not to be blamed. Since man is not responsible for shaping his life, sacrificial and dignified death, characteristic of some classical tragic drama, is denied to him. Spiritual rather than physical death is the predominant feature of almost all contemporary tragic drama.

It is noteworthy here that the conditions which were behind the decline of Greek tragedy in the second half of the fifth century B.C. already existed in the West when the dramatists of the modern European theatre were contemplating not only the possibility of writing tragedy that reflect the modern mode of uncertainty and spiritual inertia, but also of extending its range and enlarging its potentialities as a study of the tragic dilemma of modern man and his world. In fact, the turbulent experiences of this period can be best described in terms of the loss of innocence. Like the modern age, this was a period of immense cultural crisis and political convulsion. In culture, the emphatic movement encouraged skepticism in the old beliefs the outcome of which is the undermining of the old sense of moral security.

Hence, the ideological presuppositions of tragedy namely, the immutability of the social order, the unequivocal acceptance of moral authority, the relation between the human and the divine and lastly the sacrificial heroism are shattered in

modern western culture, under the heavy blows of materialistic philosophy as well as intellectual and technological developments which contributed a great deal to the inquisitiveness and skepticism of modern man.

The other serious factor that helps to accelerate the dissolution of traditional values and systems upon which society is based is the First World War and its devastating effect on the whole fabric of modern western society, where life became a circle of broken passions, lusts, fears and horrors. The integrity of the world collapsed and serious debasement began. Furthermore, the reaction of post-World War I society was to suspect too easily all manifestations of authority. The question, as Gassner puts it, is "how should the nobility and splendor of the tragic vision survive in a world leveled down by democracy and cheapened by mass production and mass consumption, a world in which even emotion and ideas have been converted into commodities gaudily packed for the buyer?" [3]

David Mercer attributes the death of tragedy to the deep spiritual and cultural impoverishment of modern communities; "There is no communality of belief, no communality of assumption no communality of purpose...We're unified neither by God nor man and divided by everything." [4] Therefore, a common realism takes the place of idealism to which the art of tragedy aspires by historical examples since the time of Aristotle. The most important exponents of realism in modern theatre are Johan August Strindberg (1849-1912) and Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) whose views on tragic drama are of special importance here.

Ibsen, under the impact of realism and later on naturalism as new attitudes and philosophies in drama, was in rebellion against romantic situations and characterization. He tried to put on stage, as a realist, only what he could verify by observing ordinary life; and as a naturalist he tries to present a specially angled view of real life under the powerful forces

that governed human lives; the forces of heredity and environment. He wrote what might be called, "bourgeois tragedy" in which he deals with the lives of people from the middle class. It can be said that "Ibsen and Strindberg, the fathers of modern drama, begat O'Neill, who was to become the father of American drama."[5] Thus, his works are real reflections of what have been mentioned as the new characteristics of tragedy which depend not on the British heritage, but on his ability to make use of the American native subjects and scenes.

Not only O'Neill but also George Bernard Shaw finds in Ibsen a model worthy of imitation. Shaw promoted realism on stage and established prose as a very powerful medium of drama. In his book *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), Shaw attacks the nineteenth century English theatre which consists, according to him, of the rags and tatters of Shakespeare and he awakens theatergoers to the possibilities of socially conscious drama.[6] In revolt against these decadent theatrical practices, he proposes a drama of ideas which puts the audience into a critical frame of mind when watching the dramatic situation presented. Instead of the familiar structure of the well-made play, which is built on the scheme: 'exposition, situation, unraveling', Shaw adopts the technical scheme used in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*: 'exposition, situation, discussion.' [7]

Shaw believes that discussion is the crucial technical innovation which accompanies the change in outlook which he was the first to be aware of. Moreover, his belief that good and ill-intentioned people alike can commit the cruelest actions accounts for the absence of the traditional villain characters in his tragic plays. This implies that Shaw is intent on excluding any philosophy of evil and choosing to focus instead on stupidity, ignorance, self will, and a general blindness to the ultimate cause of a given action in time. Shaw actually believes that it is impossible to compose tragedy according to the histrionic notion of heroism. He firmly holds the view that non-heroism and the modern intellectual climate are incom-

patible with the requirements of the Aristotelian tragic dictum. Therefore, Shaw takes for his heroes and heroines ordinary men and women. As a matter of fact, what Shaw has done is to bring the hero off his pedestal, but only to demonstrate that the flesh and the blood was much more of a hero than the statue and the legend. This is apparent in his treatment of historical figures such as Julius Caesar and Napoleon Bonaparte, for he presents them not as exceptional persons, but as ordinary human beings like anyone else.[8]

The development of American drama

The American theatre, now considered one of the strongest and the most outstanding world theatres, was really out of focus until the end of the nineteenth century. It was the last major genre to come of age. At the beginning there were hesitant and stumbling steps in trying to create a serious American theatre and to have stable cornerstones of the American play. It is worthwhile to mention that "drama was the last of all the literary types to come to full flower in America." [9]

Through its history, the American drama faced lots of difficulties and obstacles that hindered its foundation and proliferation. These obstacles were social and religious. They refer to the narrow-mindedness and illiberality of the dominant authority at the time. One of these obstacles is the power of the Puritans, a group of religious people, who regarded the theatre as a sort of sinful entertainment that evokes the passions and promotes objectionable desires. Thereupon, in an attempt to gain approval in the eyes of the public officials and in order not to upset the Puritans, plays were billed as moral dialogues, and theatres were called opera houses or school houses.

Theatres were used as an educational vehicle to the extent that some early American theatrical offerings included

lectures with a single performer dispensing homely wisdom and commenting on current social manners. In Ohio, a catastrophe shocked all American theatres and supplied the opponents with evidence of God's avenging hand at work when a theatre was burned down taking the lives of seventy-two people. Strict regulations kept many theatres closed and the stage rapidly declined soon after. Many applications begged the government to stop the open contravention against the exhibition of stage plays but the appeals failed. In March 1789 a civic group called The Dramatic Association won a hard fight to make the theatre permanently legal. Thus, "all plays dropped their thin veils of lectures and were presented by authority." [10]

The Process of Imitation

The history of drama begins very late in American literature and this is due to the youthfulness of the American nation as compared with other nations. According to James E. Miller, the newness of the American literary career made the Americans feel they are "too young to rival in literature the old nations of Europe." [11] Thereupon, because of their inability to rival their predecessors in drama, they started the process of imitation.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the American drama passed through the imitation phase, and it is believed that this is an ordinary stage which precedes the innovation phase. Literature, at that time was plainly superficial, derivative, inferior, and lacked profundity; it was not an expression of the American people. Like the people who created it, American drama had its beginnings in Europe and was strongly influenced by European models.

Although the American theatre remained a copy of the European and makes use of its themes and subjects, the Amer-

ican dramatist tries to adapt and adjust these themes according to the satisfaction of the American audience. [12] The nineteenth century witnessed the appearance of three distinctive writers in America, namely Irving, Poe, and Bryant. Although their works won high esteem and large readership among Europeans, yet the process of imitation can be clearly seen in their works, as James E. Miller states:

Irving's *Rip Van Winkle* and *Ichabod Crane* were direct borrowings from German legend, and many of Poe's short stories, including *The Cask of Amontillado*, were based on European gothic romances, while Bryant's *Thanatopsis* was originally considered a British forgery.[13]

The radical changes and literary originality

The second decade of the nineteenth century witnessed tremendous changes; these changes were political and intellectual. They played a vital role in shaping and forming American literature especially in raising the spirit of nationalism and the spirit of perfection. From the political point of view, the war of 1812-1818, which America fought against Great Britain, was very influential in making the American people conscious of their own literature. Intellectually, we can find the great and permanent impact that the Reformation Movement and the Transcendental Philosophy played in developing the spirit of perfection. These two movements have changed the literary world of America radically. They pushed the American literary heritage to the phase of originality, discarding the imitation phase that the earlier authors had initiated.

On December 24, 1818 the treaty of Ghent formally ended the war in which neither side could claim victory. After the war, the Americans became more independent in their literary pursuits because after this war an extraordinary spirit of

nationalism has been raised and the Americans began to look closely at their own society and their own affairs. The American authors and playwrights, inspired by this spirit, began to develop and create a new American literature and culture. They used settings, characters and themes that were typically American. About the war of 1812, Thomas H. O'Connor says: "In the years after the war of 1812, the Americans gained confidence in their own abilities and in the future of their country. The war was a turning point after which the American people began to establish a separate identity. The attention of the nation turned from Europe toward America."[14]

As for the Reformation and the Transcendentalist movements, these two movements with their intellectual ideas helped in forming the spirit of perfection which went hand in hand with the spirit of nationalism in promoting the original American art and culture. Thomas H. O'Connor believes that one of the greatest periods for American literature came during the Reform years because writers of this time were often influenced by the democratic spirit and the spirit of perfection, as they wrote about America and its people. To speak about the Reform movement, is to speak about the Transcendentalist movement because both of them tried different forms, new ideas, and themes; both of them have contributed to the flowering of the American art and literature.

There were certain ideas, concepts, and philosophies that formed the basis of both of these movements, one of which is that, during the 1700s, some churches had taught that only a certain number of people were chosen by God to be saved and to go to heaven. But as the country became more democratic, many churches began to teach that all people could be saved if they improved themselves and the world around them. These ideas encouraged people to make changes for the better. Ralph Waldo Emerson was influenced by these ideas; he developed a new philosophy or set of ideas which was called Transcendentalism. Emerson believed that people could go beyond

their limitations and perfect themselves and their society. As a matter of fact, Emerson continued shaping American literature significantly, adding things and deleting others; adding originality to art literature and deleting dependence on 'outsider' themes and techniques.

The ideology of the war of 1812 and the philosophy of the Reform movement were crystallized in the American mind in the period that followed 1820 because it was only at that time that the American people became conscious of themselves and their own society; they became fond of national subjects and national themes. They no longer wanted to imitate European art and culture. They recognized the need for a uniquely American literature in theme and setting, characterized by the nation's mood of youthful optimism.

Day after day and year after year the greatest classics of American art and literature began to appear. So many of them crowded into the 1850s, and accordingly that period has been variously called "American's Golden Day, The Flowering of New England, and The American Renaissance." [15] During a brief five-year period, 1850- 1855, many of the most prominent American works appeared: Emerson's *Representative Man* (1850); Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851); Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851); Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852); Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* (1852); Melville's *Pierre* (1852); Thoreau's *Walden* (1854); and Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855). With very little borrowing and significant originality, the result was a sort of national literature; a literature that witnessed the shaking off of traditional restraint and the beginning of a sort of intellectual renaissance. But the majority of the dramatists, at that time, took their matters and themes from reality; they made use of it, without realizing that art does not portray life in all its aspects and merits but recreates it and moulds it in an artistic way. So, the American literary men, instead of producing artistic reality, pictured naked reality and the result was that, as dramatists, they failed in their first national Renaissance. [16]

The theatrical syndicate

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, to be precise in 1896, the formation of a well-intentioned but disruptive enterprise known as the Syndicate came into being. It started out as a sound business arrangement conceived in order to facilitate the movements of important road shows throughout the country. About this theatrical Syndicate, Jordan Miller states: "Its founders decided there would be more efficiency in sending the shows, through the agency of a central booking office, into theatres all over the country on a carefully predetermined timetable." [17]

On paper, the plan sounded good. In practice, under the leadership of Marc Klaw and A.L. Erlanger, who gave the Syndicate its name, it became a terrifying powerful monopoly. What it eventually succeeded in doing was to seize control of virtually every important theatre from coast to coast. Soon no production without Klaw and Erlanger's contract could enter certain cities under any conditions. Second rate plays, losing ground in New York, could be sent on tour and forced into any theatre where the managers would have to show them or would run out of business. The prosperous shows would remain in New York, depriving the road of the good theater it was supposed to be paying for. Eager new actors had to satisfy Charles Frohman, a syndicate member, or face little chance of getting a start. Writers of course, were almost completely at the group's mercy.

In 1906, the Syndicate controlled about 700 theatres. The best way to fight such an organization was with an equally strong trust. This was supplied by Lee J.J., and Sam Shubert. By 1905 Shubert was managing three New York playhouses and eight out of town. After his tragic death in a train wreck that year, his brothers erected a Sam S. Shubert Memorial Theatre in every city they could enter and began to give the Syndicate a big fight.

In the end, challenged everywhere, Klaw and Erlanger gave up. The Shuberts never achieved the same absolute monopoly although they opened a majority of the legitimate theatres in the country well into the 1950s. Among the others who resisted the syndicate was David Belasco, who successfully built his own theatres. Anyhow, in 1915 the monopoly ended. With the dissolution of the theatrical Syndicate of 1896, we end our look at the nineteenth century and prepare ourselves to discuss the major incidents that happened in the twentieth century, showing their influence upon the Second American Renaissance.

The twentieth century impact

In the history of America since the beginning of the twentieth century, several distinct periods can be distinguished, each of which has had more or less direct influence on the kind of literature produced in America. The more important of these periods may be designated as the First World War (1914-18), the period of the Great Depression (1930s), and the period of the Second World War (1939-45). We will not focus on the last, as it happened after the period in which Eugene O'Neill presented most of his tragic plays. Nevertheless, the war left great impact on the literary mind of the American playwrights who lived and witnessed its days and after.

The First World War

The First World War was one of the prominent events that changed the modern world drastically. From the humanitarian side, the influence of this disastrous war was tremendous. The literature of the First World War too reflected dark and gloomy reality. It pictured the sense of frustration, despair, oppression, and the social injustices which were the characteristics of the age. Although it made literature dark and

gloomy, yet the war brought profundity to the literary mind and literary subject matter especially in the field of tragedy, as our study of O'Neill's selected plays will show. As a matter of fact, up to the time of the First World War, the playhouses of the United States did not produce any theatrical literature of importance; it was the generation that came after World War I who gave us the first American theatre of distinction. So, the war played a vital role in the process of maturation of the American literary mind though the United States government did not participate in this war.

The pioneers of the new theatre movement

Now, it is time to move away from the desperate atmosphere of the war and start shedding light on the Second American Renaissance. Although the horror of World War I was astounding, yet the American Renaissance went on in its way to universality, and the theatrical companies in the United States did extraordinary work to make the American theatre gain internationalism. The major theatrical companies at that time were The Washington Square players and The Provincetown Players. They were the pioneers of the new theatre movement in the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly during the same period of World War I.

The story of these two theatrical companies and other pioneering groups between 1915 and 1929 holds a great interest for anyone who wants to observe the American theatre in a proper perspective. The slightly older of the two groups, the Washington Square Players, was formally established in 1914. It presented its first production in the following year in Midtown Manhattan in a small theatre called the Bandbox. The group consisted of intellectuals, social rebels, and artists. One of the leaders was the scene designer Lee Simonson, "who was steeped in the European avant-garde movement and helped to revolutionize American scenic art." [18] The Washington Square

players revealed a characteristic partiality for one-act plays, but later on, the young company went beyond fashionable intellectualism and enriched its one-act repertory with effectively realistic productions. These included O'Neill's early sea play *In the Zone*, but the ambitions of this theatrical group reached out rapidly to the production of full-length drama.

The Washington Square players managed to present sixty-two one-act plays and six full length ones in New York during a brief career. The company was closed in May 1918. About this company John Gassner states that "after the cessation of hostilities, it reestablished itself as a producing company ... it started gathering around itself a growing number of subscribers calling itself the Theatre Guild." [19] The reconstructed group forged ahead to become America's outstanding producing company.

On the other hand, the other acting group which is the Provincetown players maintained its amateur or semi-amateur status to the end of its career in 1929; while the original Washington Square players disbanded in 1918. Moreover, the Provincetown group was primarily interested in producing the work of new American playwrights; and it rapidly attained prominence with O'Neill's most advanced experiments in dramatic technique. As a matter of fact, the Provincetown Company came to be regarded as essentially a playwright's theatre and this is, as John Gassner points out, chiefly because it excelled in the task of developing modern playwriting in the United States.

The company acquired new talented members, famous writers, and artists. Those writers soon provided the company with their plays to be performed. Especial contributions were made by O'Neill's one-act plays, among which were the little sea plays *Ile* and *The Long Voyage Home*. Other new one-act plays were supplied by Susan Glaspell.

After many successful seasons, the Provincetown players

reached their highest creativity with a moving presentation of four of O'Neill's best one-act plays under the collective title of *S. S. Glencairn*, as well as a sparkling production of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *Patience*. Nevertheless, after a series of unsuccessful and disappointing attempts and the decline of its production effectiveness, nothing could prevent the dissolution of the Provincetown players. According to Gassner, the Provincetown remained a playwright's theatre to the very end. It ended its career, just as it began, with the work of a new American playwright, namely Virgil Gedde's bleak Midwestern tragedy *The Earth Between*.

The Washington Square players and the Provincetown players attempted to create a vital modern theatre in the United States. They were part of a widespread movement to establish little experimental theatres in the other large cities such as Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, and Detroit. Even before the establishment of the Provincetown Players, as early as 1912, the so-called little theatres devoted themselves to produce plays without regard for the practical considerations of the commercial theatre.

The Jazz age

In our journey through the American literature during the twentieth century, we reached an era that is worth studying because the young Americans, who once failed in their first Renaissance, now become great scholars who lead American literature into its unforgettable phase. This era is called the 1920s, the Roaring Twenties, or the Jazz Age. As a matter of fact, both the excitement and the problems of the changing times could be seen in the literature of the 1920s. Many writers wrote about the sadness of the modern life, and among them was Ernest Hemingway who portrayed characters searching for values and struggling to find meaning in life besides F. Scott Fitzgerald who wrote about the carefree lives of the

young and the wealthy people. His works *The Side of Paradise*, and *The Great Gatsby*, made him a spokesman of the Jazz Age and a group of scholars who called themselves the lost generation. In describing this age, critics believe that American drama did not become completely American until it attained full maturity in the plays of Eugene O'Neill, of the 1920s.

The decade of the 1920s came to be known as the Jazz Age because a new kind of music called jazz became popular at that time. It had accented rhythms and developed from ragtime and blue music. The Jazz music originated in the black culture of New Orleans, but in the 1920s and 1930s, its syncopated rhythms captivated people in Chicago and New York. Hence jazz became a symbol for some Americans who welcomed the change to a less ordered life.

The great depression

The third decade of the twentieth century witnessed one of the severest economic crises in the history of the United States, a crisis that was to shake American society, crash many fortunes, and cause many suicides. This crisis was the Great Depression. The depression ushered in a period of high unemployment, bankruptcies, and mortgage foreclosures. The Great Depression of the 1930s came in part because the Americans had not yet learned to master their machines and to distribute what their machinery so generously produced. According to G. J. Barstowe "the primary cause of the depression was underconsumption, not overproduction, as many people think."[20] People could not afford to buy the surpluses because they did not have the purchasing power to buy what the machinery was producing efficiently.

From 1927 to 1929 there was an almost uninterrupted inflation in stock prices. On October 29, 1929 stock prices began

to fall catastrophically. Hundreds of thousands of small investors were wiped out. By 1931 the value of al stocks in the New York Stock Exchange had fallen from $87 billion to $19 billion; business activity fell off 50 percent. In 1931 alone 2300 banks failed and wage cutting began. Hundreds of thousands of farms and homes were lost by mortgage foreclosure. Unemployment estimates varied between twelve and fifteen million.

It was inevitable that the theatre, and consequently the drama, should suffer deeply during the depression. The drama is the most costly of all arts; it requires for its full existence a theatre, actors, a box-office and advertising staff. The cost of all these commodities had soared during the boom period after World War I. With the coming of the Depression, the economic pressure on the theatre became tremendous. Large numbers of the theatre-going audiences in America were driven to seek less expensive or free forms of entertainment. In New York, there was a sensational slump in theatrical enterprise, and in cities like Chicago and San Francisco, the theatrical fare became so scarce as almost to threaten the drama with extinction.

The series of terrible social disasters that followed the onset of the depression impressed on the younger playwrights the need for expressing dramatically the more violent phases of the class struggle; and "this led to the emergence of a radical or proletarian drama" [21] which took the European drama as its distinguished model. Of most of the proletarian dramas of the depression years, the defects are more conspicuous than the virtues. The defects are in the main excessive violence and the tendency to represent the class struggle in the elementary terms of traditional melodrama. Their virtues are those of vitality and impassioned conviction, of acute social consciousness, and the determination to see that drama shall not continue to be merely an expensive form of bourgeoisie and a profitable form of economic exploitation for the commercial producer. At their least, these plays picture for after times, the darker aspects of the worst years of the depression.

The new literary trends

As we mentioned, the twentieth century witnessed the most controversial and rapid change of thoughts in history and social upheaval without parallel. The political movements of the 'proletariat' (social class comprised of manual laborers) were manifested in theatre by such movements as realism, naturalism and impressionism particularly in the early twentieth century as society battled to determine the ultimate goals and meaning of political philosophy in the life of the average person.

American people and the playwrights among them were left disillusioned by the effects that wars and new technology had on their society. People needed a literature that would explain what had happened and what was happening to their society. American playwrights and specifically O'Neill, as a forerunner, turned to what is now known as modernism as a domain for literary interpretations according to the criteria of the realists, naturalists and the impressionists as well.

Realism

Realism as an experiment appeared in France in the last half of the nineteenth century. It is broadly defined as the faithful representation of reality. It aims to make theatre more useful to society. As a technique of writing, realism denotes a particular kind of subject (middle-class life) to present "truth" as fixed, stable and knowable.[22] In general, the realists are influenced by three prominent figures: The first one is August Comte (1798-1857) who is considered the father of Sociology and the originator of the theory of Positivism in Sociology. Among Comte's ideas was an encouragement for understanding the cause and effect of nature through pre-

cise observation. The second one is Charles Darwin (1809-1882) who has two theories, "The Survival of the Fittest" and "Evolution." In 1859 Darwin presented his famous work *The Origin of the Species* in which he emphasized that people were controlled by heredity and environment and behaviours were beyond our control. The third influential figure on realism is Karl Marx (1818-1883) who in the late 1840s espoused a political philosophy arguing against urbanization and in favor of a more equal distribution of wealth.

Realism came to be heavily loaded against romanticism, melodrama and comic operas. Undistorted by personal bias, realism believed in the ideology of objective reality and revolted against exaggerated emotionalism and spontaneity of feeling and faith in the visionary imagination. Truth and accuracy became the goals of many realists. Henrik Ibsen is considered to be the father of modern realistic drama. His plays attacked society's values and dealt with unconventional subjects within the form of the well-made play (causally related). He became a model for later realistic writers. Eugene O'Neill too, was dissatisfied with the romantic and melodramatic plays presented on the American stage and under the impact of realism started his dramatic career as a realist. He strove hard to introduce realism on the American stage and to accomplish this; he had to stand up against the genteel tradition that abounded in sentimentality. He wrote four one-act plays, *Bound East for Cardiff, Long Voyage Home, Tthe Moon of the Caribees* and *In the Zone* which dealt with a realistic picture of sea-life.

O'Neill is a realist in his choice of theme, settings, characters, situations, and dialogues. Earlier dramatists chose themes that had little relation to the facts of life as experienced by ordinary man; they did not cultivate that minute observation of men in the ordinary and eternal conflicts of every-day living. O'Neill delved deep beneath the surface apparent to all observers. He created a realistic picture of life.

His first full-length realistic play *Beyond the Horizon*, which is also a good example of psychological realism, is a tragedy exposing the destructive power of the romantic ideal. The play rehearses the tragedy of a man whose body and mind need the open road and far spaces, but who, by force of wanton circumstances and the bondage of a romance that soon burns itself out, is imprisoned within the hill-walled boundaries of a few unyielding acres, chained to a task for which he is not fitted.

Naturalism

Naturalism as the name implies, is an approach that looks upon nature as the one original and fundamental source of all that exists, and attempts to explain everything in terms of nature. A commonly interchangeable term with realism, naturalism assumes that humans are controlled by their environment, fate, psychology, chance or coincidence. As such it seeks to replicate a believable reality, as opposed to such movements as Romanticism or Surrealism in which subjects may receive highly symbolic, idealistic, or even supernatural treatment. It originated in France in the nineteenth century but its high period was during the twentieth century.

Essentially, the literary concept of naturalism grew out of the concept of realism during the nineteenth century and the naturalistic writers considered themselves second generation realists. The realist had wanted to hold up a mirror to life and render a very accurate picture of life. The naturalist wanted to go a step further and examine life as a scientist would. Thus, the technique of the naturalist involves viewing life with scientific objectivity. For the naturalist, man is controlled by basic urges and can do nothing to determine his own destiny. Environmental, hereditary, and biological forces combine to control man's life. These basic and elemental urg-

es place man in a position similar to that of animals. Naturalistic situations are generally pessimistic and deterministic. When man is trapped and controlled, his behaviour becomes instinctual and animalistic. If there is heroism, it is in a human's desire to survive against insurmountable odds.

In fact, both naturalism and realism aim at reproducing real life in an objective manner, and both of them are defined by their subject matter: the depiction of stark reality, the interest in ordinary and lower class people instead of those who come from a high station in life; and obscene or unpleasant subjects are tackled instead of pleasant ones; but it is worthy to mention that the naturalistic writers are franker or more extremist than the realists in handing matters of sex, poverty, disease, prostitution, and the ugly aspects of the society.[23]

Emile Zola (1840-1902), the novelist and French art critic, is considered as the chief figure of the naturalistic school and his novel *Therese Raquin* (1867), is widely regarded as the first milestone of the movement.[24] It talks about Therese's adulterous love and her final suicide. The plot of this novel revolves around Therese who is married to a man who cannot satisfy her sexually; therefore, she seeks another man to satisfy her. Therese and her lover decide to kill her husband in order to get married to each other. The two lovers succeed in drowning the sickly husband but on the night of their wedding, they commit suicide by poisoning themselves because they are burdened with guilt and to atone for their wrong doing they decide to take their own lives. As a matter of fact, the novel focuses on the conflict between feelings, instincts, and conscience.

Eugene O'Neill was one of the most famous exponents of naturalism in drama. This involved both a technique and a way of viewing life. He also accepted the psychological urges as a part of man's basic driving force. In his plays, O'Neill shows characters being driven by forces which they cannot understand or conquer. A man born in one type of environment

is influenced by concomitant forces to the point that his basic actions in life are governed by these environmental forces. Carried to an extreme, the view leads to determinism, that is, the idea that man can do nothing for himself and is constantly at the mercy of forces outside him.

A typical image used by the naturalists is that of a person being trapped or imprisoned in a cage. In his earlier works, O'Neill often used the physical image of the cage as in *The Hairy Ape* to suggest the position of man caught or trapped in an alien and hostile universe. In *Desire Under the Elms*, O'Neill depicts man as the victim of his elemental drives, which are motivated by the environment, the biological need to survive, and the hereditary traits of the characters. Later, O'Neill accepted the findings of Sigmund Freud and utilized psychological forces as a part of man's inherent drives. Thus, in *Mourning Becomes Electra* O'Neill attempts to show how certain characters are dominated by their sexual drives, which cause them to commit crimes that repulse the ordinary person.

Naturalism as a dramatic form has some serious limitations. In the true sense of tragedy where man has the potential to control his destiny, the character becomes tragic in relation to how much he is in control of his fate. But in naturalism, man is incapable of controlling his destiny and so becomes the victim of greater forces. The tragedy occurs when we consider the implications of these external forces and the realization that man is trapped. We watch with a horrified sense of pathos man struggling against insurmountable obstacles. Consequently, the tragedy lies in man's awareness and in his consciousness of the futility of struggling against a blind fate. This is completely applicable on O'Neill's *Anna Christie* as the next chapter will show.

Expressionism

Expressionism is an artistic literary movement which began in Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century and reached its height in the decade 1915-1925. In literature, expressionism is often considered a revolt against realism and naturalism, seeking to achieve a psychological or spiritual reality rather than merely recording external events in logical sequence. i.e. it strives to express subjective feelings and emotions rather than to depict reality or nature with objectivity. In drama, the Swedish dramatist Strindberg (1849-1912) is considered the forefather of the expressionists, though the term is specifically applied to a group of early twentieth German dramatists, including George Kaiser, Karl Capek and Ernst Toller. Strindberg has laid down the main features and the chief principles of expressionism in his trilogy *The Road to Damascus* (1898-1901). These principles have been summed up by Garten: firstly, the reduction of the characters to mere types named by general terms such as the stranger, the beggar, the Doctor; secondly, the unfolding of the action in a succession of scenes, denoting stages of the central character's development towards a spiritual goal; thirdly, the identification of the author with his central figure. [25]

Expressionism as a dramatic technique has undoubtedly widened the possibilities of drama and to a large extent it has succeeded in making the twentieth century audience aware of the inner drama that is more interesting than the drama that our external life is. The interest is no longer in the development of the plot or character but in the expression of a soul swollen with tragedy. It uses symbolism in portraying crude violence and emotional intensity. Often there is a rejection of the strong individualistic character in favour of the more abstract symbol. There is seldom an interest in cause and effect because the dramatist wants to convey his ideas through abstractions. But like any other technique, when it becomes the

sole concern of a dramatist, it is bound to cause embarrassment. One great danger of extreme expressionism is the possibility that the writer may subordinate the human element to an "abracadabra of meaningless symbols". It is possible that it may subordinate the role of man to stage equipments. Gassner was right when he said, ''The disappearance of man from theatre, this alone constitutes the decadence in theatre."[26] Depersonalization is a great threat to art whether it is used for social reform or the creation of pure art .It should not be presumed that expressionism in itself is always a better technique than realism or other modes of expression. What ultimately matters is the vision of the playwright and his capability of creating a suitable medium for its communication rather than his interest with various techniques without anything to communicate. Other writers should not necessarily be condemned if they did not use expressionistic technique,. Without imagination no writer can be an artist in the true sense because art requires talent for transmutation of life into something acceptable to all in matters of content, and interesting enough in matters of style. O'Neill himself discarded the expressionistic technique after a period of time when he made the last effort to combine it with realistic technique. However, it can be said without doubt that O'Neill created in *The Hairy Ape* the most impressive and exemplary expressionistic play. He made use of symbolism, expressionism, and Freudian psychology. Thus, *The Hairy Ape* is considered one of the best examples of this trend. As the plot developed, it grows more and more fantastic, leaving realism behind and adopting the expressionism of distortion. Everything is presented, not as it is, but as it would seem to the disordered mind of Yank. This time O'Neill's interest was not the external reality or the universality of romantic attachment to illusions that sustain life; it was his desire to explore the various unconscious motivations of man and to explain some of the behavioural mysteries. Under the influence of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and

Carl Jung (1875-1961) and his own experiences, he had learnt to see unknown interests clashing and shaping the behaviour and language of man.

Ultimately, the expressionist movement declined after the late 1920s because of its vagueness, its use of highly poetic language and the personal and inaccessible nature of its mode of presentation; but the main reason behind the movement's decline were the Nazis who came to power in 1933.[27] They declared that all expressionist works were corrupt, and they forbade exhibition, publication or production of all these works.

The Concept of Modern American tragedy

In general, the American tragedians show a seeming lack of regard for the Aristotelian imperatives that are concerned with the unity of plot, nobility of character, refinement of language, and control of violence. Their indifference to the Aristotelian principles of writing tragedy reflects their attempt to create a form which is true to the realities of modern life in America. [28] This is in agreement with the declaration of some critics that modern American plays will be free in form. They point out that the Greeks obeyed their own conventions that were all parts of the religious rituals from which drama springs. They also believe that the dialogue would grow more condensed and seek less to imitate the rambling uncertainties of natural speech. Prose rather than verse will be the main means of expression in the tragic plays. Furthermore, commenting on the content of the modern American tragic play, MacGowan points out that this genre will attempt to transfer to dramatic art the illumination of those deep and vigorous and eternal processes of the human soul which the psychology of Freud and Jung have given us through the study of the unconscious, striking the heart of emotion and linking our life today with the emanations of the primitive racial mind.[29]

Of all the psychoanalytic themes that appear in twentieth century American drama, the Oedipus complex is the most prominent. Next to it are the themes of sexual suppression, frustration, and aggressiveness. In fact, the tragic plays to varying degree, serve as capital illustrations of father and mother figures, sexual frustration, guilt feelings, death wishes and incestuous drives. Accordingly, psychoanalysis provides the American tragedians with "illumination, suggestion and direction." However as W. David Sievers states, the flesh and blood of their characters and their emotional agonies are the dramatists' own.[30]

As a representative of the age, O'Neill's plays revolve around the revolt of son against father, the love for a mother and most important of all, the terrible hold that the past has on the present. His characters, in general, are haunted by their sins, mistakes, wrong choices and betrayals. Their sense of guilt forges a chain that binds them forever to terrible things they have done. As a result, they continually relieve the agonies of their past experience so that memory becomes a kind of avenging Furies that torture the human conscience.

In fulfilling his intention to write modern psychological dramas modelled on the legendary plots of Greek tragedy, O'Neill draws heavily upon the theories of Freud and Jung, hoping to get "a psychological approximation of the Greek sense of fate into such a play, which an intelligent audience of today possessed of no belief in gods or supernatural retribution could accept and be moved by."[31]

Fate assumes various forms in O'Neill's characters' lives. In a letter to Arthur Hobson Quinn, O'Neill states that he is always acutely conscious of the force behind fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it, and of the one eternal tragedy of man in his glorious self-destructive struggle to maintain his own integrity and to carry out his 'hopeless dreams'. O'Neill's experiment with masks comes as

part of his attempts to recreate Greek tragedy and an expression of his dissatisfaction with the theatre which he inherited. He expresses his conviction that:

> the use of masks will be discovered eventually to be the freest solution to the modern dramatist's problem as to how with the greatest possible dramatic clarity and economy of means, he can express those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probing of psychology continues to disclose to us.[32]

Another notable American playwright, Arthur Miller (1915-2005) believes that tragedy is the most appropriate medium for expressing the dilemma of modern 'low man' who is crushed by various destructive forces beyond his control. This results in the emergence of the tragic hero as a victim in Miller's plays. In "Tragedy and the Common Man", Miller describes the nature of modern tragedy as he understands it. He states his belief that "paucity of heroes, skepticism of science, and the adoption by modern literature of the purely psychiatric or sociological view of life, account in no small measure for the rarity of tragedies in the modern age."[33] He also questions the validity of the classical concept of the tragic hero as postulated by Aristotle. "It matters not at all," he states, "whether a modern play concerns itself with a grocer or a president, whether the hero falls from a great height or a small one, whether he is highly conscious or only dimly aware of what is happening, whether his pride brings the fall or an unseen pattern written behind the cloud."[34]

What matters, in Miller's opinion, is "the intensity of the human passions to surpass his given bounds; the fanatic insistence upon his self-conceived role. If these are not present, there can be only an outline of tragedy but no living thing."[35] Accordingly, insistence upon the rank of the tragic hero or

the nobility of the character, Miller believes, is really "but a clinging to the outward forms of tragedy."[36] In fact, the presentation of the common man as a hero is a widespread phenomenon in American drama. Downer points out that the typical American hero has always been "the common or little man; shrewd peddler, honest farmer, patriotic foot-soldier and energetic tradesman." He adds that each day, this hero is growing 'smaller and more common, physically and intellectually." [37]

O'Neill and Tennessee Williams have the same attitude towards this subject matter. Man appears to O'Neill as a "puny little creature surrounded by forces much beyond his control, roaming alone in a godless universe" [38] As for Williams, it seems that "little people" are the only sort of people whom he is interested in dramatizing. He often writes of people "with no magnitude." His desperate heroines often live lives of their own in which they can enjoy the glories of a lost splendid past. They are alienated and separated from their society for they are incapable of confronting its standards and values. However, O'Neill's concept of tragic character is essentially Greek. He does not present his characters in a normal social milieu, as is the case in the plays of Miller and Williams. Rather, his characters are lonely figures that are blindly and hopelessly driven by forces they do not have the power to withstand. They are alone in their confrontation with Fate in whatever shape it may appear. Psychological and biological impulses rather than social factors bring their tragic ends. Their tragedy comes from within and the society around them is no more than a media who can do nothing and get nothing of the tragedy of that hero. As such the tragic hero of the old Greek and the Elizabethan is changed into an anti-hero who simply does not measure up to Aristotelian criteria.

Talking about the tragic hero entails a discussion of the factors that lead to his downfall. Again, Miller disapproves of the classical notion of 'the tragic flaw'. "The flaw or crack

in the character", Miller states, "is really nothing and needs to be nothing but inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity and his image of his rightful status in the society."[39] The tragic feeling, Miller adds, is invoked in the audience upon watching a character who is ready to lay down his life and to throw all he has into the contest to secure one thing: his sense of personal dignity. The tragic action springs from the failure of a character to maintain this sense of personal dignity. This may bring him/her into violent opposition with his/her society. Tragic antagonism arises because the unchangeable social environment, as Miller states, often "suppresses man, perverts the flowing out of his own love and creative instinct." Society, however, is not the sole tragic villain in Miller's plays. His discussion of the dangers of social "unrelatedness" and insistence upon the importance of collective responsibility are clear indication of his belief that social evils can be changed and cured if the members of society have the will to do so.

On the other side, an atmosphere of violence, terror, and blood-shedding dominates the American tragic plays. The American dramatists have their own opinion of the classical notion of 'pity and fear' and its resultant feeling: catharsis. Miller believes that the feelings of terror and fear that are classically associated with tragedy take place when a character reacts often violently against the scheme of things that degrades him. In the process of the tragic action, he states, everything we have accepted out of fear or insensitivity or ignorance is shaken and re-examined. This total onslaught by the character against the seemingly stable cosmos surrounding him and his re-examination of his unchangeable environment is what makes his life worthwhile.

Tennessee Williams regards the violence in his plays as a sort of catharsis, in order to purge the feelings of bitterness and frustration which have tortured him all his life.[40] As an explanation for his preference to present violent actions in his

plays, Williams says, "...having to contend with this adversary of fear, [and] sometimes terror, gave me a certain tendency toward an atmosphere of hysteria and violence in my writing, an atmosphere that has existed in it since the beginning."[41]

As for the structure, the American dramatists do not invent something new of their own; as Nicoll remarks, "They employ in constructing their plays the techniques inherited from the classical and European theatrical practices." [42]

End Notes

1. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society: 1780-1950,(Hasmondworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1975) p. 59.

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CHAPTER FOUR:

O'Neillian Modern Tragedies

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Why O'Neill?

Eugene O'Neill was the first American playwright to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936 and the first of his countrymen to be so honoured. He started a revolution in the American theatre and put the American drama on a firm footing. He was awarded three Pulitzer Prizes (the highest American prize for literature) for his great service to American drama and particularly tragedy. There is no doubt that O'Neill combined great theatrical talent with an intuitive understanding of the human psyche. His forty-seven plays have an intensity of passion and a sense of theatrical action. His courage and endless experimentation with various methods of the naturalists, realists, and expressionists created a new theatre in America. He presented a series of plays which represent American society and culture between the two World Wars.

In 1914-1915, O'Neill attended Professor Baker's class at Harvard. In 1916, he went to Provincetown, Massachusetts, and there became associated with the Provincetown players. It was a fortunate combination for both playwright and actors. At this point, O'Neill cut himself off from friends and family. He had lived with the knowledge that his mother was a morphine addict and that his father and his brother were failures both in their art and lives. He had married Kathleen Jenkins in 1909 but the marriage ended with a divorce in 1912. In 1918 he married Agnes Boulton. He had two children, a boy and a girl. In 1928 after divorcing her, he married, Carlotta Monterey, an actress with whom he lived happily till his death.

Nietzsche, Strindberg and Ibsen were already O'Neill's intellectual mainstays. Accompanied by Terry Carlin, his Irish mentor, he reached Provincetown where he found congenial

companions among the radicals of the day. Subsequently, Provincetowners staged many of his short plays. In 1920, O'Neill's reputation as the leading dramatist of America became established and he became sure of himself. He decided to earn his living by writing plays. He looked around him to see what was happening and picked up his materials.

Pre-twentieth century American drama had dealt with superficial theatricality which was stifling of any creative stimulus. Producers were feeding the audience with light comedy and sentimental drama far removed from the realities of life. The historical perspective of the drama of the twenties was made up of European forces rich with intellectual and artistic challenges. The fertilizing contact with European artistic life in the twenties quickened the creative imagination of the American mind. The First World War put an end to the decades of American insularism and isolation from European culture.[1]

O'Neill's play *Bound East for Cardiff* marks a major breakthrough in the history of American drama as the audience could for the first time see a native drama based upon the life of the native soil. The twenties was a period of exploration of new thoughts and ideas. O'Neill was, therefore, exposed to all the cross-currents of historical and contemporary ideas in the domain of literature and philosophy. The thoughts of Freud and Jung accelerated the artistic and intellectual movement of the time. O'Neill found himself among the radical thinkers like John Reed and anarchists like Terry Carlin. At Provincetown, he was to find recognition for his talent, as this New England town, known as "America's oldest Art colony" was already beginning to play a significant role in the foundation of American drama. Followers of realistic tradition in drama presented arguments on the stage about states of mind or social systems. O'Neill burst upon the world of drama with fights, drunkenness and violent language with an emphatically American accent. He captured the psychological and emotional roots of real people in his plays like *Beyond the Horizon*

and *Anna Christie*. [2]

O'Neill became the symbol of that Provincetown group which represented the growing rebellion of the American intellectual against a commercial civilization. He had behind him a rich tradition of tragic literature in the works of the Greeks, the Elizabethans and of course the great moderns, like Ibsen and Strindberg, who were the new interpreters in the theatre of the characteristic spiritual conflicts which constitute the drama of that day.

Greek elements in O'Neill's plays are conscious borrowings from the ancient myths. He did aim at an approximation of the Greek sense of fate in modern terms. O'Neill's conscious use of Greek myth in the plot structures of two of his finest tragedies *Desire Under the Elms* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*, are proof of the fact that he was indebted to Greek tragedy which inspired him in his use of symbols and myths from the modern psychological perspective. His professed intention was to recreate a modern tragic equivalent of the Greek sense of fate (without the inclusion of God) in the twentieth century.

He begins writing realistic sea-plays and ends with tragedies of gloom. The autobiographical elements grew in the plays written in his last years. O'Neill chose for his plays subjects like social injustice and conflict of races. The conflict of capital and labour and the problem of man versus machine also attracted his attention. He was preoccupied with the theme of fate in a society which suffers from spiritual sterility.[3] O'Neill passed through a number of phases and attitudes which led to the shaping of his particular tragic vision of life which encompasses the life of the acquisitive middle class. He proved himself a master of psychological conflict. Most of his characters are simply not heroic. They are haunted by their own psychological and biological impulses.

O'Neill's creativity declined after 1936 when the depression and its attendant ideologies made an onrush in the theatre.

Consequently, no strong impulse did strike the vision of the playwrights. Commercialism had deadened all invention. The little theatres were not able to emulate the Provincetowners who produced O'Neill's plays in 1920s. At that time, no play came out until *The Iceman Cometh* appeared as a realistic study of the fragility of illusions. Years later, he wrote *A Long Day's Journey into Night*, a portrait of a tormented and self-destructive family. However, he was faced by serious illness. Doctors found that there was in him no will to live. He was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and it culminated in his death in 1953, leaving behind a memory of the first American playwright who was able to win a solid international reputation.

O'Neill will not be outdated, for his concern was with almost all techniques of modern drama. He dealt with tragedy which is outside time. Whatever his faults are, O'Neill will always be remembered for his contribution to the field of tragedy. John Gassner sums up O'Neill's contributions to the world of drama saying: "Find fault with O'Neill and find fault with the entire American stage: find merit in him and you find worth in its striving or straining toward significant drama."[4] On his side, Bloom emphasizes that "early in the twentieth century, O'Neill set the stage for a tradition of serious American drama that has grown and flourished into the twenty first century."[5]

The choice of O'Neill comes from a consideration that he is recognized as a great American artist whose vision of life was essentially tragic. He appears to have had an instinctive perception of what a modern tragedy should be. Most of O'Neill's plays are powerful tragedies but they are not tragedies in the Aristotelian sense. Their themes and subject matter may have certain similar features with his predecessors but their forms and interpretations are different. They are modern tragedies which strike at the roots of contemporary problems that are concerned with human desires and beliefs. O'Neill says: "The playwright must dig at the roots of the sickness of

today as he feels it, the failure of science and materialism and express those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probings of psychology continue to disclose to us."[6]

On the other hand, tragedy is not often associated with American history. With no tradition of battling royal or courtly intrigues, the American national background has most often been personified in the hero of the Revolution: the dauntless pioneer and the rugged individualist who seek an earthly paradise, the possibility of which had previously been denied and treated as unattainable. Courage, optimism, endurance along with ruthless exploitation, and cruel indifference to others' wellbeing has been a part of the growth of the American nation.

In fact, the hallmark of American history has been 'the success story' and the search for 'Utopia', instead of the tragic sacrifice of the individual for the benefit of others.[7] Accordingly, to search for the tragic approach in the works of any important playwright before 1920 is unrewarding. The nearest date one can choose for modern American tragedy is 1920 when Eugene O'Neill's first full-length play, *Beyond the Horizon*, was produced. The play represents the first conscious attempt to recreate tragedy as a modern dramatic art in America. Before the production of O'Neill's first tragic play, it was only melodrama, farce and comedy which dominated the American theatrical scene.[8]

American tragedy, like other literary genres, was largely a derivation from its European cultural sources. The significant role played by Henrik Ibsen, George Bernard Shaw, John M. Synge and August Strindberg in inspiring the development of modern American drama is recognizable. Indeed, Strindberg has been acknowledged as the greatest influence on modern American drama. Moreover, O'Neill considers him the precursor of all modernity in the American stage. When O'Neill received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1936, he paid homage

to August Strindberg as he recalled in his acceptance speech: "I was reading his plays when I first started to write back in the winter of 1913-1914 ...that above all else gave me the vision of what modern drama could be."[9] The successful plays of the late nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century, Bloom adds, are designed to reflect an essentially romantic view of life and their happy endings are not so much theatrical conventions as popular conviction. This romantic view was fed on the belief that America was God's country or the 'New Eden' on earth where there are no major problems. Attempts to tackle the actual problems of the American society and to avoid the romantic approach to life are made by a number of American dramatists who begin writing in the second decade of the twentieth century.

The plays of O'Neill usher a new stage in the development of American drama and make it completely American. The works of this playwright reveal the fact that the world is not a pleasant little nest made for our protection, but a vast and largely hostile environment wherein the poor are continuously crushed under the heavy weight of materialism, competitiveness and spiritual bankruptcy. These oppressive conditions which modern American society witnessed, as Downer points out, help to accomplish the long maturing of the American tragedy. The audiences as well as the playwrights realize that they can no longer shut their eyes to the world with its rapid changes and conflicting values. During that time, the theatre was under the impact of continuous experimentation with new themes and techniques. Employment of the theatrical conventions of Realism, naturalism and Expressionism and the adoption of the psychological theories in motivating the action of the characters are in vogue during this period. As such, the American tragic plays can be considered a detailed miniature of the American life in the twentieth century. Arthur Miller says "American drama has been a steady year by year documentation of the suffering and frustration of man."[10]

This statement shows how conscious the dramatists were of the problems that uprooted American society during that period. It also reflects the conviction about the collapse of social continuity and the increasing anxiety in modern American society.

Accordingly, the duty of the dramatist is to dig deep into the roots of 'the sickness of the day' which O'Neill ascribes to the collapse of spiritual values and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying answers to the dilemmas of modern American man. This results in the dominance of the feelings of insecurity, alienation and dislocation in modern American man's life. Alienation, which is a major theme in modern American tragedy, assumes many forms: "Man from spiritual values, from his environment, and sometimes from himself."[11] Thus, the American individual is living in a world where the laws of market and materialistic competition reign supreme.

The phenomenon of the American dream is unique in American history. The early settlers believed that they had made a new beginning in a new "Garden of Eden". However, the subsequent history demolished this glimmering image of America. The Industrial Revolution, the successive wars, the economic depression and the present electronic revolution have caused actual nightmares that only illusory dreams have softened. Williams and Miller view the American dream as "precarious, a problematic mythology that relied on superficial appearance and exclusion rather than the freedom, diversity and opportunity it advertised."[12]

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the American felt a sense of haunting insecurity in a world where destructive powers could be unleashed at any moment. This feeling led to a sense of bewilderment, hesitation, apathy, loss of confidence, a sense of inner defeat and a mood of lost self-esteem and bitterness towards life in general. All these feelings are

reflected in almost all the American tragic plays and especially in Eugene O'Neill's. O'Neill sheds light, in his tragic plays, on the dilemmas of modern man, for he believes that the responsibility of the dramatist is to be a sort of demoniac social critic to present the world as he sees it. "He hopes that the audience will get rid of their complacency and mental lethargy. He calls for a change in behaviour that will save modern man from the stifling pressures that frustrate him and to live in the absence of what we need fully to be and to know."[13]

The following part consists of three sections in which each one of O'Neill's three selected tragedies will be approached according to the trends of realism, naturalism and expressionism respectively. O'Neill makes use of these 'isms' to portray modern tragedy. These tragedies established the reputation of O'Neill as a great American dramatist. He was able to present a new type of tragedy which shares some features with the Greek and the Elizabethan but still has O'Neillian touches in theme and structure under the impact of modern influences as we saw in Chapter Three. O'Neill concentrates on a tragic anti-hero as a protagonist in each of his tragedies to reflect the tragic crisis of modern man. These tragedies were wholly American and not derived from European culture sources.

O'Neill's Beyond the Horizon: Experimentation with realism

Beyond the Horizon marks a milestone in O'Neill's dramatic career. It established for all the reputation of O'Neill as a great American dramatist. It is the first Broadway success that leads him to get his first Pulitzer Prize in 1920, the year of its publication. Of this realistic play, O'Neill writes, "It is the

first serious attempt to do something bigger than my short plays express."[14] Indeed, it is O'Neill's first comprehensive portrayal of a young farm-born dreamer frustrated in his quest for happiness by hostile materialistic forces with consequent mental and physical decay, resulting in a tragedy of futility and despair. Though it is termed a "new American tragedy," it is a tragedy which might occur in any civilized country of the world where marriage is a recognized institution and this may be one of the reasons for its universality. Moreover, it interprets the misery which follows the union of a man and a woman who are incompatible; an intellectual, a dreamer, a man with the soul of a poet, who marries a woman mentally is his inferior. Thus, the characters, the setting, the language and all events are so realistic that the audiences and readers can feel it as well because it is their own real picture of a family and a society.

Structural approach

Beyond the Horizon is a three-act play which centers on the triangular relationship between two brothers, namely Robert and Andrew Mayo, and Ruth Atkins, a nighbour. At the beginning of this tragedy, Andrew (Andy) seems in love with Ruth, while Robert confesses his desire for a world beyond the farm where he lives. Robert is bookish, frail, and poetic; Andy is sturdy and blunt. Andy is meant for the outdoor life, making him the logical heir to the family's farm.

In the opening scene, Robert confesses to Ruth his love for a world beyond the horizon. She is captivated by his eloquence and, while caught up in the moment, confesses her love for Robert. As a result, instead of Robert leaving the farm as he wishes, Andy leaves, defeated and jealous due to the love relationship he discovers between his brother Robert and Ruth. Moreover, the hasty decisions made by all three principal characters are catastrophic. Robert, in his ineptitude, tends

the farm incompetently; Andy journeys to the sea, but longs for Ruth and the farm; and Ruth grows cynical, realizing that it is Andy, not Robert, whom she truly loves.

The structure of the play emphasizes the conflict of the two opposing ideals of adventure and security and of the two brothers who embody them. The two opposing ideals are symbolized not only in the action, but also in the division of the acts into alternate indoor and outdoor scenes. Of these divisions, O'Neill says:

...in *Beyond the Horizon*, there are three acts of two scenes each. One scene is out of doors, showing the horizon, suggesting man's desire and dream. The other is indoors, the horizon gone, suggesting what has come between him and his dream. In that way, I tried to get rhythm, the alternation of longing and loss. [15]

Act One starts with the dream of Robert's haunting obsession with what lies beyond the horizon. 'Pointing to the horizon-dreamily', he tells his brother Andrew in the first scene that:

... it's just beauty that's calling me, the beauty of the far off and unknown, the mystery and spell of the East which lures me in the books I've read, the need of the freedom of great wide spaces, joy of wandering on and on-in quest of the secret which is hidden over there beyond the horizon. (1.1.7.20 ff)*[1]

This motif (the quest of the secret) reveals itself at the beginning of the play. Robert's longing to leave the farm in order to explore the external world is as strongly charged as possible, as he says to Ruth:

*1 www.eoneill.com O'Neill's Beyond the Horizon. E book. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition, number of the act, scene, page and the line (s) will appear after each quotation.

I used to stare out over the fields to the hills ... (*He points to the horizon*) and somehow after a time I'd forget any pain I was in, and start dreaming. I knew the sea was over beyond those hills...and I used to wonder what the sea was like, and try to form a picture of it in my mind. There was all the mystery in the world to me then about that-far-off sea – and there still is! It called to me then just as it does now. (1.1.10.21 ff)

Robert projects his romantic obsession on other things around him; he believes that the road has the same longing to the far-off sea. Dreamily, he tells Ruth:

And other times my eyes would follow this road, winding off into the distance, toward the hills, as if it, too, was searching for the sea. And I'd promise myself that when I grew up and was strong, I'd follow that road, and it and I would find the sea together. (1.1.10. 26 ff)

The preceding quotations reveal two facts, which are decisive in determining the future life of Robert, namely, the deceptive nature of his dreams and the fact that he is an invalid since childhood.

Act Two opens with a description of the sitting room in Robert's farm house three years later. The description is meant to be an index of the extent to which the farmhouse has sunk in poverty and destitution. The stage direction tells us:

Little significant details give evidence of carelessness, of inefficiency...The chairs appear shabby... the table cover is spotted... Holes show in the curtains... a number of books are piled carelessly on the sideboard... even inanimate objects seem to wear an aspect of despondent exhaustion. (2.1.29.9)

Not only the place, but also the characters have changed

a great deal. Mrs. Mayo's face "has lost all character, disintegrated, become a weak mask wearing a hopeless, doleful expression of being constantly on the verge of comfortable tears," while Mrs. Atkins, Ruth's mother, is a "victim of partial paralysis... and has developed the selfish, irritable nature of the chronic invalid."(2.1.21.19) lndeed, the ravages of time on the characters are stressed by the stage direction and constitute a clear evidence of dissolution. Moreover, the decay evidenced by the setting itself expresses a sense of exhaustion.

In Act Three, five years later, the deterioration in the conditions of Robert's household and the farm is beyond repair. In a heart rending description, the stage direction reveals:

The room, seen by the light of the shadeless oil lamp with a smoky chimney which stands on the table, presents an appearance of decay, of dissolution. The curtains at the window are torn and dirty... The whole atmosphere of the room ...is one of a habitual poverty too hopelessly resigned to be any longer ashamed or even conscious of itself. (3.1.53.7)

Moreover, both Robert and Ruth have aged horribly. Their faces and bodies betoken sickness, emaciation, and suffering. In a desperate attempt to set things right, he tells Ruth that he would give up his foolish pride and ask for Andrew's financial help. Unfortunately, this is another of Robert's unfulfilled dreams, for Andrew, who has returned after five years absence, is not the rich man Robert is thinking of, for he has lost nearly all of his fortune in grain-speculation business. He is punished because he wants easy profits and tries his hand at illegitimate trading.

Completely disappointed, Robert tries to diagnose the causes of their failure. Recalling his father's prophetic statement, he tells Andrew:

I've been wondering what the great change was in you. ...

You-a farmer- to gamble in wheat pit with scraps of paper. There's a spiritual significance in that picture, Andy. I am a failure and Ruth's another- but we can both justly lay some of the blame for our stumbling on god. But you're the deepest failure of the three. Andy. You've spent eight years running away from yourself. You used to be a creator when you loved the farm. You and life were in harmonious partnership. ...your gambling with the thing you used to love to create proves how far astray- So you'll be punished. You'll have to suffer to win back. It's no use. I can't say it. (3.1.65.33 ff)

The punishment takes the form of a request made by Robert who is terribly sick and dying now. He asks Andrew to marry Ruth after his death to compensate her for the wretched life she has had with him. This action serves the double function of rectifying the wrong done to Ruth when Robert married her and of providing Andrew with the suffering he needs for his own redemption.

Thematic approach

O'Neill, throughout the play, emphasizes the importance of having a dream in one's life as something real that can be found in any human being. In his opinion, any life that merits living lies in the effort to realize some dreams, and the higher the dream, the harder it is to be realized. This shows that as a tragic dramatist, O'Neill cherishes this situation of the dream of happiness and its frustration as a major factor in modern tragedy. This may shed a light on the bigger subject that most of his successors write about, the American dream of something great- an ideal which is turned upside down to become a mere nightmare for those who dream of it.

The tragedy of Robert starts when he is offered a chance to realize his dream at the beginning of Act One. He is about

to sail on a three-year sea voyage with his uncle Dick Scott to discover what is beyond the horizon. On the eve of his departure, Ruth meets Robert who is sitting out on the fence. She persuades him to tell her the second reason why he is planning to leave. It is her love, he confesses. While Robert knows well that she is his brother's beloved, he accepts her admission of love. Moreover, she emphasizes "I don't! I don't Love Andy" when he asks her about her relation with his brother Andy. She asks him not to go out to the sea and leave her alone. Having long been in love with her, Robert gives up his life-long dream, in favour of staying in the farm and marrying Ruth. In so doing, Robert actually betrays himself and forgets all thoughts of the world beyond the horizon. Thereafter, O'Neill's intention is to show the tragic effect of Robert's wrong choice and the dangers of betraying one's own nature. In choosing to stay behind and marry Ruth, Robert feels that love is perhaps what he has hoped to find in his search for happiness. He tells Ruth:

I think love must have been the secret that called to me from over the world's rim – the secret beyond every horizon; and when I did not come, it came to me... Oh, Ruth, you are right our love is sweeter than any distant dream. It is the meaning of all life, the whole world! (1.1.12.41 ff)

In Ruth's love, Robert believes that he has found a 'bigger dream'. Moreover, the decision to stay in the farm means for Robert "the beginning of a new life... in every way." (1.2.20.22) However, shortly after the marriage, clouds of problems invade them and in a few years the farm has deteriorated under Robert's management and the family become destitute. Robert gradually realizes his inability to overcome the circumstances, which he finds himself entangled in. In spite of this, Robert clings to his early idealism hoping that one day he might change his life for the better. Unfortunately, Robert

is defeated as he admits that all his life efforts to run the farm and domestic life end in failure at the end of the play. We follow, through the subsequent years, the physical and psychological decay not only of Robert but also of the members of his own household. The real reason behind Robert's defeat according to R. R. Khare is not circumstances but the delusive quality of his own dreams. In choosing to stay, he has substituted a deluded dream of love for his true dream of adventure. [16] Bigsby has a different viewpoint. He points out that the failure of the characters in *Beyond the Horizon* "derives not from the greatness of their dreams, or even the courage with which they tackle a task imposed by fate." Rather it is "a consequence of their capitulation to biological impulse, of their capacity for self destruction, of their willful abandonment of dreams for immediate satisfaction of one kind or another." [17] The characters Bigsby is talking about are Robert's brother, Andrew and Robert's wife, Ruth. Bitter at having lost Ruth, Andrew suddenly decides to sail in Robert's place, thus revealing the same tendency to betray his own nature. Furious with Andrew's decision, the father cries prophetically, "you are runnin' against your own nature, and you are goin' to be mighty sorry for it if you do."(1.2.24.18)

The father's prophecy is fulfilled in the following two Acts which are designed to exhibit the tragic consequences of living contrary to one's true nature. In fact, they help to reveal primarily what was obvious from the start; that Robert was not cut out to be a farmer and that Andrew, in his turn, was not meant to be a sea adventurer.

Besides the financial problems, Robert receives another shock when he realizes that Ruth no longer loves or cares for him. Pleading earnestly for his wife's emotional support, Robert is informed that he is a 'curse', which befalls not only the farm but also Ruth herself. In a scene of poignant domestic strife, Ruth reveals her utter callousness and insensitivity when she scornfully tells Robert that it is hateful to be "liv-

ing 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." (2.1.39.36) Her utter disappointment culminates in her painful confession that she did not love him. She adds "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." Hence, the very basis of Robert's rejection of his dream- Ruth's professed love- has collapsed. However, Ruth here has placed a foolish hope in something 'beyond the horizon'; for she persists in cherishing the delusion that Andrew still loves her. As he later admits to Robert, Andrew has forgotten Ruth six months after sailing abroad. More important, during his sea voyages, he comes to consider his love affair with Ruth a silly desire of adolescence.

The changes that befall Ruth are twofold: physical and psychological. Her face has lost its youth and freshness. There is in her expression something hard and spiteful and she believes that the tragedy of her life began when she unwisely took the wrong decision: marrying Robert. Ever since then, she remarks that there was always something wrong in her life. Her feelings of bitterness and resentment make her treat her child harshly. Her life becomes empty of all meaning and hope. Here, O'Neill produces one of the most important and recurrent themes in his plays: man's tragic inability to reach out to his fellow human beings. In fact, he never stops portraying the husband and the wife as strange persons living together, but 'communicating in codes' with neither ever able to find the other's key.

Instead of love and compassion, the marital life of Robert and Ruth is marked now by resentment, indifference, and perhaps, even hatred for each other. Unable to render his work in the farm productive, especially after the death of his father, Robert comes to regard it as a prison that stifles his best expectations of life. He tells Ruth:

Oh, those cursed hills out there that I used to think prom-

ised me so much! How I've grown to hate the sight of them! They are like the walls of a narrow prison yard shutting me in from all the freedom and wonder of life. (2.1.38.42)

Ironically, this romantic dream to leave the farm in order to explore the external world and to breathe freely once more also collapses under the heavy blows of Andrew's practicality and his realistic business-like manner of describing the East. "The East", Andrew tells Robert, "is stench", for one can find nothing in its narrow streets but filth and sordidness; this goes to demolish another of Robert's long standing illusions about the places he dreams of going to.

Having been forsaken by the persons they most love, Robert and Ruth no longer see any meaning in life beyond the love of their child for whose sake they continue to live together. The ultimate blow comes when their child Mary dies due to neglect and sickness which renders their life utterly meaningless. Like the absurd dramatists, O'Neill here conveys the sense of impotence and sterility felt by modern man due to the bankruptcy of love and the absence of what makes life meaningful.

In Act Three, symbolically, O'Neill sets the death-scene of Robert against the sunrise. Robert crawls out of the farmhouse to die with his unfulfilled dreams. Death is not an end, Robert thinks, but it is a new beginning in another life and a triumph over all the ills of his body and soul. However, the nature of Robert's death is debatable. "Seen objectively," Goyal points out, "Robert's death is an escape, not a victory. It is a sorry compensation for the barren life wasted in a futile search for identity. His effort to transcend the boundaries of real life is a negation of life; an affirmation only of death."[18] Although Robert offers his suffering and his last act of sacrifice as a form of grace, the play ends on a note of resignation and exhaustion rather than hopefulness; for the final stage direc-

tion suggests a sense of stasis from which recovery is impossible. Andrew tells Ruth that they should try to help each other, "but Ruth, if she is aware of his words, gives no sign," for she remains silent, "gazing at him dully with the sad humility of exhaustion, her mind already sinking back into that spent calm beyond the further troubling of any hope." (3.2.71.13)

The subtlety and complexity of the play derive from the modulation of this pattern of alternation, which the action develops, and from the conflicts within the minds of the brothers that it describes. In this respect, the play foreshadows the later developments in the tragic vision of O'Neill, for Robert, like O'Neill's other characters, is "entangled in circumstances which, if not tragic in any strict sense of the term, were destructive of happiness."[19] This makes *Beyond the Horizon* a tragedy of character wherein the protagonist is tricked by fate to become a farmer, when all his life he has longed to go to the sea.

However, Engel believes that Robert is predestined to suffer endlessly even if fate had not intervened in his life. It is evident from the outset that Robert, who is an invalid person since early childhood, is as ill fitted to be a sailor as he is to be a farmer. Furthermore, Engel ascribes the inevitability of Robert's sustained suffering and Andrew's punishment not to fateful circumstances in the action of the play but to qualities inherent in the characters themselves; namely their ability for self-destruction.[20] Joseph Wood Krutch remarks that this makes O'Neill "come nearer than any other American dramatist to writing tragedy in the sense of the Greeks and Shakespeare." He notes that the play should be seen as an "instinctive discernment of the laws of such writing," and adds:

The play is marked by a sense of tragic fitness which is by no means the inevitable accompaniment of vigor or honesty ... In the hands of another dramatist, this story might have

become a vehicle for mere pathos or sentiment... Divesting himself of every trace of faith in the permanent value of love and presenting it as merely one of the subtlest of those traps by which Nature ensnares Man, O'Neill turns a play which might have been merely ironic `into an indictment not only of chance or fate but of that whole universe which sets itself up against man's desires and conquers them. [21]

O'Neill's Anna Christie: Experimentation with naturalism

If O'Neill won his first Pulitzer Prize for his first successful and critically acclaimed full length realistic play, *Beyond the Horizon*, it was *Anna Christie*, the naturalistic play, for which he won his second Pulitzer Prize in 1922 which gained more wide-spread popularity for the playwright. *Anna Christie* was considered one of the most popular plays that dealt with a serious social malady which proves to be the corruption of a family. O'Neill made this play naturalistic in order to convey his message in a truthful representation of life under the impact of heredity and environment. As a naturalist, the focus is not on the plot and the scenes start and end arbitrarily. A lot of the events are reported; they are not physically represented on the stage. The audiences know nothing about the past of most of the characters, which is merely informed to us; this is true of Chris' past, the death of his wife, his desertion of his daughter as well as Anna's past enslavement and drudgery in the farm. The aim is to present a slice of life to be studied scientifically in realistic situations.

Anna Christie is considered one of O'Neill's most enduring plays. It has a secure place in American cultural history. Be-

yond that, however, it is highly regarded "for its fine storytelling, its rich characters, its striking theatricality and its suggestive ambiguities." [22]

Structural approach

Anna Christie, we can say, is a sea play for three of its four acts are set aboard the barge (*Simeon Winthrop*) at sea. The only act not set at sea is Act One which takes place in *Johnny the Priest's* a bar near the sea in New York City. I do believe that the setting of the first act on land is intentionally done by O'Neill who wants to establish the tension between land and sea that is at the heart of his tragedy as contrary places where his characters are looking for security and safety.

Act One opens with a dialogue of two longshoremen who come to the bar to have a drink. A postman enters with a letter from Anna to her father, Chris, the old captain of a coal barge, telling him that she is on her way to New York to stay with him after fifteen years of separation. The father tells Marthy, a woman in her thirties and Larry (the bartender) that Anna had moved to the United States from Sweden as a little girl when her mother became tired of waiting at home for him to return from the sea. Anna was left with her cousins after her mother died. Chris believed that this is better for her than moving back to be with him; and he intended to keep her away from the sea and the fate of seamen.

My voman-Anna's mother- she gat tired vait all time Sveden for me ven Ay don't never come. She come dis country, bring Anna, dey out Minnesota, live with her cousins on farm... den she don't ole davil, sea, she don't know fader like me."*[2] (1.1.41 ff)

Anna arrives the bar just after her father has left the bar. She is "a tall, blond, fully developed girl of twenty ...her youth-

*2 www.eoneill.com O'Neill's Anna Christie, E book. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. The number of the act, page and line (s) will appear after each quotation.

ful face is already hard and cynical beneath its layer of make-up." (1.9.2) When she enters the bar, she asks Larry for a drink directly. Then, she introduces herself to Marthy and starts to tell her about her past and the father whom she does not expect to be better than men whom she has met. "But I ain't expecting much from him. Give you a kick when you're down, that's what all men do. Men, I hate 'em--all of 'em! And I don't expect he'll turn out no better than the rest." (1.10.33-35) Moreover, Anna tells Marthy her story of exploitation and abuse by her relatives in the farm, as well as by other men when she worked as a nurse. Yet with nowhere else to return, she has come to New York in search of her father who may become a shelter for her to enjoy the warmth of the family. This may also show her desire for stability and a clean new life.

Anna is introduced to Chris by Marthy who then leaves the bar; Anna and Chris are left alone in a critical situation for both. The father--daughter meeting is strange. Both feel embarrassed with each other. They feel that they have lost the intimacy that should prevail between them. Chris starts to justify why he left Anna years ago. Anna rejects her father's excuses. Moreover, she knows that he is not a janitor, as he told her once, but a sailor, which means that he himself cannot offer her the shelter that she is eager to have.

In Act Two, after ten days, Anna appears "healthy, transformed; the natural color has come back to her face."(2.16.10) She tells her father how much she hates the farm and the sea which obliged her indirectly to live in that cursed farm. "I've told you a hundred times I hated it (*decidedly*)." (2.17.32) After a while, Anna is introduced to a sailor whose steamer was wrecked; he is big, strong, handsome, in his thirties and his name is Mat Burke. Both are attracted to each other as they exchange some opinions about sea life. After some days, Burke proposes marriage to Anna who does not reject his proposal. This leads the father Chris to curse "dat ole davil, sea" again, this time for bringing Anna and Burke together as the father

fears that if his daughter marries Burke, she will be forever doomed to the lonely life of a seafarer's life.

In Act Three, as Anna's relation with Burke becomes strong, she tells her father how much she likes Burke, but also, rather mysteriously, confesses that she will not marry him because "she is not good enough for him." (3.28.16) When Burke finds an opportunity to announce his intention to marry Anna, the father mocks Burke. The argument ends with both attacking each other. Anna comes back to them. While each of them is trying to exercise his authority over her, she declares her independence from both of them:

You was going on's if you had got to own me. But nobody owns me, see? – 'cepting myself. I'll do what I please and no man, I don't give a hoot who he is, can tell me what to do! I ain't asking either of you for living. I can make it myself--one way or other. I 'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe and smoke it! You and your orders! (3.19.23)

Anna proceeds to tell the true story of her abuse by the men on the farm that eventually drove her to prostitution, and in spite of her pleading with Burke to believe that she has changed, Burke reacts with violent anger. He curses her for deceiving him, promising to sail away from her as far as possible. Chris reacts with a combination of repulsion and guilt, as Anna blames his failure as a father for her situation. "And who's to blame for it, me or you? If you'd ever been a regular father and had me with you may be things would be different!" (3.19-21) Chris puts it all in the context of his belief that "dat ole davil, sea" is to blame for everything bad that happens to him. Then he departs, to get drunk and forget all this pain and frustration, leaving Anna alone on the barge.

When Act Four begins, it is two days later, and Anna "looks

pale and terribly tired". Suddenly, Chris enters and apologizes to his daughter: "But Ay'm not sick inside head vay you mean. Ay'm sick from tank too much about you, about me Ay'm sorry, Anna."(4.40.17-18) Anna agrees to forgive him and relieves him of his guilt with a sentiment: "It ain't your fault, and it ain't mine, and ain't his neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we yust get mixed in wrong, that's all."(4.41.17-18) Chris informs Anna that he has signed on to sail away on a steamer, and that his earnings will be paid directly to her, so that she will not have to work as a prostitute anymore, his way of making restitution for his wrongs against her. Anna discovers that Chris has a revolver in his coat, and he confesses that he originally purchased to use it against Burke, but never bought the bullets. Anna takes it from him, as he exits to sleep.

Within a few minutes, Burke returns to the cabin, with signs of heavy drinking and fighting. "There is an expression in his eyes of wild mental turmoil, of impotent animal rage baffled by its own object misery." (4.43.13) At first Anna defends herself by the revolver she has confiscated from her father. Burke expresses his anguish and Anna surmises that she is not in any physical danger from him. Anna asks him to forget her past and forgive her because of the change she feels with him. "Listen, Mat! You hadn't come, and I'd give up hope. I'd bought my ticket ...But I got thinking about you ... don't you see I've changed? Can't you forgive what's dead and gone and forget about it?(4.45.10) After a long debate on her past life and probable love affairs Anna, asks Burke to believe that she is changed and that she did not really love anyone before the real love she feels for him. "You got to believe it, Mat! What can I do? I'll do anything you want to prove I'm not lying!"(4.47.20 ff) Burke asks her to swear on a cross given to him by his mother that he is the only one she loves, and that she is leaving her sordid past behind her forever. When he realizes that Anna is not a Catholic, meaning that the oath she swears on his moth-

er cross is empty, he accepts her "naked word for it."

As Anna and Burke embrace, Chris reenters and proposes a toast to the couple's reconciliation and impending marriage. Anna informs them that both men have, ironically, signed on to sail on the same ship, so they will be bound together aboard ship, while she intends to live in a house on land and wait for them to return. Distressed when he learns that Anna and Chris are Lutherans by birth, Burke, for the first time, expresses some reservations about their fate:

Chris _ (Moodily preoccupied with his own thoughts-speaks with somber premonition as Anna re-enters from the left.) It's funny. It's queer, yes you and me shipping on same boat dat vay. It ain't right. Ay don't know-it's dat funny vay ole davil sea does her vorst dirty tricks, yes. It's so.

Burke_ (nodding his head in gloomy acquiescence- with a great sigh) I'm Fearing maybe you have the right of it or once, devil take you. (4.49.28 ff)

Anna, however, who has painted a picture of domestic happiness, continues to cling to that vision: "Aw, say, what's the matter? Cut out the gloom. We're all fixed now, ain't we, me and you? ... Come on! Here's to the sea, no matter what! Be a game sport and drink to that! Come on!"(4.49. 37-39) Yet, it is the skeptical Chris who gets the last word in the play:

(Looking out into the night-lost in his somber preoccupation- shakes his head and mutters) Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see vhere you vas going, no. Only dat davil, sea-she knows! (The two stare at him. From the harbor comes the muffled, mournful wail of steamers' whistles. (4.50.3)

Thus the play concludes with ambiguity, with hope in the

face of anticipated inevitable doom. O'Neill, however, recognizing and acknowledging that he had written what could be construed as a happy ending, conceived its significance differently:

The happy ending is the comma at the end of a gaudy introductory clause, with the body of the sentence still unwritten. (in fact, I once thought of calling the play Comma)...My ending seems to have a false definiteness about it that is misleading – a happy ever- after which I did not intend....A kiss in the last act, a word about marriage, and the audience, grows blind and deaf to what follows.[23]

Ultimately, we can say that how a reader or viewer interprets it depends largely on the internal and external world of that individual viewer. Whatever O'Neill's intentions, once his work is published, its meaning is out of his hands, and it is subjected to the reader-response theory and the way it reflects the work.

Thematic approach

Anna Christie is both a romance about Anna and Burke and a revelatory family tragedy about Anna and her father, Chris. When Anna first appears in the saloon in act one, she reveals that she has been abandoned by her father and is now seeking reconciliation with him. They each approach this reunion with false impressions of the other. Chris thinks Anna is a respected nurse, and Anna thinks Chris is a janitor. He has admitted leaving her with relatives in Minnesota, but he believes it was for her own good, to keep her away from "dat ole davil, sea." Because of this superstition, he has deprived his daughter of a normal paternal relationship, for which she has

harbored a good deal of resentment toward him.

As a naturalistic play, O'Neill portrays real human beings in a realistic situation and doing naturalistic things which are telling lies, dreaming of a good future and having a hope of something good towards others. Anna is not a governess as her father believes and he is not a janitor as Anna believes. Both have an idea of something good towards each other until they meet to discover their truths. When confronted with the truth about each other, Anna recognizes that, as Marthy has informed her, Chris is "a good one", but Chris continues to see what he wants to see in his daughter. In spite of all the outward evidence of her profession, Chris treats her as if she were a "good girl." For example, when she asks for a drink at the end of Act One, he apologizes that they don't have "fancy" drinks at this saloon. When Anna reveals the truth about her past to both Chris and Burke in Act Three, Chris's need to believe otherwise is so desperate that he curses the sea for bringing Burke to his barge in the fog, not because Anna is becoming involved with Burke, but rather because the fighting between Anna and Chris over her relationship with Burke leads her to reveal the truth about herself to Chris. He would prefer to believe in his own illusion: "Ay don't never gat to do-dat vay- no more, Ay tall you. Ay fix dat up all right". (4.40.29) Thus, it is believed that sometimes human beings have to tell lies so as to manage living peacefully specially when there is no way to tell truth in the sense that telling truths may lead to disastrous results.

Chris attempts to control whom his daughter marries, which transforms their hopeful reunion into a strained battle. In the end, Chris apologizes for his role in her unhappiness and vows to stand aside if marrying Burke will make her happy, thus following the path of many parents who struggle as they instinctively attempt to protect their children until the children strike out on their own and reject the parents' protection. In this case, Chris hopes that marrying Burke will bring

Anna happiness, yet he ultimately accepts his impotence and irrelevance in setting the course of his daughter's adult life.

This struggle for control between father and daughter is, of course, part of a larger metaphysical question that is raised in many of O'Neill's works, which is who or what controls the course of human lives. When Chris asks Anna for forgiveness in act four, she says: "There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It ain't your fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his {Burke's} neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we yust get mixed in wrong, that's all." (4.41.16 ff) The implication of Anna's statement is that her father's belief in the power of "dat ole davil, sea" may not be so crazy, after all. According to Chris, the sea makes bad things happen, and the sea is therefore to blame for everything, so people like Chris, cannot be blamed.

The questions of guilt and blame place O'Neill's tragedy firmly in the tradition of twentieth century existential drama, in which the issue of personal responsibility defines the struggles within and between the characters. If things just happen that are beyond the individual's control, then no person has to take responsibility for his or her behaviour. Many of O'Neill's characters want to believe in some higher power like the sea to relieve them of the awesome responsibility that comes with free will. Yet these same characters continue to be nagged by guilt, as is Chris. Is it true to say that Chris had no choice but to leave his daughter on the farm in Minnesota, or for that matter, that Burke has no choice but to return to the barge after Anna's revelation, or that Anna has no choice but to marry Burke? Could they each have behaved differently? Each must take responsibility for his or her action, which leads to the ambiguity at the end of the play. It would be easy to blame the sea if things do not work out for Anna and Burke, but each has made a choice to be together, and each is responsible for making it work. To relinquish that responsibility and blame someone else, or the sea, would be living in bad faith, as the existentialists would have it.

Moreover, O'Neill presents the sea as a symbol for his characters. Anna believes that the sea is a place where she can find shelter and sanctuary, and by the sea, she will be away from this cruel and hostile world with all its knots and complexes and ultimately, she will be able to make a new start for her clean future. It is the sea that purifies Anna's soul, reconciles her with her father and introduces her to Mat Burke, the ideal husband. "I love it! It makes me feel clean out here –'s if I'd taken a bath"(2.17.16) On the other hand, for Chris, the sea is a symbol of bad fate and domineering power which is beyond the control of human beings. It is the sea that ruined Chris' life, devouring his age and separating him from his family. Thus, O'Neill presents life as it is with characters who think and behave sometimes according to their desires and mostly according to their environment and other forces that are beyond their control. In this sense, there is no hero or heroine as far as the naturalistic plays are concerned, because the aim is to present a slice of life, not a character or a plot; i.e. we can see a type of anti heroic protagonist who is an individual in a tragedy in which he or she ruin themselves; it is not their choice but the impact of the pressures of life which defeats them. They are weak, disappointed and frustrated characters. So the dominant force is that of fate, the power which is beyond the characters' control, as the determinists believe.

O'Neill's The Hairy Ape: Experimentation with expressionism

In terms of Expressionism, O'Neill presents *The Hairy Ape* (1922) as an attempt to symbolize the relationship between modern man and his universe, a universe in which the desire of man to belong is thwarted at the hands of capricious deterministic forces. He focuses his attention on the social outcast, whose rootless, bitter struggle against a hostile society is symbolic of the position of mankind in an indifferent universe. O'Neill attempts to portray inner reality in non-realistic terms by the use of abstraction, symbols and distortion. This method provides him with an excellent medium for satire and social comment. The main character, Yank, is not so much a character as a symbolic representation of a type of man who cannot belong in this modern world. He embodies a type rather than individuality in order to present intimations of certain psychological states of mind. As such, *The Hairy Ape,* considered "by contemporary standards", as Krasner states, "...O'Neill's expressionistic phenomenon." [24]

Structural approach

In *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill dramatizes the plight of his hero in eight short scenes, using both realistic and expressionistic techniques. The settings and environments of this play reveal larger social and cultural realities. Yank and the firemen exist within the cramped and hot forecastle and stokehole, described as a formidable cage: "The firemen's forecastle is crowded with men, all are dressed in dungaree pants, heavy ugly shoes, resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at."(1.1.15ff)*[3] In contrast, Mildred and her Aunt's environment, the Promenade Deck of the

*3 www.eoneill.com O'Neill's The Hairy Ape. E book. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition, number of the scene, page and the line (s) will appear after each quotation.

ship, is filled with fresh air and sunlight. The ocean that surrounds them is infinitely spacious and the general feeling of freedom abounds. "...the sea all about-sunshine on the deck in a great flood, the fresh sea wind blowing across it."(2.7.19) The promenade deck is also symbolically situated at the top of the ship, far above the stokehole. Both the stokehole and the promenade deck setting epitomize the lifestyles and characteristics of the ship's actual decks and the upper and lower classes on board.

The story of *The Hairy Ape* is simple. Yank's position at the bottom of the social ladder and his opposition to those at the top are established in the first four scenes; in each subsequent scene, he attempts to find a place for himself in society. Unable to fit in anywhere, he ends up in the gorilla's cage at the zoo, where he dies alone.

Yank is the strong, respected leader of the stokers aboard a transatlantic liner sailing from New York City. The opening sets the scene below deck in the firemen's forecastle, where the stokers drink, sing and pass the time when they are not working. Arguments break out about their lot in life, with Yank resisting Long's calls for a revolt against the capitalists above deck, declaring the natural superiority of himself and his mates, who "run de whole woiks," over " all de rich guys dat tink dey're somep'n, day ain't nothing! Dey don't belong, de whole ting is us."(1.6.30 ff) Convinced that he "belongs," Yank's worldview is shattered when a young, aristocratic woman, named Mildred, who is introduced in Scene Two on board as the daughter of the ship's owner traveling with her aunt, almost faints at the sight of him stoking coal in the stokehole. She calls him a "filthy beast" in Scene Three. In one fell swoop, Yank falls from the top of the evolutionary ladder ("de whole ting is us") to the bottom (a "great hairy ape"), and, egged on by his shipmates in Scene Four, he is determined to regain his rightful place at the top: "I'll show yuh who's a ape." (4.15.5)

In Scene Five, Yank, accompanied by Long, seeks out Mil-

dred and her ilk on Fifth Avenue on a Sunday morning. As the ladies and gentlemen emerge from church to walk along the avenue like automatons, they ignore Yank, avoiding eye contact and staring without affect, no matter how much Yank rails at or provokes them. Finally, due to a quarrel with a gentleman in the street, Yank is besieged by a group of policemen who beat him down and arrest him. Alienated from the elitists on Fifth Avenue, Yank next attempts to connect with his fellow human beings in prison in Scene Six, in which the prisoners are represented as disembodied voices that taunt and provoke him. When he mentions the name of Mildred's millionaire father, one of these voices suggests that he join the Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World, or I.W.W., a labor organization actively and nonviolently opposed to big business. The I.W.W. recorded its highest membership and greatest influence in the early 1920s, when it also became the target of government repression. The inmate's Voice reads excerpts from a news article of a speech by a right-wing senator opposed to the Wobblies, who accuses its members of being a violent threat to the very fabric of democracy. In his frustration, Yank responds positively to the volatile language with which the senator describes the Wobblies and wants to join their cause, to "blow up tings" and "turn tings round". Then, worked up into a rage, he bends the steel bars of his cell to make his escape.

Scene Seven takes place about a month later, when Yank goes to the I.W.W. local headquarters and attempts to join the union. The stage direction suggests that this is a meeting room where members freely and openly congregate: "The whole is decidedly cheap, banal, commonplace and unmysterious as a room could well be."(7.24.7) Wary of police and other officials because of its antigovernment activities, Yank arouses the suspicions of the secretary with his expectations of secret handshakes and passwords. When he explains that he wants to help their cause by blowing up Mildred's father's steelworks, they suspect that he is a spy sent by the govern-

ment to entrap them, and they literally kick him out of the building (tellingly calling him a "brainless ape.") Discouraged that even the Wobblies are not committed to the kind of meaningful action that he seeks against his perceived oppressors and therefore, not belonging there either, he is confused as to where to turn next.

Finally, Scene Eight finds Yank at the monkey house at the zoo. A gorilla is in plain sight in a cage, while a "chattering" noise (reminiscent of the noises at the prison) suggests that others are nearby. From outside the cage, Yank compares his plight to that of the gorilla and decides that they are both "members of de same club – de hairy Apes." (8.27.23) In an attempt to cement the bond between them and have the gorilla join his cause, Yank frees the gorilla from his cage, only to have the gorilla hug him so hard that he cracks Yank's ribs and kills him. The gorilla escapes and throws Yank in his cage, where Yank dies. The stage direction provides the playwright's intended meaning for the conclusion of the dramatic scene: "And, perhaps, the Hairy Ape at last belongs." (8.29.44)

The structure which O'Neill employs in rendering this unending quest of modern man is distinctly expressionistic and symbolic in form. With the absence of plot in the conventional sense of the word, this play represents the working out of a psychological state, in which conflicts with other human beings are clearly subordinate to the psychological conflict within the hero. Each of the eight short scenes seeks to depict a state in this psychic process. Here, however, the expressionistic techniques are explored more boldly, and as the action becomes more intense, the settings lose their correspondence to reality. They strive to reflect the psychological condition of the hero.

The Hairy Ape is, as we said, expressionistic and symbolic in form because the author deliberately subordinates plausibility of language and situation to the essential need of mak-

ing his theme clear. The characters do not talk or act as they would in real life, because O'Neill wishes to give us things they feel, which reach us only by faint and allusive indications. Given the nature of his subject and his technique, one can readily attest to *The Hairy Ape* as a symbolic tragedy of modern man.

Yank's unconscious imitation of Rodin's statue, *The Thinker* is symbolic of Yank's need to think. While he physically embodies the cultural symbol of a "thinker" he cannot think himself. Every time O'Neill's stage direction calls for the actor to take the position of "The Thinker" Yank has come up against an obstacle that cannot be tackled by any other means but thought, when Yank cannot process the realities before him. After Yank is thrown out of the I.W.W. he immediately gets into *The Thinker* pose. He is desperate to make sense of his situation and understand why the union would throw him out.

For Yank, thought is the ultimate boundary. Whether pressing his fingers to his head or sitting in the position of Rodin's "The thinker", he cannot muster enough thought to make sense of or come to terms with the world around him. Thought only becomes necessary for Yank after he encounters Mildred in the stokehole. Mildred and her class present a new threat that Yank cannot eliminate or get rid of by physical might. Yank is forced to think how he can defend himself. This transition is exemplified in the "tink" joke among the men. Before Mildred enters the stokehole Yank finds thinking ridiculous and unnecessary, he laughs when he tells the men that he is "trying to tink". However, after the encounter, Yank earnestly tells the men that he is trying to "tink". When they joke and correct him in a mocking chorus, "Think!", he is genuinely hurt.

Thematic approach

The resounding theme in O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* is man's at-

tempt to discover himself and his place in the order of things. This consideration makes his play universal and enduring. Among the early plays, *The Hairy Ape* best reflects modern man's struggle for self-awareness and his effort to belong, to give life meaning. In the figure of Yank, O'Neill depicts the dilemma twentieth-century man faces when his faith in the machine and the world of materialism it symbolizes is shattered, and he can find nothing in himself or in his world that can replace this lost faith. O'Neill captures the mood of pessimism that prevailed in the 1920s, when man discovered that while the industrial world provided him with material benefits it also crushed and threatened to obliterate his humanity. The typically somber O'Neill thesis prevails in the bleak world of *The Hairy Ape*: that man has lost his place and his belief in himself and in God or anything external to himself, that life without faith can only end in despair and death, and that man must strive to retain his humanity to give order and meaning to existence.

In his effort to dramatize the displacement of modern man on the distorted universe that followed World War I, O'Neill abandoned the realism of his first plays for expressionism. O'Neill had read the plays of Strindberg, and he and other European expressionists were directly influenced by them. What distinguishes the American playwright from other expressionists and aligns him more closely to Strindberg is what John Gassner calls the "metaphysical mode of expressionism" in *The Hairy Ape*. The play examines not only the nature of man's role in society but the nature of being. Using the technical devices of expressionism, O'Neill moves his hero, Yank, through a series of rapidly changing scenes in his quest to belong, to find his place in the universe; yet in his highly subjective treatment the dramatist never neglects to present the effects of dislocation and loss of faith on the human psyche.

While he needed a nonrealistic approach to dramatize Yank's outer struggle and inner suffering, O'Neill, uses cause

and effect and retains the character motivation of realism. O'Neill's catalyst for Yank's questioning of and awakening to his true condition is woman as the destroyer and nemesis of man. It is his encounter with Mildred, who emerges out of darkness like the unconscious, shadowed side of him that rouses this slumbering automaton from his lethargy. Her rejection of his physical presence, the sum total of the self he had known until then, stuns him. He is thrown off balance when she classifies him as an animal, and his pursuit of her becomes a quest for his own identity. Critics believe that the artificial light above the stairs leading down to the stokehole illuminates not only Mildred but a part of Yank which has always remained a dark mystery to him. But it, on the other hand, proves to be ineffective illumination. Although light has always been a symbol of enlightenment, this artificial glow reflects an artificial woman who, like the modern technology that breeds her, cannot provide Yank with insight.

Until this time Yank has responded to his environment by a series of conditioned reflexes. As "part of de engines," he has adapted to his environment mechanically, bypassing conscious decisions. He has worshipped the machine, becoming one with it. It, in return, has crushed his humanity. Yet, at the beginning of the play, the union of machine and the brute strength of man have produced in Yank a godlike feeling. He is an extension of the machine; its power is personified in him. Yet even before Mildred's appearance, Yank has made feeble attempts to "tink", to understand the complexity of existence.

The dark region of the stokehole he inhabits reflects the underground of his mind. Proud of his animal strength and his ability to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the machine, he has never developed a social presence. Yank is not sophisticated enough to assume a mask to project a socially acceptable image. His arrogance and ignorance leave him vulnerable. In his first major contact with it, society, in the form of Mildred, crushes and rejects the raw natural state of man he

represents.

Yank's unconscious, repressed desires never appear on the surface until Mildred's ethereal appearance. Through Mildred, daughter of the president of Nazareth Steel, the world's new plastic Virgin Queen, descending "a mile of ladders and steps to be havin' a look" at her slaves, O'Neill makes a strong anti-capitalist statement. Her forebears were once vital, productive, and purposeful. In contrast, Mildred is described as pale, anaemic, "looking as if the vitality of her stock had been sapped before she was conceived."(2.7.22) Nervous, disdainful, discontented with her life in spite of great wealth and social position, she is vaguely conscious of being a "poser," as her aunt claims, and of lacking a purpose in life. Somewhere in her unconscious lies a yearning for the primitive, the animalistic, and the primordial heart-of-darkness jungle, peopled by creatures like her grandmother "with her pipe beside her--puffing in Paradise."(2.8.3) The horror that Yank sees but does not understand when he looks into her eyes is her realization that here in him are not only her roots, her past, but, if she would allow her sexual and emotional drives free expression, her vital self.

This vision of Mildred has a twofold effect on Yank: it makes him aware of his social inferiority and conscious of his inadequacies as a human being. Before this encounter, he had been an integral part of the vast industrial complex that produced steel girders, rising godlike in the sky. Their majesty was something tangible, strong and impressive like the brute power of his own body. It is inconceivable to him that Mildred, the daughter of steel, would reject him, the son of steel. Before Mildred came into his life, he had been the pure animal, a leopard, stalking through his domain, proud of the spots, the dirt and sweat that gave him identity. When Mildred calls him a "filthy beast," Yank's safe, known world is destroyed; he is dispossessed. The feminine wonder of Mildred touches a chord of humanity within him that has never been struck before. He

responds with a growing arousal of sensitivity and seeks to find his place on the ladder of evolution. When his pitiful attempts to belong fail, he wants to hurt the creature who gave life to the displaced monster in him but who has neglected to sever the umbilical cord that ties him to his animal world. He says, "She grinds the organ and I'm on de string. She'll get on her knees and take it back or I'll bust de face offer her!"(2.8.33)

Mildred can do nothing to help him or anyone else. For her own attempts to become fully human have failed; and she is left, as she says, "a waste product of the Bessemer process, I am sired by gold and damed by it."(2.8.34) Nor can Yank help himself. He cannot discover by reflection who he is or where he belongs; he simply does not have the mental capacity to do so. Therefore, vainly, he turns outward to society for guidance, understanding and compassion. Society, assuming in the last scenes the shapes of the stylized chorus on Fifth Avenue, the prisoners at Blackwells Island, and the members of the IWW, persistently rejects him.

In his search to discover himself, Yank moves from one cell to another, from the cage-like stokehole of the steamer to the cell on Blackwells Island to the final death cage. Although he does not reach the end without a degree of awareness of the meaning of existence, he must suffer the limits of his perception. In the past Yank had been content to worship the god of steel, had taken pride that he belonged to it. As a result of the rejection he has experienced, the idol is shattered. Now he knows that girders and beams and steam are not enough, that the newly aroused instincts within him crave nourishment:

Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't your belly. It's way down--at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops. Dat's me now--I don't tick, see?--I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me. Aw, hell! I can't see--it's all dark. (8.29.33)

When he realizes his search to belong somewhere has been futile, and he has been rejected by all segments of society, the wealthy, the imprisoned, and finally the representatives of the masses, the IWW, Yank sits in a gutter, "bewildered by the confusion in his brain, pathetically impotent." In desperation, he "turns a bitter mocking face up like an ape gibbering at the moon" and says: "Man in de Moon, yuh look so wise, gimme de answer, huh? Slip me de inside dope, de information right from de stable--where do I get off at, huh?" (8.28.12) Abandoned by and now abandoning humanity, Yank makes his way to the zoo and the gorilla's cage. Remembering Mildred's words, he thinks man's house of classified beasts is where he might belong. It is twilight, that gray-light time between day and night, suspended precariously, even as Yank is, between heaven and earth, humanity and animality. Watching the gorilla who sits like *The Thinker*, a pose he had often assumed earlier, Yank says, "Youse can sit and dope dream in de past, green woods, de jungle and de rest of it. But me--I ain't got no past to tink in.... You belong."(8.29.3) He confronts the beast, looking for traces of himself, and calls it "brother." Yank settles not for brotherhood with man but with animals. Recklessly, he opens the door of the cage, and the gorilla embraces him "in a murderous hug" and throws Yank's crushed body into the cage.

Yank's world ends in despair and death. As O'Neill depicts it, his plight is that of modern man who has become dislocated, disillusioned, and destroyed by his highly technological world. As long as man does not question this world nor seek a better one, he is allowed to function by society, though only on an animalistic, mentally stultifying level. Only when he begins to question, however feebly, the validity of this world and tries to discover a more meaningful existence does he meet with rejection. The tragedy in modern society is not that man has been reduced to Yank's level but that he has even lost the will to attain to Yank's admirable though ill-fated quest. Having rejected his former place as "son" of God, he emerges as the

bastard child of materialism, industrialism, and all the other "isms" that symbolize his godlessness and his inability to provide substitutes. Rootless, bereft of a meaningful role and place in the structure of the universe, he becomes an alien in a hostile world.

O'Neill would agree with Freud that complete self-awareness is an impossibility; man can never explore fully the deep recesses of the unconscious and fathom the secret storehouse of the source of rational decisions. The mind of man is a bottomless pit. What O'Neill seems to be demonstrating in *The Hairy Ape* is that man should at least engage in a search for the self and question the meaning of his existence. Turning back to live complacently on the animal level brings with it moral death and destruction; turning inward to discover the self can provide a degree of awareness of our humanity. Perhaps O'Neill wanted to show that life is an ongoing exploration; that man, like Yank, is still in the process of evolution.

The play is a scathing criticism of contemporary industrial society. But criticism of the class conflict, social inequality or social injustice is not the real theme of the play. The playwright is more concerned with the psychological implications of the machine age. And the importance of O'Neill as a social critic lies in the fact that he emphasizes the psychological aspect of the modern social order. He points out the disease of our acquisitive society. He does not merely stress the fact that workers are exploited to create wealth for the few, but shows how in our modern machine-made world they are deprived of the sense of harmony and mental well-being that comes from doing something that seems important and necessary. Man's work is a necessary part of his personality; it is an extension of his ego; it makes him feel that he is a necessary part of the life of the world in which he lives. Modern industry tends to destroy this psychological counterpart of work, and in so far as it does so, it leaves the worker a nervous, irritable and dissatisfied misfit. Yank was such a worker, and at the same time,

conscious of the thing he had lost. He didn't want a job simply because it would be a means of earning a living; he wanted a job in which he could live.

The Hairy Ape is centered on Yank's loss of faith and belief in himself as well as in the world in which he lives. Yank, in his search for identity, discovers firstly, that he is alone and the world is impossible to live in, and secondly, that steel is no power within him but a prison around him. Steel makes the ship, which represents power but it also makes the cage in which Yank is imprisoned.

Yank had thought that he was the creative element in the ship, the workingman but now "it is dark" and groping blindly he asks: "Where do I go from here?" Ironically enough, he ends up at the zoo and, creeping close to the gorilla he asks: "Ain't we both members of de same club- de Hairy Apes?"(8.22.23) At this point, Yank surrenders himself to the only self image of which he can be conscious- that symbolized by the ape and the cage. It is here that his sense of disillusionment is complete. This scene portrays the complete and final disintegration of Yank.

The *Hairy Ape* is a great tragedy but it is not a conventional tragedy in the Aristotelian tradition due to its modern features. Aristotle laid down that the hero of a tragedy must be an exceptional individual, a man of high rank, a king or prince, so that his fall from his former greatness would arouse the tragic emotions of pity and fear, but Yank, the hero of the play is not a man of high rank, he is not a king or a prince or some other exalted individual. He is a humble stoker whose business is to shove fuel into the furnace of the ship's engine. For long hours, he has to work in the cramped and low-roofed stoke hole. He is beastly, filthy, vulgar and coarse. He has no mind. He cannot think; he can use only physical force, like the hairy ape that he is.

Thus Yank, the tragic hero, is not a man of high estate, a figure of national importance in the Aristotelian sense. Further, Aristotle had held that the hero must fall and suffer owing to some error of judgment or fault of his own. He must have some "tragic flaw" in his character. This was considered necessary because the fall from greatness of a perfectly good man would not be tragic but merely shocking and impious. The tragic hero must suffer because of some fault of his own, and not merely because of the hostility of fate or some malignant deity.

In this respect also, Yank differs from the tragic heroes of Aristotle. He does not suffer from any fault of his own; but because he is in conflict with his environment, with certain social forces that are much stronger than him. Yank is driven to his doom by these forces, against which he struggles, and which are too much for him. In the opening of the play he is quite contented and at ease, quite happy and self-confident because he has a sense of belongingness, a sense of identity. But this sense of security, this sense of belongingness is soon shattered by Mildred, who comes to the stokehole to look down upon them as on wild beasts in a zoo. She calls Yank a "filthy beast" and looks down on him as if he were a hairy ape. Yank feels insulted in the very heart of his pride, his confident sense of belonging is gone. He realizes that he is not steel and steam which make the ship go, but the slave of those who own the ship.

Aristotle stated that action (or plot) is the soul of tragedy. In *The Hairy Ape* also there is enough of action, but the action which counts is internal. The action develops rapidly through eight short scenes, and every scene is a step in the disintegration of Yank's personality. If there is any villain in the tragedy, it is not God or Fate or any human being, but the mechanical forces of the social environment. Society is the real villain of the piece, the forces of a soulless, mechanical-social order, with which he is in conflict, for we are explicitly told that Yank is alone, that he had run away from home early in life. Atten-

tion is focused throughout on the spiritual decay of Yank. That he has been called a hairy ape becomes an obsession with him till he begins actually to see himself as a hairy ape. The delusion carries him step by step to the gorilla-cage, and so to a horrible death.

Conclusions

1- Any analysis of the concept of tragedy as it finds expression in modern drama must recognize that Aristotle's famous definition cannot be applied to these plays, at least not as it has been traditionally interpreted. The full implication of the traditional interpretation as applied to drama from Sophocles to Shakespeare will not serve for Modern one. At the same time, it is recognized that no discussion of tragedy can avoid Aristotle, nor can O'Neill be discussed as a writer of tragedy without reference to Aristotle's definition; whatever the departures from Aristotle may be, that O'Neill does belong in the great tradition of tragedy is certain.

2- Modern tragic plays perhaps come at a time when they seem to oppose the assumption of the death of tragedy after the First World War; this assumption states that there is no such thing as modern tragedy because our philosophical assumptions are non-tragic and we lack the kind of culture, mythology and theology that sustained tragedy in the Greek and the Elizabethan theatre.

Moreover, there was also the claim that tragedy had become impossible in our time as there has been a 'coarsening' or a 'stiffening of the bone' in our imaginations and our language emptied out by a century of atrocities. As against these points of view, some scholars and critics argue that the forms of thinking, the ideologies that dominated the twentieth century such as Marxism, Freudian psychology, Existentialism etc, are inherently tragic in substance and spirit. Man can achieve fulfillment of his life only after violent conflict. He is torn by intolerable contradictions, in a condition of essential absurdity. From these inescapable propositions and from their combination in so many minds, it is not surprising that so much tragedy has in fact emerged.

3-The modern plays are in this sense more complex than those of the Ancients, because the moderns have the advantage of the great tradition of drama – the experiences and the rules of the ancients, as well as the life and nature of their own age, available before them, which they imitate and represent in their plays. With the combination of the insights and themes inherited from the ancients and the new developments in modern thought and philosophy, modern dramatists are able to add new dimensions and introduce new features and have discovered much that is new in Drama.

4- Unlike the works of Greek and Elizabethan dramatists, modern tragedy specially O'Neill's has no concern with the growth of the society or the history of a nation. His tragic focus is on the individual who is trapped by the circumstances of his life and the inescapable bonds of his heredity.

5- Modern plays exhibit a keen sense of loss of the individual's relationship with his family, his society's values, nature and god. Science and materialism fail to give O'Neill's heroes a satisfying meaning for life, or comfort from the fear of the unknown. Still, they are engaged in a heroic struggle against total alienation.

6- Each tragic play written by O'Neill adds something new to our knowledge and experience because it discusses real subjects dealing with real human conditions; these plays help us to discover something about the world that we had not experienced before. In this sense, he too, like his predecessors, portrays the mystery that is human destiny.

7- O'Neill's tragic vision encompasses the life of the acquisitive middle class. Tragic characters wage a heroic battle against the crippling circumstances of a materialistic society which eventually prove stronger. Their tragedy lies in their

protest and struggle, if not in their magnitude or in their heroism.

8- As opposed to the Aristotelian concept of tragedy, we can say that O'Neill writes naturalistic tragedies. There is no supernatural destiny presiding over the O'Neillian universe. The past history of his family, and the biological and capitalistic social structures made by man prove catastrophic to the protagonist's desire to realize his\her human aspirations upon earth.

9- O'Neill presents his Anti-hero or heroine as a tragic protagonist or principal character who lacks the attributes of nobility and magnanimity of the traditional protagonist or hero. The anti-hero is exemplified by the following traits:

a- Imperfections that separate him from typically heroic characters; these include failings such as selfishness, ignorance, bigotry and prejudice.

b- Lack of positive qualities such as courage, physical prowess, fortitude general helplessness in a world which is alien and a life over which he has no control.

c- Qualities normally identified with negative\antagonistic characters such as amorality, greed and violent tendencies.

d- Unseen, unknown, covert 'noble motives' often pursued by bending or breaking the law in the belief that 'the ends justify the means. These negative characteristics of the anti-hero often reflect modern man's ambivalence towards traditional moral and social virtues.

10- O'Neill's antiheroes differ from tragic heroes of the Elizabethan period because a tragic hero (even a villainous protagonist like Macbeth) is still primarily heroic but with a fatal flaw that brings about his downfall; while an antihero's flaws are often more prominent than his heroic qualities. Antiheroes are not doomed to a great tragic end like the tragic hero, either. Their suffering and death are not 'grand' or elevating in the classical sense.

11- The traditional tragic hero is classically depicted to possess an image that is larger than life. He is generally expected to be more physically attractive, stronger, braver, and more charismatic than the average everyman. O'Neill's tragic heroes lack these traits. They lack the glorious appeal of earlier heroic figures.

12- O'Neill's modern anti-heroic protagonists reveal an increased moral complexity. They are recognizable by their lack of identity and determination.

13- The continuing popularity of the antihero in modern drama and modern literature may be based on the recognition that a real human being is fraught with human frailties, unlike the archetypes of the knights and the noble warriors, and is therefore more accessible to readers and viewers.

14- The modern hero's life and death do not require the protagonist to undergo the traditional anagnorisis or self-discovery to bring the story to a close. He\she may die without any justification of his destiny and may suffer without the ability to change events that are happening to him. The story may end without closure and even without the death of the hero.

15. O'Neill presented the American of his day in his tragedies. Among the subjects he chose to present are social injustice, the ruin of families and the conflict of capital and labour, and, to borrow a term from sociology the prblem of 'man versus machine'. These are the themes O'Neill has the honour of bringing to the American stage and audience for the first time.

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