1958

Aeschylus and O'Neill: a study in tragedy

Philippa Blume
Colby College

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AESCHYLUS and O'NEILL: A STUDY in TRAGEDY

Philippa Blume
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INTRODUCTION

What is the nature of tragedy? Is it embodied in an idea, an attitude, or a type of character, or a type of structure? Or is it in a common element to be found throughout ancient, Renaissance, and modern tragedy? Although these three periods emphasize different aspects of tragedy, the Greeks stressing idea, the Elizabethan idea and character, the moderns character, they all explore one fundamental problem which is the essence of tragedy. This problem is the relationship between man and his universe; tragedy is the statement of man's understanding of that relationship.

If we are to comprehend this relationship we must know the writer's view of the nature of man and the nature of the universe. Usually the universe is conceived of as running according to an inevitable order, rational and impersonal. The crux of the nature of man is to be found in man's will. The nature of man is usually the nature of his will. As there is a basic theme throughout tragedies, so there is a basic movement. This movement starts with the will which determines choice. Then this choice leads to action or inaction which results in certain inevitable consequences. Therefore, since man must suffer the consequences of his choice and actions, man's choice is, in a sense, man's fate.

Tragic action depends on man's ignorance of or opposition to the cosmic order. Men will their choices out of ignorance
of or in opposition to this cosmic order which lead to their ruin. Both this ignorance and this opposition are to be found in man himself. Such ignorance is responsible for producing the tragic ironies of life. Man, ignorant of the cosmic order, often makes the wrong choice believing it to be the right choice, thereby causing the opposite of his intention. It is man’s duty to himself to discover the operations of the universe and to lead a life which is in harmony with it. Usually such insight or knowledge comes too late. Man's tragedy is not that he must die, for eventually all men must die; but that, being mortal, man is limited and cannot fully comprehend the cosmic laws. Thus, man incurs suffering more than his error calls for and often is subject to an untimely death.
PART I: GREEK TRAGEDY

INTRODUCTION

When writing about a period we have a tendency to generalize and typify that period as a whole rather than to explore its individual, and therefore varying, components, although these components actually do not permit many generalizations to be made. We tend to forget how extensive an historical period really is and how varied one particular writer alone might be. The Aeschylus who wrote the Suppliants is an almost entirely different person from the Aeschylus who wrote the Oresteia. For this reason it would not be accurate to discuss all the Greek tragedies in terms of one tragedy alone, and yet it is also impossible to discuss all of them. Realizing this limitation I have selected certain Greek tragedies to illustrate both the variety and unity within one period. Aeschylus' Oresteia, Sophocles' Oedipus, and Euripides' Hippolytus are to be the examples.

Some generalizations can be made about Greek tragedy. First of all, almost all of them are based on myths familiar to the contemporary audience. This allowed the tragedians to minimize mere expository material and devote the play to a particular purpose or idea. Secondly, all Greek tragedies used a chorus. However, the extent and function of the chorus varies with each tragedian and indeed with each tragedy. Similarly in all the Greek tragedies the presence of the gods
is felt, and in some they actually physically appear, but their roles vary with each tragedy. For Aeschylus in the Oresteia the gods are changing and progressive. They embody an idea such as a moral or social code, and they are immanent in the action or they may appear as dramatis personae. In the Libation Bearers Apollo is in the background, but in the Eumenides he moves into the foreground. Although the gods do not normally appear as physical characters in Sophocles, as they do in Aeschylus and Euripides, they do play a decisive part in the action. Apollo is a symbol of rational order in the universe and he is immanent in every human act because he represents the principle that every human act has its inevitable consequences. The gods in Euripides stand for specific qualities. Through the use of the gods and the chorus, ideas expressed are elevated to universal significance.

A. Plot and Theme

We cannot dogmatically claim what was the major motivation or idea behind the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides. It is fairly safe to assume that they were partly concerned with winning a prize at the Dionysian festival for which the tragedies were originally written, but it is also safe to assume that the idea which recurs throughout a tragedy is the one which holds the greatest interest for the author.

Aristotle in the Poetics states that the most important part of tragedy is the plot. If we are to interpret plot to
mean the imitation of an action, this is another way of saying the theme is the most important part of tragedy, and for the Greeks this was true. Although the characters are clearly presented, they, and the plot, are subservient to the theme.

Justice was one of the important contemporary issues of Aeschylus' time and was the important theme of Aeschylus' tragedy the Oresteia. Three aspects of justice are presented in this trilogy. One aspect is that this is not a struggle in which right opposes wrong but in which right opposes right. One of Clytaemestra's reasons for murdering Agamemnon was revenge for Agamemnon's sacrifice of their daughter, Iphigenia. Therefore, Clytaemestra claims she is doing the right and just thing when she kills Agamemnon, "the work of this right hand that struck in strength of righteousness" (Ag. 1405-1406). She also says, "Now hear this, the right behind my sacrament: By my child's Justice driven to fulfillment" (Ag. 1431-1432). She will "be content that (she) swept from these halls the murder, the sin, and the fury" (Ag. 1574-1576). And at the end of the Agamemnon Clytaemestra reaffirms her belief in her righteousness. "We two," she tells Aegisthus, "shall bring good order to our house at least" (Ag. 1673).

Aegisthus too claims that his part in Agamemnon's murder was the right and just action for him, "it was I, in my right, who wrought this murder..." (Ag. 1604). Driven to banishment when he was a baby he declares "justice brought me home again" (Ag. 1607). And "now (I) can die in honor, if die (I) must,
having seen him (Agamemnon) caught in the cords of his just punishment" (Ag. 1610-1611). Orestes in The Libation Bearers murders his mother because she has murdered Agamemnon. Now it is Orestes who believes he is doing the right and just thing when he kills Clytaemestra. Orestes says publicly, "I killed my mother not without some right. My father's murder stained her" (L.B. 1027-1028). Again he says, "It was in all right that I achieved this death" (L.B. 988). It is Orestes who sees that this is a struggle in which "warstrength shall collide with warstrength; right with right." Electra prays that justice will avenge her. Over her father's grave she prays, "Let earth and conquering Justice...give aid" (L.B. 147-148). And to Orestes she cries, "let Force, and Right, and Zeus...be on your side" (L.B. 244-245). She exclaims, "I ask for right" (L.B. 398). She pleads with the gods to "be just in what [they] bring to pass" (L.B. 462).

A second aspect of justice in the Oresteia concerns the dispute over which is stronger, the blood or marriage bond. In the Eumenides Orestes is accused, by the chorus, of killing someone who was of "blood congenital" (Eu. 605). Orestes' crime is thus considered by the Furies to be worse than Clytaemestra's since she did not kill someone of "kindred blood" (Eu. 212). Apollo opposes the chorus' belief by claiming "the mother is no parent of that which is called her child, but only nurse of the new-planted seed that grows" (Eu. 558-559). Athene agrees with Apollo mainly because "there is no mother anywhere
who gave me birth...I am always for the male with all my heart" (Eu. 737-738).

A third and very important aspect of justice concerns the change from traditional, automatic, individual retribution to collective justice enforced by the state. Until Orestes' trial each person was executing his own justice, which consisted of "blood stroke for the stroke of blood" (L.B. 312). "Here is anger for anger" (Ag. 1550), declares the chorus. Agamemnon was Zeus' instrument of revenge on Troy. Clytaemestra administered her own revenge on Agamemnon for Iphigenia's murder. Orestes administered his own revenge on Clytaemestra for Agamemnon's murder. Electra, although she does not actively take revenge, prays that evil will fall on the person who has done evil, "gifts to match the...evil they have done..." (L.B. 95). "I pray that your avenger come, that they who killed you (Agamemnon) shall be killed in turn, as they deserve" (L.B. 143-144). Orestes says something similar to his mother when he is about to kill her, "You killed, and it was wrong. Now suffer wrong" (L.B. 930). Individual retribution ends and state justice begins at Orestes' trial. Athene recognizes the inadequacy of traditional justice and initiates a change. She asks for a court of mortals to judge this mortal, a court that "shall swear to make no judgment that is not just" (Ej. 466). Electra is conscious of the distinction between collective law and individual retribution, as is indicated by her question whether she should pray for someone to "judge" the murderers or for someone to "give
them punishment" (L.B. 120).

Justice and right are two key words in the Oresteia. While Clytemnestra, Orestes, and Electra pray for revenge, justice, and right, the watchman and chorus pray for "some respite from the weariness" (Ag. 1), "some man...who will set free the house" (Ag. 160) from its curse. The chorus also prays for justice and right, "By the will of Zeus let these things be done, in the turning of Justice...The spirit of Right cries out aloud" (L.B. 310-311). They too are eager for right to win. Their refrain is "Sing sorrow, sorrow; but good win out in the end" (Ag. 120). They take an active part in the drama and do not regret the part they play because, as they assert, "All that I spoke was spoken in right" (L.B. 787-788). After Orestes has murdered Clytemnestra, the chorus believes he has put an "end to this chain of bloodlettings" (L.B. 933). The chorus assures Orestes "What you did was well done...You liberated all the Argive City" (L.B. 1046). At the trial the chorus declares, "The man who does right, free-willed, without constraint shall not lose happiness" (Eu. 550-551). Earlier the chorus had said, "Righteousness is a shining in the smoke of mean houses. Her blessing is on the just man" (Ag. 775).

As Aeschylus is concerned with Justice, so Sophocles is concerned with the laws and order of the universe. In the Oresteia the gods represent justice. In Oedipus the gods, but even more specifically the oracles, represent the order of the universe. We shall see something rotten in the city
of Thebes as a result of the negation of order. Sophocles is interested in exploring this situation of disorder.

One of the choral odes (864-908) clearly defines the central theme of cosmic order. In the first strophe the chorus says that the gods are the creators of laws and order in the universe, "laws begotten in the clear air of heaven, whose only father is Olympus; no mortal nature brought them to birth" (867-869). Although Sophocles does not define this law, it is the general, rational structure of the world. In the first antistrophe he applies the term law to the moral order, but moral experience is only a part of the total world structure. Here human, moral order proves that "Insolence...plunges sheer down to the ruin that must be" (874-877). But now in the second strophe the certainty of the existence of law is questioned. If justice and law, in other words the moral structure, is rejected, continues the chorus, then "why should I honour the gods in the dance?" (896). Finally in the last antistrophe in this choral passage the chorus declares they will no longer go to worship Apollo (symbol of rational order) "unless the oracles are proved fit for all men's hands to point at" (901-902).

Jocasta and Laius, in an attempt to defy the oracles' prophecy concerning their son, Oedipus, had tried to dispose of Oedipus by binding his ankles and then leaving him on a pathless hillside. For a while Jocasta believed she had been successful in prohibiting the prophecies from being fulfilled. So, sure of her success, Jocasta ironically tells Oedipus he should not pay
attention to the oracles, and she proceeds to give him proof by illustrating her own story. She concludes by telling Oedipus that "Apollo failed to fulfill his oracle" (720). She, therefore, makes the assumption that since Apollo's oracle was false all oracles are false: "so clear in this case were the oracles, so clear and false. Give them no heed" (723-724). Jocasta rejoices when she hears that Polybus is dead and that his death was not caused by the hand of Oedipus; for this contradicts what she believed the oracle had prophesied for Oedipus. To Jocasta this is another example of the unreliability and failure of oracles. She cries out triumphantly, "O oracles of the gods, where are you now?" (945-946). Oedipus himself now believes that the oracles are dead and false, "The oracles...they're dead as he himself (Polybus) is, and worthless" (971-973).

Jocasta urges Oedipus not to fear his "mother's marriage bed" because there is no rational order in experience and chance is all: "Why should man fear since chance is all in all for him.... Best to live lightly...unthinkingly" (977-979). Jocasta had tried to defy the oracles and by doing so she had tried to deny (the) order in the universe. Finally, Jocasta and Oedipus recognize their blindness and see that a rational order does exist.

Although the chorus loves Oedipus, they eventually hope for his fall because they know that in order for life to have meaning the oracle must be vindicated. The chorus says to Oedipus, "I pity you, but I cannot look at you" (1303), and they plaintively cry, "Would I had never known you" (1348).
In Euripides' tragedy Hippolytus human frailty, excessive passions, and passionate rejection of passion are ideas in conflict with the ideals of the characters. Reputation, nobility, and honor are the ideals to which Phaedra and Hippolytus aspire and which occupy Euripides' center of interest. The Hippolytus begins with a speech by Aphrodite in which even she, a goddess, talks of her concern for honor. She does not want Phaedra to escape the "retribution that honor demands that (she) have" (50). Phaedra fights her passion for Hippolytus; yet she feels inwardly guilty and says, "My hands are clean; the stain is in my heart" (317). She does not want to speak to anyone of her desire because her "honor lies in silence" (329). But the nurse argues, "Where honor is, speech will make you more honorable" (332); and Phaedra answers, "We should not talk of 'shame'" (387). Phaedra exclaims to the nurse that she will not hear "such shameful words" (494). For her it would be better to die than to be dishonored. The nurse, however, believes the shameful words are better than "noble-sounding moral sentiment." "'The deed,'" she says, "is better if it saves your life than your 'good name' in which you die exulting" (501-502). Therefore the nurse tells Hippolytus of his mother's love for him. When Phaedra learns of the nurse's betrayal, she cries, "Therefore I must die and die dishonored...He (Theseus) will fill all the land with my dishonor" (688). Phaedra accuses the nurse of giving her "dishonorable advice" (707). "What you have tried," Phaedra exclaims, "has brought dishonor" (708). Phaedra states
clearly, "It would always be my choice to have my virtues known and honored" (402). She could not bear to be a traitor to her husband, her children, and her honor. She prays that she will leave her children "an honorable name" (424), that she can pass on to her children a "life with an uncontaminated name" (718). "For I will never shame you, my Cretan home" (719), she cries. Knowing that Phaedra will kill herself, the chorus says, "The shame of her cruel fate has conquered. She has chosen good name rather than life" (772-773).

Theseus, after reading Phaedra's note saying Hippolytus had raped her, exclaims "He has dishonored God's holy sunlight" (886). "Look at this man!" he cries, "He was my son and he dishonors my wife's bed!" (942) But Theseus' last words to his dying son after he has learned the truth, indicate that Hippolytus had adhered to his ideal until the end; "How noble you have proved to me" (1452).

The preceding discussion has suggested the underlying themes of the Oresteia, Oedipus, and Hippolytus. It has not, however, included the action being imitated, although the action and the theme are very closely interrelated. In the Oresteia the action being imitated was crime and punishment or retribution. Here the action being imitated is incorporated in the underlying theme of justice. In Oedipus the action being imitated is Oedipus' discovery of who he is. This has a subtle relationship with the basic theme of order, for by discovering who he is, Oedipus discovers the rational order that exists in the universe. In
Hippolytus the action being imitated is a search for the main-
tainence of ideals, an action which is closely allied to the
major theme of honor.

B. Ideas on the Universe and Gods

The Greek view of the nature of the universe is fundamentally
different from the Christian view. The Greeks believed that the
earth created the gods whereas Christians believe that God
created the earth. Another major theological difference
between the Greeks and Christians is that the Greeks believed
in many gods but Christians believe in one God. Further-
more, the Greeks did not have a religious system as does
Christianity. Nor did they have a sacred book or creed.

The Greek gods themselves were different from the Chris-
tian God. Although one god was considered supreme over the
other gods, this supremacy was not everlasting and indeed had
been overthrown from time to time: "He who in time long ago
was great, throbbing with gigantic strength, shall be as if
he never were, unspoken. He who followed him has found his
master, and is gone. Cry aloud the victory of Zeus" (Ag. 167-173).
In other words even though Uranos had strength and ruled over
all the gods his son Kronos replaced him. Similarly Zeus re-
placed Kronos. Change existed in the realm of the gods and
mortals, but the main principle of the universe never changed.
This principle is based on the rational order which is main-
tained by eternal laws. Gods are born, and therefore they are
not eternal; but the laws were in existence before the gods; and thus they are eternal.

The Greeks did not believe in gods who were omnipotent, omnipresent, or omniscient. Their gods were anthropomorphic, possessing human passions and weaknesses. In addition, however, each god stood for a certain idea or quality. Zeus, being the supreme god represents many qualities. In the Oresteia, Zeus is the "bestower of power and beauty" as well as the teacher of wisdom: "only Zeus, to cast this dead weight of ignorance finally from out my brain...Zeus who guided men to think, who has laid it down that wisdom comes alone through suffering" (Ag. 176-178). He is called upon in the name of justice by Electra and Orestes to aid them in avenging Agamemnon: "Zeus, Zeus grant me vengeance for my father's murder. Stand and fight beside me," cries Orestes (L.B. 17). Orestes later asks again for Zeus' help, "Zeus, Zeus direct all that we try to do" (L.B. 246). In the Oresteia the Furies, Apollo, and Athene also stand for justice. Orestes' trial takes place at Athene's temple which she herself calls "the place of the just" (Eu. 413). Athene gives strength to her argument for Orestes by claiming, "I have Zeus behind me" (Eu. 826). Apollo says to Orestes, "To you...I shall speak justly. I am a prophet, I shall not lie...This is justice" (Eu. 615-619). Here the new gods (Athene and Apollo) are in conflict with the old gods—the furies.
In *Oedipus* Apollo is important as he is associated with the oracle which is the representative of the inevitable order of the universe. Apollo's symbolizes the existence of rational order in the universe. The fault of Jocasta and Oedipus was their failure to realize the validity of the oracles, and the rational order guaranteed by the oracles. Jocasta claims, "Apollo failed to fulfill his oracle" (720) and Oedipus declares, "The oracles... they're dead... and worthless" (970-972).

Aphrodite is the goddess of passion and Artemis is the goddess of chastity in Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Since the gods are not only anthropomorphic but also may represent a narrow quality or idea, they often go to extremes to maintain that quality or idea. They often resort to questionable tactics, for it is not unusual to find the gods using immoral or undignified methods. Sometimes they are deceitful, quarrelsome or even rebellious.

In the *Eumenides*, Athene and Apollo are guilty of interfering on Orestes' behalf for their own personal and prejudiced reasons. They are in favor of Orestes' acquittal because they are both in favor of the father and opposed to the mother. Apollo believes the mother is not parent of the child, and Athene says she is "always for the male" (737). Sometimes Apollo has human feelings of love and anger. When Cassandra had gone back on her word, Apollo could not take back the gift of prophecy he had given her, but he could curse her so that no one would believe her prophecies. But at other times, as in *Oedipus*, Apollo is simply a cold impersonal force.
Aphrodite and Artemis in Hippolytus also have human feelings of love, anger, and desire for revenge. Aphrodite, the goddess of passion, was angered by Hippolytus' rejection of passion and jealous of Hippolytus' reverence for chastity, Artemis. "Hippolytus...has blasphemed me counting me vilest of the Gods in Heaven...for his sins against me I shall punish Hippolytus" (10-22). It does not matter to Aphrodite that in punishing Hippolytus she is also causing Phaedra to suffer; "Her (Phaedra's) suffering does not weigh in the scale so much that I should let my enemies go untouched" (48-49). Artemis is equally intent on taking revenge on Aphrodite. Artemis says to the dying Hippolytus, "You shall not be unavenged" (1416). But the dying Hippolytus says to his father, who had unjustly punished him and is responsible for his death, "I free you from all guilt in this" (1449).

Even though the gods are thus susceptible to human weaknesses, they are still revered by mortals as being superior to mortals. In the Oresteia Agamemnon, at first, does not want to tread on the purple carpet that Clytaemestra has put out for him because he knows that "Such state becomes the gods, and none beside. I am a mortal, a man...I tell you, as a man, not god, to reverence me" (Ag. 923-925). In Oedipus the Priest makes a similar distinction between god and man: "We have not come as suppliants to this altar because we thought of you as of a god but rather judging you (Oedipus) the first of men" (31-33). The old man in Hippolytus prays before the statue
of Aphrodite asking forgiveness for Hippolytus and telling her, "You should be wiser than mortals, being gods" (120). The irony here is that the gods prove to be no more wise than the mortals.

C. Ideas on Man

Where does man stand in relation to the universe and the gods? As we saw the change and instability in the realm of the gods, so too are we to see instability in the realm of man. The kind of change that is most outstanding not only in the Oresteia but throughout Greek tragedy and all tragedy is the reversal of fortune that every man is subject to. In the paradigmatic anecdote which Herodotus places at the opening of his account of the wars between Greeks and Persians, Solon had told Croesus, "What a chancy thing life is.... Great wealth can make a man happier than moderate means, unless he has the luck to continue in prosperity to the end.... Until he is dead keep the word 'happy' in reserve. Till then he is not happy, but only lucky...Often enough God gives a man a glimpse of happiness, and then utterly ruins him."4

Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides all saw "what a chancy thing life is". In the Oresteia the chorus says that "from high good fortune" springs "the quenchless agony" (755-756). Agamemnon says, "Call that man only blest who has in sweet tranquility brought his life to close" (928-929). And Cassandra cries out as she goes to her death, "Alas poor man, their destiny. When all goes well a shadow will overthrow it.
If it be unkind, one stroke of the wet sponge wipes all the picture out" (1327-1329).

In _Oedipus_ we again see the same idea of change, in man's reversal of fortune. This is seen most dramatically in _Oedipus_ himself. _Oedipus_, once "greatest in all men's eyes" (40), the best of men, has become the worst of men. _Oedipus_ once a noble, happy man has become "the greatly miserable, the most accursed, whom God hates above all men on earth" (1344-1346). Jocasta calls him, "unhappy _Oedipus_" (1071). The chorus at the very end declares that no mortal, great or weak, is secure from the reversals of fortune and so it concludes, "Count no mortal happy till he has passed the final limit of his life secure from pain" (1529-1530).

In _Hippolytus_ also we see the idea of change of fortune in men's lives. The chorus sees man's fortune as "ever-veering, and the currents of life as shifting, wandering forever" (1110). They, like the chorus in _Oedipus_, say "I cannot say of any man: he is happy. See here how former happiness lies uprooted" (981-982).

There is a tendency to regard the Greek man as a fated being instead of seeing him as the free agent he actually is. The gods are not the dictators of fate. They function primarily as a framework representing the forces in the universe which man may accept or reject according to his will. This is explicitly stated by _Hippolytus_, "Men make their choice: one
man honors one God, and one another" (104). In the Odyssey Zeus says "What a lamentable thing it is that men should blame the gods and regard us as the source of their troubles, when it is their own wickedness that brings them suffering worse than any which destiny allots them" (26). Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides believed man to be a free agent. Being free, man is the only one responsible for his fate. Heinhold Niebuhr in Beyond Tragedy said that "Man is mortal. That is his fate. Man pretends not to be mortal. That is his sin." In reference to the first part of this statement the Greeks would have agreed with Niebuhr. For man is not fated because of the will of the gods, but man is fated because of his own will. Man is a victim of his nature, not a victim of a god. Man is free to will an act, but this will can be influenced by man's passions and limitations.

In the Oresteia there was no god compelling Clytaemestra to murder Agamemnon. Clytaemestra's decision to commit this crime rested entirely on her own passions of revenge, love, hate, and jealousy; revenge for Iphigenia, love of Aegisthus, hatred of Agamemnon, and jealousy of Cassandra. Orestes too had his passions. Orestes wanted to avenge Agamemnon's death; he wanted to recover his estates and he wished to punish Aegisthus and Clytaemestra. Orestes made a choice, as the chorus says, "Yes, he murdered his mother by deliberate choice" (425); his choice, however, was partly determined by his emotions and partly determined by the god's persuasion. In the Eumenides Orestes claims,
"Apollo shares responsibility for this." He declares that it was "by the order of this god, here." [Apollo], that he was urged to murder Clytaemestra. Aeschylus had the gods step out of the background into the foreground to play an active part in Orestes' decision in order to sanction and render his action more justifiable than Clytaemestra's. In a sense Aeschylus literally used the deus ex machina here. Aeschylus was far more sympathetic with Orestes than with Clytaemestra. He agreed with Orestes that Clytaemestra "was dirtied twice over with disgrace" (600) because she murdered a husband and thereby a father too. Orestes believes that Apollo, who stands for justice and order, will not forsake him. (L.B. 269).

Oedipus, Hippolytus, and Phaedra were all victims of their own natures. In the case of Oedipus the strength of his character destroyed him. Teiresias tells Oedipus that "Creon is no hurt to you, but you are to yourself" (379). The outcome of Oedipus proves that Oedipus' choice was right; right for him as king and right for the city of Thebes but wrong for him as man.

His passionate actions were a result of his moral blindness. Oedipus was a passionate man. He cursed the murderer of Laius before knowing who he was, and then had to suffer the consequences of such a hasty, harsh, unnecessary curse. He was quick to anger whether it was justifiable or not. His anger was first directed toward Teiresias then toward Creon. He
blindly pursued knowledge, knowledge of who he was and who
the murderer of Laius was. In his blind and passionate quest
he unknowingly cursed himself and exposed himself to public
humiliation by having Creon deliver the oracle's message
in public; "speak it all" (93) Oedipus tells Creon.

Oedipus claims he has "given many tears to this, and gone
many ways wandering in thought" (66-67) in an effort to dis-
cover how the plague can be lifted from Thebes. He sends
for Apollo's advice, but being mortal he is incapable of realiz-
ing what the oracle is referring to. When Teiresias tries to
enlighten him, Oedipus does not see the light because he
is incapable of recognizing it. Teiresias tries to warn
Oedipus, "You have your eyes but you see not where you are"
(414). Oedipus blindly denies the validity of the oracle.
The only way Oedipus can see is by suffering. Therefore,
Oedipus' suffering is essential to knowledge, and it is
this knowledge that is the tragic insight or vision. This
comes too late for Oedipus, the man. Oedipus cries out,
"O god, I think I have called curses on myself in ignor-
ance" (745). The herdsman is aware that Oedipus "speaks
out of his ignorance" (1151). No one but himself is to
blame for his ruin. Oedipus clearly recognizes this, "The
hand that struck me was none but my own" (1331). The second
messenger states that "troubles hurt the most when they
prove self inflicted" (1231-1232).

Professor Bernard Knox in his book Oedipus at Thebes
argues persuasively that dramatic excitement can not be created
unless there is human free will and responsibility and unless
the catastrophe results from free decision and action. He asserts that in the actions of Oedipus in the play fate plays no part at all. Knox supports this statement by demonstrating the autonomy of Oedipus' actions. He shows that Teiresias' prophecy is the result of Oedipus' free actions. It was Oedipus' free decision to consult the Delphic oracle; it was his free decision to ask Creon to disclose the oracle's news in public; and it was Oedipus' free decision to curse Laius' murderer. Oedipus' autonomy of actions is emphasized by a sequence of efforts by people who try in vain to deter him. Teiresias asks Oedipus to let him go home. He tells Oedipus, "I will not bring this pain upon us both...I will tell you nothing" (331-333). But Oedipus insists. Jocasta twice tries to prevent Oedipus from further inquiry which she fears will only lead to ruin: "I beg you-do not hunt this out-I beg you, if you have any care for your own life" (1060-1061). The herdsman also pleads, "O master, please-I beg you, master, please don't ask me more" (1165).

The tragic action, explains Knox, is not the fulfillment of the prophecy but the discovery that he (Oedipus) has fulfilled it. Some of the main events in the play are not even part of the prophecy, Knox points out. The discovery of the truth, Jocasta's suicide, and Oedipus' self-blinding are events which were not mentioned in any of the prophecies.

Euripides, like Aeschylus and Sophocles, recognized that man
is primarily responsible for his own fate. Hippolytus said
"Men make their choice: one honors one God, and one another"
(104). Hippolytus chose to honor Artemis rather than Aphrodite.
It was not merely Aphrodite as a goddess, but Aphrodite as
sexual passion, (which is a part of life, that part of life
which Hippolytus to reject) that caused Hippolytus' suffering.
It is not the actual gods, Aphrodite and Artemis, but actual
parts of life that are in conflict in Hippolytus. The ideas
are portrayed as concrete visible characters in this play to
illustrate the point more vividly and dramatically. As Sophocles
shows Oedipus destroyed by the strength of his character,
Euripides shows Hippolytus and Phaedra destroyed by the in-
completeness of their characters. Euripides shows that some
men suffer and fall as Hippolytus did, because a part of life
was rejected. Hippolytus thought he could choose a part of
reality, but as a human being he must take and accept the whole.
And some men suffer and fall, as did Phaedra, because of a
passion which is in conflict with an ideal which he is unable
to control. Hippolytus was painfully aware that he was not
normally placed in society because of his bastard birth. He
hated women and passionately rejected passion. Phaedra, des-
pite her efforts to maintain chastity and honor, fell prey
to her passionate nature once and then struggled to regain her
honor.

At first, when love struck Phaedra she reflected how best
to bear it, and her first plan was "silence and concealment"
(394). When that failed, she believed she could conquer love "with discretion and good sense" (398), and when that too failed, she resolved to die. "This then" admitted Phaedra "is my destruction" (419), because she could not bear to be a traitor to her husband and children; she had to regain honor at any cost. Being human, Phaedra fell in love with Hippolytus. "This is my work" (28) claimed Aphrodite; in other words this was the work of passion. She tried to keep silent but being human she could not refrain from succumbing to the nurse's persuasion to talk of her passion. "I yield. Your suppliant hand compels my reverence" (335). Phaedra told the nurse "if you plead the cause of wrong so well, I shall fall into the abyss" (505). Artemis said that Phaedra "tried to overcome her love with the mind's power, but at last against her will she fell to the nurse's stratagems" (1303-1305).

The nurse was blamed by Phaedra as the cause of her ruin; "She (the nurse) loved me and she told him of my troubles, and so has ruined me" (596). The nurse meant to give Phaedra sound advice by telling her to practice temperance, "I praise less the extreme than temperance in everything. The wise bear me out" (264-266). "Love of one for the other must be tempered" (254), declared the nurse to Phaedra, "Love must not touch the marrow of the soul. Our affections must be breakable chains that we can cast off or tighten them" (255-257). But such advice could not be applied in Phaedra's situation.
Phaedra, like Clytaemestra and Oedipus, failed to see wherein she herself was the pilot of her fate. In Euripides, more than in Aeschylus and Sophocles, men seem to be the playthings of the gods. The characters are quick to accuse the gods or external forces for the unhappy situations in which they find themselves. Phaedra blamed the gods for her madness and fall, "It was the madness sent from some god that caused my fall" (241). She claimed that neither she nor Hippolytus "wills it" (319), and she referred to her curse as "an inherited curse" (343). The nurse too believed it was some mischievous god who thwarted Phaedra's wits and "prompts such whirling, frenzied, senseless words" (172). When the nurse learned of Phaedra's passion, she cried out, "Cypris, you are no god. You are something stronger than a god if that can be. You have ruined her and me and all this house" (359-361). She told Phaedra to endure her love because "the gods have willed it so". Theseus also blamed external forces for what has happened to him. On learning of his wife's death he accused fate of grinding him and his house to dust, "fate in the form of some ineffable pollution, some grim spirit of revenge" (819-820). Theseus supposed that "it must be the sin of some of my ancestors in the dim past, God in his revenge makes me pay now" (830-831). When Theseus learned that he had unjustly caused his son's death he declared "a god tripped up my judgment" (1414). Like Phaedra, the nurse, and Theseus, the women in the chorus talk of the gods as being the cause of man's fate: "Surely
some God brings sorrow in succession" (866). And at the end of the play Hippolytus cried "Woe for my fate" (1350). Artemis cried, "Unhappy boy! You are yoked to a cruel fate" (1390). Both Hippolytus and Artemis blamed Aphrodite for all the suffering that had been caused by her "cunning snares" (1406). Artemis told Hippolytus "It was fate that you should die so" (1436).

Hippolytus believed chastity was the answer but it wasn't; Phaedra believed death was the answer but it wasn't; the nurse believed moderation or temperance was the answer but it wasn't; and Theseus believed exile and death for Hippolytus was the answer but it wasn't. All the characters ironically produced the opposite of their intentions because being human they were unable to see what the right answer really was, and thus they suffered and fell through their own human ignorance. What was the right answer? This they could never know—being merely mortals. Nor did the dramatist himself offer an answer.

Aeschylus demonstrated how fallible men are under the beguiling influence of persuasion. Sophocles demonstrated how fallible men are because of their blindness to reality, and Euripides demonstrated how fallible men are under the destructive force of love.

Persuasion is not merely a divine force; it is a force under which men and gods cannot stand. It was by persuasion that Helen won Paris; it was by persuasion that Agamemnon walked on the purple carpet of pride; and it was by persuasion that
Orestes was led to murder Clytaemestra: "Persuasion... strong daughter of designing ruin" (Ag. 385-386) sang the chorus. The chorus asked Clytaemestra, "In persuasion of what report do you order such sacrifice" (Ag. 86-87)? They commented that the flames of her sacrifice were "drugged by the simple soft persuasion of sacred ungents" (Ag. 94-95). The chorus asked Orestes, at the trial, "By whose persuasion and advice did you this" (Eu. 593)? The final act of persuasion in the Oresteia occurred when Athene undertook to persuade the Furies to be reconciled with the new principles: "But if you hold Persuasion has her sacred place of worship, in the sweet beguilement of my voice, then you might stay with us" (Eu. 885-887). And Athene said, "I admire the eyes of Persuasion, who guided the speech of my mouth" (Eu. 970-971).

While persuasion was an ambivalent force in the Oresteia, leading both to destruction and to the creation of a new order, love in the Hippolytus is simply a destroying force. The nurse warned Phaedra not to let love touch the marrow of the soul. The chorus prayed that love might never enter their hearts because it causes "ruin when (it) enters human hearts" (544), and "Love goes destroying through the world." (567), "Love is like a flitting bee in the world's garden and for its flowers, destruction is in his breath" (561-562). After the chorus learned of the nurse's betrayal, they told Phaedra, "those you love have betrayed you" (595). And finally at the end of the play the chorus accuses love of "bewitching"
and "maddening" the heart (1274).

We have seen how applicable to Greek tragedy is Niebuhr's statement, "Man is mortal. This is his fate." The second part of Niebuhr's statement, "Man pretends not to be mortal. That is his sin", is also applicable to Greek tragedy. We see evidences of this in Agamemnon's treading on the purple carpet, in the efforts of Clytaemestra and Creste to right the wrong by themselves, in the denial by Oedipus and Jocasta of the order in the universe, and in Theseus' curse on Hippolytus. The characters themselves condemn these actions as the deeds of mortals pretending to be more than mortals.

When Clytaemestra tempted Agamemnon to walk on the purple carpet he said, "I tell you, as a man, not god, to reverence me" (Ag. 925). But she persuaded him to commit this overt, visible act of pride in order to justify her act of murder as minister of justice. All of Oedipus' actions take place after the priest in the prologue has said to him, "We have not come as Suppliants to this altar because we thought of you as of a God, but rather judged you the first of men" (31-32). The nurse in Hippolytus warned Phaedra, "It's only insolent pride to wish to be superior to the gods" (475), and Theseus in Hippolytus condemned all the daring impudence of men's minds, "The mind of man-- how far will it advance? Where will its daring impudence find limits" (936-937)?

Partly because man's fate is his mortality and partly because man's sin is his pretending not to be mortal, man
lacks the proper understanding of the nature of the universe. There are two kinds of ignorance; one is willful, the other is not. Hippolytus was willfully blind. He refused to see. The servant tried to explain to him that, as man should equally be a friend and honor every god; man should not reject a part of life. In contrast Oedipus was willing to comprehend the universal laws but could not until they were proven to him by suffering under them.

We have learned from Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides that "it is natural for man to sin" (Eur. 315), it is natural for man to be persuaded, to be blind or ignorant, and to be consumed by passions, especially love. Man, being limited by his mortality, must suffer. Euripides emphasized that no life is secure from pain, "We all must suffer sometimes: we are mortal" (Eur. 307). This statement illustrates what we find to be true in all the Greek tragedies, the fact that the innocent as well as the guilty suffer. As the chorus in the Agamemnon states in reference to the Trojan War, "Danaans and Trojans they have it alike...not innocent cool tears will soften the gods' stiff anger" (Ag. 66-71).

Sophocles recognized this world wide suffering; but to him this suffering was essential, for it reveals the meaning of life and teaches wisdom. Oedipus' suffering was necessary to give meaning to experience because it proved the existence of moral order. In the Oresteia suffering, Zeus taught, was necessary in order to acquire wisdom: "Justice so moves that those only learn who suffer" (250-251). As Sheppard
said, "One of the guesses made by Aeschylus at the solution of life's moral tangle was that suffering is god's discipline for men." There does not seem to be any discussion of ideas on man's inherent evil or goodness; men may be lucky or unlucky, not evil or good. The nature of good and evil in the Greek world appears to be defined in terms of acceptance or violation of universal order. Compliance with, or violation of, these laws is external and observable. By this definition Clytemnestra was evil because she violated the natural order of the family by murdering a husband and a father. Clytemnestra's evil led to further evil. Orestes technically committed a similar evil by murdering a mother, but this evil led to the end of evil, that is to a more just and thorough system of justice, whereby order could be restored. Oedipus and Jocasta were evil because they too broke the order in the universe, but an even more serious offense was their overt denial of that order. It was right that Oedipus be judged worst of men because that is the law; he has violated the law, and he must pay for it. Hippolytus was evil because, scorning Artemis, he attempted to deny one phase of the universal order. Phaedra saw that her desires went contrary to the laws of family and society; therefore, because she was guilty of such an evil, she committed suicide. Artemis accused Theseus of breaking the natural order, "You have murdered a son, you have broken nature's laws" (1287).
A characteristic of evil is its self-propagation. Evil breeds evil; "Only the act of evil breeds to follow, young sins to its own likeness" (Ag. 758-760), sang the chorus in Agamemnon. In The Libation Bearers the chorus asked, "What can wash off the blood once spilled upon the ground?" (L.B. 46); and the chorus answered, "All the world's waters may try to wash blood from the hand of the stained man; they only bring new blood guilt on" (L.B. 72-75). The whole theme of individual retribution is involved in the idea of evil propagating itself; an endless chain of bloodletting: "It is but law that when the red drops have been spilled upon the ground they cry aloud for fresh blood. For death act calls out on Fury to bring out of those who were slain before new ruin on ruin accomplished" (L.B. 400-404).

D. The Nature of the Tragic Hero

Now that we have seen the Greek idea of the nature of the universe and man, it is easier to understand the nature of the tragic hero. To a certain degree Aristotle's definition of the tragic hero as being a man greater than he is in actual life, is true. The tragic heroes Agamemnon, Clytaemestra, Orestes, Oedipus, Jocasta, Hippolytus, and Phaedra, possess a certain grandeur and nobility that surpasses ordinary men. Yet the tragic hero has his weaknesses and failing as does every man. Aristotle's other statement declaring that the hero falls because of a harmatia (error of failing) is not usually true. The hero's ruin is more likely to be a re-
sult of his entire character. Whether it is one failing or his general character, the hero is the master of his own fate. He alone makes the tragic choice which leads to the tragic action and fall.

Professor Knox presents a thorough case for the idea that Oedipus, as tragic hero, falls because of the nature of his entire character, not because of merely one flaw. The first point that Knox makes is that Oedipus is a man of action; he sent for the oracle's advice, "I sent... Creon... to Apollo... that he might learn there by what act or word I could save this city" (69-73); he sent for Teiresias, "On Creon's word I have sent two messengers and why the prophet is not here already I have been wondering" (87-89); he sent for the herdsman, "Send someone for the peasant to bring him here, do not neglect it" (860); and Oedipus sent for the shepherd, "Someone go and fetch the shepherd for me" (1069). Oedipus relentlessly pursues his aim. He acts quickly and deliberately, and he is impatient of slowness. Oedipus admits himself that "my actions have not been sluggard" (86). He is vexed that Creon "is gone far longer than he needed for the journey" (75), and he impatiently wonders why Teiresias "is not here already" (86). As Knox points out, Oedipus' questions to Creon, Teiresias, Jocasta, the messenger, shepherd, and herdsman are rapid; he never loses time. Although Oedipus acts rapidly, it is not without thought: "You have not roused me like a man from sleep", 
says Oedipus, "Know that I have given many tears to this, gone many ways wondering in thought" (66-67). His thought results from his superior intelligence. Knox says Oedipus has a creative as well as a critical intelligence. He has a critical intelligence, says Knox, because of his method of questioning, which is like that in a court, and because Oedipus insists on complete knowledge and clarity. He must have the full truth. Despite Teiresias', Jocasta's, and the herdsman's pleas to Oedipus to stop his investigation, he continues. His only comment is "I must hear" (1170), no matter how fearful the knowledge may be. This is the determination of man greater than he actually is. He has a creative intelligence because he is able to answer as well as ask questions. He was the only one able to answer the riddle of the sphinx. "I solved the riddle by my wit alone" (98), declares Oedipus.

Knox says the critical and creative intelligence of Oedipus along with his position in Thebes illustrates the "versatility of Oedipus' brain". Oedipus' will to action, Knox believes, is based on his "superb courage" and "springs from enormous self confidence". Knox points out that this self confidence is the mark of a superior person. It is not vanity; the confidence that he has in himself is no greater than what others have in him. Thebes regards him as "the first of men" (33), "noblest of men" (46), and Oedipus is "willing to give all that you (Thebes) may need" (11). His self confidence permits him to be hopeful and optimistic. He feels sure that he will accomplish what he set out
to do, "I will bring this to light" (132) asserts Oedipus, "and justly you will see in me an ally, a champion of my country and the God" (134-135). Let the assembly meet says Oedipus "upon the understanding that I'll do everything" (144-145). The opening scene pictures Oedipus as an ideal ruler. He loves the people and has a strong sense of responsibility toward them. His anger, therefore, is justified as it arises out of his devotion to the city of Thebes.

This is Oedipus' character, as Knox sees it: he is a great man, a man of experience, who executes swift and courageous action but not without deliberation. He is illuminated by analytic and demanding intelligence. His successful actions generate self confidence which is always directed to the common good. He is an absolute ruler who loves and is loved by his people. Oedipus is capable of anger only under great provocation and which can be subdued when he sees himself isolated from his people. Knox says that Sophocles presents a hero who destroys himself. The process of self-destruction is difficult and is presented as a heroic task to which Oedipus dedicates himself for the common good. We can agree with Knox that "Oedipus is the greatest single individual in Greek Tragedy". Knox's description of Oedipus depicts him as being a man greater than he actually is, yet a man who has a common bond with everyman in his
ignorance of the cosmic order. To Knox Oedipus does not fit into Aristotle's theory of the hermata because he views Oedipus' tragedy as being a "product of the total man". But Knox does agree that Oedipus' tragedy is what Aristotle believed to be the best kind, reversal combined with recognition. Oedipus' moment of recognition occurs during his questioning of the herdsman. He then sees who he is, and that he, who rejected the prophecy and the divine order of the world, is a living proof of its existence. This is also the moment of reversal: Jocasta kills herself and Oedipus blinds himself; he is now the "luckless" Oedipus. The second messenger sees this reversal: "The fortune of the days gone by was true good fortune--but today groans and destruction and death and shame--of all ills can be named not one is missing" (1281-1286).

Hippolytus is a different type of tragic hero from Oedipus, although his ruin, like that of Oedipus, was a result of the nobility of his character. Ironically Hippolytus' ruin was a result of the nobility of his character. He knew that Phaedra's note accusing him of raping her was a lie, but he did not deny it and nobly accepted the consequences of it. "I know the truth and dare not tell the truth" (1091) says Hippolytus. Here is a man of more than ordinary nobility. But Hippolytus is not the great and noble figure that Oedipus is. In modern terms Hippolytus'
character would be termed pathological. He has an intense hatred of women, "I'll hate you women, hate and hate and hate you, and never have enough of hating" (664). He also has an extreme sensitivity to his bastard birth, "I would not wish on any of my friends a bastard's birth" (1064). Hippolytus also has a fanatic adherence to chastity. He tells the servant that he worships Aphrodite "from a long way off" because "I am chaste" (102). He hails Artemis as "Maiden Goddess most beautiful of all the Heavenly Host that lives in Olympus" (70) and he tells Theseus that he is a "virgin to this very day" (1004) and has no desire to be otherwise. In Hippolytus there is no recognition on Hippolytus' part of his own failings. With this fact we may connect the fact that instead of one reversal there are two. The first reversal occurs when Phaedra's note is disclosed and Hippolytus is cursed by his father. This curse is the cause of Hippolytus' death and the cause of his destruction as a man. The second reversal occurs when Hippolytus nobly tells his father, with his dying breath, "I free you from all guilt in this" (1449). This act of Hippolytus' is a triumph for him, but is a triumph in which he does not recognize any fault in his own conduct. Artemis' action in establishing permanent honors for Hippolytus is proof that the gods themselves accept the value of the standards by which Hippolytus has lived. It is also a
triumph for all mortals because they are capable of forgiveness as the gods are not.

As Hippolytus ends in triumph, so does Oedipus. Although the hero as man in both plays is destroyed, the victory that they achieve as more than man triumphs over their mortal defeat.

Orestes is the tragic hero in the Oresteia. Orestes' ending is victorious because he has been released in the name of justice and he has stopped the endless chain of bloodlettings. The Oresteia is not a tragedy in any of the Aristotelian terms. Orestes has no moment of insight or recognition, and there is no one moment of reversal. Reversals do occur periodically throughout the trilogy. One reversal occurs when Agamemnon is murdered; then a second reversal occurs when Clytaemestra is murdered; still another reversal takes place when Orestes is acquitted at his trial. Although Orestes is technically considered to be the tragic hero, Clytaemestra is so powerful that she too can be considered as a tragic hero. However, neither she nor Orestes ever has any moment of tragic insight. Clytaemestra has a statuesque grandeur, but this, in her case, does not mean she is a great or noble character, it simply means that she is a powerful, passionate, and determined person in dimensions which exceed those of the normal person. Whereas Oedipus' grandeur was directed toward restoring order, Clytaemestra's grandeur was directed to-
ward destroying order.

Generally the Greek tragic hero is a strong, determined person driven by an ideal or passion. By his driving passion, he encounters a moment of reversal which usually leads to a moment of insight or vision. Hippolytus blindly and passionately rejected passion. Oedipus blindly but with reason and thought sought to help the city of Thebes. Phaedra with careful thought and reason decided the kind of life she wished to achieve and adhered to it. Similarly Orestes thought out his course of action and then carried it out.

In summarizing Part I we can say that Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides have shown that the nature of tragedy is to be found in man's relationship to the universe. These three tragedians illustrate this idea by showing how man, who is strong, clashes with the universe, which is stronger, thus ending in catastrophe and tragedy for man. The reason for man's tragedy is that his strength is in his will. This prompts man to act, but he is not always aware of the consequences of his actions. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides show man striving for ideals and trying to understand the universe. In the Oresteia Aeschylus was interested in the nature of justice in the world. In Oedipus, Sophocles was interested in the laws and order of the world. In Hippolytus, Euripides was interested in the ideals that motivate and determine people's lives. Since the gods played an important role in the lives of the Greeks they also played an important role in their dramas.
Aeschylus retells Homer's story of Agamemnon, as O'Neill retells Aeschylus' story of Agamemnon. O'Neill utilizes the reader's knowledge of the Oresteia in building up the effects of his own play, Mourning Becomes Electra. Although it is not essential to know Aeschylus' Oresteia in order to understand O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra, both understanding and enjoyment are enhanced by such knowledge. It is the purpose of this part of this study, by revealing the similarities and differences between these two trilogies, to lead the reader to a greater appreciation of Mourning Becomes Electra.

O'Neill indicates in many ways that he is remodeling Aeschylus' ancient trilogy. O'Neill's title is indicative of this intent. He even created a parallel period for the action by placing the play, in time, shortly after the Civil War, as Aeschylus' play was placed shortly after the Trojan War. In choosing this particular time O'Neill had the following thoughts on the subject as his work diary indicates:

No matter in what period of American history a play is laid, must remain a modern psychological
drama—nothing to do with period except to use it as a mask—what war?—Revolution too far off and too clogged in people's minds with romantic grammar—school-history associations. World war too near and recognizable in its obstructing (for my purpose) minor aspects and superficial character identifications (audience would not see fated wood because too busy recalling trees)—needs distance and perspective—period not too distant for audience to associate itself with, yet possessing costume, etc.—possessing sufficient mask of time and space, so that audiences will unconsciously grasp at once...Civil War is only possibility—fits into picture—Civil War as background for drama of murderous family love and hate.

Still another parallel O'Neill creates is the setting. As O'Neill said:

... house Greek temple front type that was rage in first half nineteenth century—(this fits in well and absolutely justifiable, not forced Greek similarity)—This home of New England House of Atreus character, Agamemnon's father—grotesque perversion of everything Greek temple expressed of meaning of life—(New England background best possible dramatically for Greek plot of crime and retribution, chain of fate—Puritan conviction of man born to sin and punishment...²

The trilogy form of Mourning Becomes Electra is yet another of the many structural similarities between the Orestesia and Mourning Becomes Electra. In both trilogies a crime has been committed prior to the opening. The first plays of the trilogies, Agamemnon and Homecoming, deal with the hero's homecoming after a war and his murder. Similarly the second plays of the trilogies are parallel; The Libation Bearers and The Hunted deal with the deaths of Clytemnestra...
and Christine. With the last plays of the trilogies comes the major structural, and thematic deviation, but both plays, *The Eumenides* and *The Haunted*, are concerned with the end of the family curse.

As there is a balance in structure between the two trilogies, so there is also a balance in characters. O'Neill even goes so far as to endow some of his characters with a name beginning with the same letter as his Aeschylean counterpart, Adam-Aegisthus; Christine-Clytaemnestra; Orin-Orestes. However, this does not hold true for Lavinia and Electra or Ezra and Agamemnon. O'Neill, in his work diary, explained:

Names of characters- use characteristic names with some similarity to Greek ones- for main characters, at least - but don't strain after this and make it a stunt-. no real importance, only convenience in picking - right names always tough job.

Agamemnon- (Asa), (Ezra) Mannon
Clytemnestra- Christine(?)
Orestes- Orin
Electra- Eleanor (?) Ellen (?) Elsa (?)
Laodicea- Lavinia (this sounds more like it) Vinnie (called in family)
Aegisthus- Augustus (?) Alan Adam (?)
Fylades- Paul (?) Peter (?)
Hermione- Hazel- Hester3

However, there are many differences between the two trilogies. The basic structure and characters are parallel but this parallelism offers a basis for contrasts that are as important as comparisons. Contrasts occur between themes, structures, and characters. These contrasts are obvious and purposeful, for they illustrate how the fundamental ideological and thematic ideas have changed between these two ages. They also illustrate
how drama itself has changed.

Aeschylus is concerned with the nature of justice, individual retribution versus state justice. In a cosmic sense Aeschylus is interested in man's relation to the gods and the universe. The _Oresteia_ is more than a domestic tragedy, it is a political and dynastic tragedy as well. O'Neill, however, is concerned with man's relationship to man; the theme of Belonging. And, instead of turning his interest outward and dealing with the cosmic implications, O'Neill turns inward to explore the psychological nature of man. Therefore, _Mourning Becomes Electra_ is primarily a domestic tragedy. The emphasis on psychology in O'Neill was prompted by Freud and the growing interest in psychology, even though O'Neill claimed, "I know enough about men and women to have written _Mourning Becomes Electra_ almost exactly as it is if I had never heard of Freud, Jung or the others". Many of O'Neill's plays use the Freudian concept of the Oedipus complex or its counterpart, the Electra complex. If Aeschylus was for the male, O'Neill is for the female. One of the first questions O'Neill asked himself before writing _Mourning Becomes Electra_ was, "Is it possible to get modern psychological approximation of 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?" Two years later he wrote in his work diary: "Greek tragedy plot idea—story of Electra and family psychologically most interesting". Then a year later he wrote that
this play "must remain a modern psychological drama".\(^7\)
Another year later, after he had been working on *Mourning Becomes Electra* for some time, he still insists that the play, "must before everything, remain modern psychological play".\(^6\) And after its completion O'Neill feels that in *Mourning Becomes Electra* he has achieved "a psychological modern approximation of the fate in the Greek tragedies... without benefit of supernatural".\(^9\)

This introduction has briefly touched on the broad lines of similarities and differences between the two trilogies. In order to understand the meaning of these similarities and differences we must proceed to a close textual examination of the *Oresteia* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*. First the structures will be compared, then the characters, and finally the theme and imagery.
A. Structure

*Agamemnon* and *Homecoming* begin in similar ways. In the *Agamemnon* the watchman in the prologue, and the chorus in the parados, provide an exposition, as do Seth and the townspeople in *Homecoming*. However, in the *Agamemnon* the prologue and parados are two units while in *Homecoming* they are balanced by one unit. From the watchman, in *Agamemnon*, we learn that Argos is no longer "administered in the grand way" (Ag. 18), and that Argos is suffering from a weariness caused by the war. The watchman sees the beacon light and prays that this is a sign that "truly the citadel of Ilion has fallen" (Ag. 29-30). Seth, in *Homecoming*, does more than pray for Ezra's return; he tells Lavinia, "You can count on your paw comin' home" (693). From the watchman and Seth we also learn something about the returning heroes, their wives, and the speakers' attitude towards them. The watchman reveals his love for Agamemnon by saying, "May my king come home, and I take up within this hand the hand I love" (Ag. 34-35), and Seth reveals his admiration for Ezra by claiming he is an "able man" because "he went to...war and came out a major...He learned law on the side and got made a judge. Went in fur politics and got elected major...and jined the army again. And now he's rez to be General!" (690). The watchman refers to Clytaemestra as a lady who has a "male strength of heart" (Ag. 11). When Christine is mentioned to Seth his face grows grim and he sharply says, "never mind her. We ain't
talkin' 'bout her" (690), and Amos tells the other townspeople that Seth has "allus hated her" (690). O'Neill reveals Ezra earlier and more fully than Aeschylus reveals Agamemnon. The reason for this may be that Aeschylus had the advantage of having his characters and plot known to the whole audience whereas this is not true for more than a small part of O'Neill audience.

Structurally O'Neill emphasizes different characters from the characters emphasized by Aeschylus. In Agamemnon the chorus enters singing after the watchman speaks and does not leave the stage for the rest of the trilogy. The choruses speak with every character who appears on the scene-watchman, Clytaemestra, Herald, Agamemnon, Cassandra, Aegisthus, Orestes, Electra, Clisto, Apollo, Athene; if there is no other character on the stage they speak among themselves. In each play of Aeschylus' trilogy the chorus represents a different kind of group, citizens of Argos in Agamemnon, slave women in The Libation Bearers, and the divine furies in the Eumenides. Although O'Neill has introduced a chorus in Mourning Becomes Electra, its function and importance are greatly diminished. The chorus, comprised of the townspeople, appears in the opening scene of each play and then disappears entirely (until the opening scene of the next play). O'Neill has described the townspeople as types rather than individuals, "a chorus representing...the town as a human background for the drama of the Mannons" (753). As Clytaemestra is the first character
to appear after the opening choral passage in *Agamemnon* so Christine is the first character to appear after the opening choral passage in *Homecoming*. However, Christine makes a quick appearance and disappearance without speaking a word, whereas Clytaemestra remains on the scene and carries on a lengthy conversation with the chorus. Generally, Christine and Clytaemestra have about the same importance in the trilogies. Lavinia, who appears immediately after Christine's first entrance, is O'Neill's center of interest. While Lavinia is O'Neill's most important character, Electra is almost Aeschylus least important character. *Mourning Becomes Electra* practically begins and does end with Lavinia on stage. The fact that O'Neill entitled his play after his Electra indicates that she is of major concern to him. Electra, however, is in only one scene in Aeschylus entire trilogy and that scene is in the second play; after Orestes' entrance Electra appears only together with Orestes and the chorus, while Lavinia, like the chorus in *Agamemnon*, appears with almost every character in the trilogy, Seth, Christine, Adam, Orin, Ezra, Hazel, and Peter. The presence of Hazel and Peter marks another deviation from the *Oresteia* because they have no Aeschylean equivalent. Still other character deviations from the *Oresteia* in *Mourning Becomes Electra* are the absence of a Herald, a nurse, and a Cassandra; and whereas Aegisthus does not appear in the *Oresteia* until the very end of the *Agamemnon*, Adam appears in *Mourning Becomes Electra* in the
first act of *Homecoming*... Neither Orestes, nor Orin appears until the second play of the trilogy but Orin is given more significance than Orestes.

The plot is altered as well as the characters. For example, in *Homecoming* it is Seth who tells Lavinia, and Lavinia who tells Christine, that Ezra is on his way home. Seth says to Lavinia, "you can count on your paw comin' home!" (693) Lavinia asks Christine, "you have heard the news I suppose? It means father will be home soon!" (700). Here it is Christine who is dubious as to the truth of this statement: "we've had so many rumors lately. This report hasn't been confirmed yet, has it?" (700) In *Agamemnon*, however, it is Clytaemestra who informs the chorus- "The men of Argos have taken Priam's citadel!" (267), and here it is the chorus who doubts Clytaemestra, asking, "how can I be certain? Is there some evidence?" (272) Another deviation between *Agamemnon* and *Homecoming* is that there is no active conspiracy on the stage between Clytaemestra and Aegisthus against Agamemnon, as there is between Christine and Adam against Ezra. Also the method of murder differs between these two plays; Agamemnon is stabbed while Ezra is poisoned. This seemingly insignificant detail is surprisingly significant as the character analysis will prove. Still another significant variation is the way in which the *Agamemnon* and *Homecoming* end. The *Agamemnon* ends almost on a note of triumph. Although the chorus knows of Clytaemestra's crime, Clytaemestra believes
that she and Aegisthus will finally "bring good order" (1673) to her house. There is a sense, on Clytaemnestra's part, of victory of righteousness. False as this sense of victory and triumph are later to be proved, it nevertheless exists at the end of the first play. In *Homecoming*, Lavinia, not the chorus or anyone else, is aware of her mother's crime, and there is no sense of triumph. Instead there is the indication that the crimes have just begun as Lavinia cries out to Christine, "I'll make you pay for your crime! I'll find a way to punish you" (749). Actually Aeschylus indicates this same idea, but, he does it far more subtly by Aegisthus' ironic statement, "Exiles feed on empty dreams of hope, I know it, I was one" (1668), which is a foreshadowing of Orestes' return.

Some time has elapsed between the first and second plays of each trilogy. The time between *Agamemnon* and *The Libation Bearers* is many years; the time between *Homecoming* and *The Hunted* is two days. The opening scene of *The Libation Bearers* and *The Hunted* are similar; both open with the chorus on stage before the tomb of the hero murdered in the first play. Ezra's "tomb" is the Mannon house. Christine, in *Homecoming*, had referred to the house as a tomb. She said to Lavinia, "I felt our tomb needed a little brightening...Each time I come back from being away it appears more like a sepulchre!" (699) When Orin returns home in *The Hunted* he tells Lavinia that the house is "like
a tomb", and Lavinia tells Orin, "It is a tomb-just now, Orin" (760). In The Libation Bearers and The Hunted Orestes and Orin return home after a long absence, Orestes from exile, Orin from the war. In The Libation Bearers it is Orestes who is unrecognizable to his sister and mother because of the long years of absence, but in The Hunted it is the sister and mother who are unrecognizable to Orin because the strain of their emotions has altered them. Since there is no nurse in The Hunted the plot is slightly different from the plot of The Libation Bearers. In The Libation Bearers it is Clytaemestra who sends for Aegisthus but in The Hunted Christine goes to Adam. Another striking variation in The Hunted from The Libation Bearers is that Christine kills herself; she is not killed by Orin as Clytaemestra was killed by Orestes. However, there are similarities. Neither Adam nor Aegisthus is on stage until the end of the second play of the trilogy. Adam is murdered by Orin, as Aegisthus is murdered by Orestes. Both The Libation Bearers and The Hunted end on a note of slight hysteria as Orestes and Orin are attacked by the furies. If there was any note of triumph at the end of Agamemnon it has completely disappeared by the end of The Libation Bearers. In fact, in both The Libation Bearers and The Hunted, instead of triumph there is a greater sense of helplessness and an indication that the curse is continuing.

With the last plays of the trilogies the major deviations
character, plot, and theme occur. In *The Eumenides* it is clear that Aeschylus was primarily concerned with his thematic problem. Because of this the only characters that are necessary are Orestes and the gods. Apollo and the furies represent opposing forces in Aeschylus' thematic conflict and Athene is the force which reconciles them. As Aeschylus develops his theme Electra is left out entirely and even Orestes becomes insignificant and disappears entirely before the end of the play, as the gods—furies and Athene—are left to resolve the thematic problem. Although O'Neill is just as interested in his theme as Aeschylus was in his, O'Neill does not sacrifice his human characters to the ultimate working out of that theme. Instead the remaining characters in *The Haunted* maintain their significance until the end of the trilogy. As *Homecoming* and *The Hunted* opens with the chorus so *The Haunted* opens with the chorus. As Seth and Lavinia began the trilogy so they end the trilogy. As Lavinia has been the most important character throughout *Mourning Becomes Electra* so she is the most important character in the final moments of the play. O'Neill deviates from Aeschylus' pattern by using characters for which there is no equivalent in the *Eumenides*. Lavinia, Peter, and Hazel are O'Neill's innovations. O'Neill, like Aeschylus, uses the furies; but, unlike Aeschylus, the furies are not visible. Clytemnestra's ghost and her furies appeared visible to Orestes but Christine's ghost and furies did not appear
visibly to any of the characters. In The Haunted the furies are internal, not external as they are in the Eumenides. Being internal they exist in the consciences of Orin and Lavinia. In the Eumenides Orestes has a trial but in The Haunted Lavinia does not need a trial as she judges her own crime and administers her own justice and punishment. The final deviation in The Haunted from the Eumenides is that Orin kills himself whereas Orestes is acquitted and lives.

B. Characterization

The differences in plot structure between Oresteia and Mourning Becomes Electra become significant to us as we see the differences in character between the two trilogies. O'Neill retained most of the major Aeschylean characters and to some extent he maintained their Aeschylean characteristics.

In the previous discussion we saw that O'Neill stressed different characters and that the actions of his characters sometimes deviated from those of his Aeschylean counterpart. This discussion will be concerned with why O'Neill made these deviations, why his characters act the way they do.

On an external level the differences between Clytaemestra and Christine begin with their opposing qualities of masculinity and femininity. We first learn of Clytaemestra's masculine quality from the watchman who refers to Clytaemestra's
"male strength of heart" (Ag.11). After Clytaemestra speaks the chorus says, "my lady, no grave man could speak with better grace" (Ag.351). When next we have an indication of this masculine quality it is from Clytaemestra herself who claims,"With no man else have I known delight, nor any shame of evil speech, more than I know how to temper bronze" (Ag. 611-612). Later on in Agamemnon Clytaemestra states that she takes no shame in speaking aloud before all because in time "modesty fades" (Ag. 856-858). Agamemnon himself is troubled by Clytaemestra words and he wonders, "Surely this lust for conflict is not womanlike?" (Ag. 940) After Agamemnon's murder Clytaemestra admits again that she takes "no shame now to unsay it all" (Ag. 1373). She then brutally proceeds to describe the manner in which she killed Agamemnon blow by blow (Ag. 1384-1392). The chorus' only reaction is "We stand here stunned. How can you speak this way, with mouth so arrogant, to vaunt above your fallen lord?" (Ag. 1399-1400) And Clytaemestra answers by again asserting her male strength of heart, "You try me out as if I were a woman and vain; but my heart is not fluttered as I speak before you" (Ag. 1401-1402). That Clytaemestra used an ax for her weapon is another indication of her masculine personality. Christine, however, used poison as her weapon, and this is indicative of her feminine personality. O'Neill describes Christine as
being a "striking-looking woman" with "a fine, voluptuous figure" (691). In general Christine has a feminine quality about her in spite of the fact that her face is described as "handsome rather than beautiful" (691). Both Ezra and Orin tell Christine how beautiful she is, "You're beautiful. You look more beautiful than ever" (737). Orin says to Lavinia in The Haunted, "You don't know how like mother you've become. I don't mean only how pretty you've gotten" (768). We learn that Christine dresses attractively, has beautiful hair and the movements of her body have "feminine grace" (825).

These external differences between Clytemestra and Christine penetrate to their internal characters. Although they have some similar characteristics, basically Clytemestra and Christine are dissimilar. Clytemestra is glad to hear that Agamemnon is on his way home but Christine is not glad to hear that Ezra is on his way home. Clytemestra is the one to tell the chorus Agamemnon is returning but Christine is the one to doubt the news of Ezra's return. This basic difference is attributed to the fact that Christine lacks the strength and grandeur which is fundamental to Clytemestra's character. Clytemestra is anxiously and triumphantly awaiting Agamemnon's return, whereas Christine is fearfully and nervously dreading Ezra's return. Clytemestra knows what she must do when Agamemnon comes home but Christine does not know what she will do when Ezra comes
home. However, Christine as well as Clytaemestra decide on murder as a solution. Clytaemestra has decided on this solution prior to Agamemnon's return. She is sure and determined in her act of murder. Not only is Clytaemestra capable of executing this action but she is capable of executing it without the help of anyone, even Aegisthus. Christine on the other hand has not decided on any course of action prior to Ezra's return. Furthermore she is unsure and hesitant even after Ezra's murder. Nor is Christine able to execute the murder by herself; she needs Adam's assistance and makes sure that he is as involved in the murder as she is. In Agamemnon Aegisthus does not appear until after Agamemnon's murder. In Homecoming, however, Adam appears before Ezra's murder, and Christine and Adam work out the details of the murder together. At the end of Act Two of Homecoming we learn why Christine is so eager to have Adam included in her plans. After Adam has left she says to herself, "you'll never dare leave me now, Adam...when I grow old and ugly" (726). Not only does Christine need support to carry through the murder but she needs assurance that this murder will not be in vain, not now or later in her life.

Christine's moments of hysteria and fear show her weakness which follow Ezra's death. She is continually afraid, both of time and of being alone, "I'm afraid of time" she tells Adam. And "I'm afraid to be alone" she tells Pazel. The first moment of panic occurs directly after Ezra dies;
at this moment Christine faints. This is a kind of reaction which a person of Clytemnestra's character would never be prone to. Christine begins to "snap under the strain" (745) in Act Four of *Homecoming*. Her fear turns to "savage satisfaction" (747) as she taunts Ezra to death, but she "starts with terror" as Lavinia appears on the scene. In *The Hunted* Christine lapses into several moments of fear which end in hysteria. One occurrence of this behavior is at the end of Act One of *The Hunted*. Here Christine is talking to Lavinia but as Lavinia does not say one word "Fear creeps into Christine's tone" (763), then she "exclaims frightenedly." (764) Finally, "as Lavinia remains silent, Christine gives way to fury and rushes down the steps and grabs her by the arm and shakes her" (764). As Lavinia walks away "Christine stares after her, her strength seems to leave her, she trembles with dread." (764) Throughout the second act Christine is tense, strained, and frightened for herself and then becomes "full of new terror now-for Brant's life." (775) Although she may appear to be calm "her eyes are still terrified and her voice trembles." (775) At the end of Act Two Christine appears "almost triumphant" (777). She seems almost "drunk with her own defiant recklessness" (778). But "then all her defiant attitude collapses and she pleads, seized by an hysterical terror, by some fear she has kept hidden" (778). When Lavinia leaves her alone Christine "collapses, catching at the table for support—terrifiedly" (778). In the third act Christine's fear increases.
When Orin doesn't answer as Christine calls to him through the locked door her "voice becomes terrified" (786) and "she pounds on the door violently" (786). When she sees the box of poison on Ez's corpse she "starts back with a stifled scream and stares at it with guilty fear" (787) and looks "wildly" at Lavinia. This act like the preceding two acts ends with Christine in a state of hysteria. By giving a "stifled scream" Christine has proven her guilt to Lavinia. When Lavinia asks Christine if Brant was her accomplice she answers "(distractedly) No! No! No!" (787). This is the final proof of Christine's guilt and, as Lavinia leaves, Christine "stares after her wildly" (788). In Act Four Christine's hysteria continues. She goes to see Adam on his ship. "She tears herself from his arms but immediately throws herself in them again-terrifiedly."

Then "she begins to sob hysterically" (800). "I can't bear this horrible feeling of despair!" Christine cries to Adam. Christine's fear, despair, hysteria and weakness reach their climax in Act Five. Christine tells Hazel "Now I know there is only hell!" (805) and admits to Hazel "I'm afraid...I must confess I'm worried-and frightened" (805). O'Neill's description of Christine illustrates her heightening hysteria. "Hysterical tears come to her eyes," (806), she speaks "In tense desperation" (806), she "then begins to pace back and forth again" (806), "She turns, seized by panic and runs to the house" (806).
and leans "against the column for support" (806), she speaks "terrifiedly...then brokenly" (807). When Orin informs her that he has killed Adam Christine exclaims "with a cry of terror", then she "begins to moan to herself, bringing her hands together in stricken anguish". Christine continues this moaning and remains unaware of anyone's presence. When Lavinia tells Christine "you can live!" Christine repeats the word "live" then "bursts into shrill laughter" and leaves the stage to commit suicide, her final act of weakness.

These illustrations of Christine's weakness of character are in sharp contrast to Clytemnestra's strength of character. Clytemnestra never faints, fears, or becomes hysterical. Nor does she depend on Agamemnon for help or security. She does not commit suicide nor would the idea of suicide occur to her. Even at the moment when Clytemnestra faces death at the hands of her own son she does not lose her self possession or grandeur. As she confronts Orestes she tries to dissuade him from his murderous intent, first by appealing to his sense of love and duty toward his mother and then by warning him of his mother's curses that "like dogs, will drag [him] down" (924). Clytemnestra's last words to Orestes are "you are the snake I gave birth to, and gave the breast" (928).

Clytemnestra's and Christine's reactions before, during and after their murders differ partly because of their differing motives. Clytemnestra claimed that her murder of Agamemnon was justified and right because it was an act
of justice. She declares that the work of her right hand struck with the "strength of righteousness" (1406). She is acting as an avenger for Iphigenia because Agamemnon "slaughtered like a victim his own child" (Ag.1417). Although there are other motives for Clytaemestra's murder, she makes this one appear as the strongest. It is the only one of her motives that she believes is most justifiable to the citizens. Because of this she was able fearlessly to commit this murder and fearlessly to tell the citizens about the murder. Clytaemestra tells the chorus, "Now hear you this, the right behind my sacrament: By my child's justice driven to fulfillment, by her wrath and Fury, to whom I sacrificed this man." (Ag. 1431-1433) She does not feel any shame "in the death given this man" (Ag. 1521) for "did he not first of all in this house wreak death by treachery?" (Ag. 1522-1524). She will be content that she swept murder sin and fury from these halls and believes she will bring good order to her house. (Ag. 1673) Nor does she feel any fear, "the hope that walks my chamber is not traced with fear" (Ag. 1434). Christine however, does not have a motive of revenge or justice. Therefore, there is no motive which is justifiable, and Christine is aware of this. That is why she did not want anyone to discover how Ezra died, whereas Clytaemestra was not afraid to proclaim her act of murder aloud.

Another motive which Aeschylus gives Clytaemestra but
which O'Neill does not give Christine is the motive of sexual jealousy. Agamemnon brought Cassandra back to his house, which gives Clytaemestra the motive of jealousy, "Here lies she... who shared his bed... Their reward is not unworthy" (L.B. 1440-1444). Clytaemestra and Christine have two similar motives. Clytaemestra hates Agamemnon as Christine hates Ezra, and Clytaemestra loves Aegisthus as Christine loves Adam. Although Clytaemestra never speaks of her hatred of Agamemnon her actions speak louder than words. Christine does speak of her hatred of Ezra. She tells Lavinia "you would understand if you were the wife of a man you hated," (713) she continues to tell Lavinia of her utter "disgust" (714) for Ezra. Although Christine and Clytaemestra are basically different they have some characteristics which are similar. Both Clytaemestra and Christine are capable of hypocrisy. Clytaemestra deceived Agamemnon by her welcoming speech as Christine deceived Ezra by her behavior the first night he was home. Clytaemestra made a very flattering speech to Agamemnon when he returned. She even went so far as to insinuate that he was worthy of being treated like a god by spreading out the purple carpet. But beneath this flattery was hatred and murder. Christine doesn't flatter Ezra but she pretends she loves him, even tells him "There is no wall between us. I love you." (740) The next morning Ezra realizes that Christine was lying to him, "You were lying to me to-
night as you've always lied! You were only pretending love" (745). Christine put on an act even with Orin to whom she had once been so attached. He had been her baby and he had been the only person she had loved. But now her only love is Adam. To save her love and Adam's love she must lie to Orin. Christine greets Orin as if nothing is different, "My boy! My baby," she cries and rushes to kill him. "All I want now is your happiness, dear...If only you knew how horribly lonely I've been without you," she lies to Orin. (771). Christine successfully deceives Orin until he sees proof of her hypocrisy with his own eyes.

Hypocrisy is not the only characteristic Clytaemestra and Christine have in common; they both are clever, tricky, and cunning. Ultimately, however, neither of them is clever enough to escape her own death. Clytaemestra's cunning is evidenced in her speech to Agamemnon and in her success in persuading Agamemnon to tread on the purple carpet. By succeeding in the latter she had another good excuse for Agamemnon's murder. By walking on the carpet Agamemnon committed an outward act of hybris. "Now, my beloved one", Clytaemestra hypocritically beckons to Agamemnon, "step from your chariot; yet let not your foot, my lord, sacker of Ilium, touch the earth." (Ag. 905-906) She tells her maidens to "strew the ground before his feet with tapestries" (Ag. 908). At first Agamemnon hesitates but Clytaemestra
cunningly implores, "Oh yield! The power is yours. Give way of your free will" (Ag. 943). And Agamemnon does yield, "Since you must have it,...Now since my will was bent to listen to you in this my feet crush purple as I pass within the hall" (Ag. 956-957). Christine's cunning can be seen in the way she manipulates people. Too weak to handle the murder herself, Christine makes sure Adam helps as well as has a binding part in it. She knows just what Adam's weaknesses are and she cleverly plays on them. Christine knows that Adam loves her, so she tells him in a "calculatingly reproachful" (722) way that Ezra would never divorce her and she says, "What would I be in the world's eyes? My life would be ruined and I would yours! You'd grow to hate me" (722). "Passionately" Adam responds, "Don't talk like that! It's a lie and you know it." Thus again firmly assured of Adam's love, she moves on cunningly to stir up Adam's emotions enough to involve him in her plan. "Calculatingly-without looking at him [Adam]" Christine says, "If he [Ezra] had only been killed, we could be married now and I would bring you my share of the Mannon estate. That would only be justice. It's yours by right. It's what his father stole from yours" (722). And Adam, stung by the truth of her statement says, "That's true enough, damn him!" (722). But Christine does not stop there; she goes on to present the possibility to him that if Ezra were dead he "could buy (his)
own ship and be (his) own master" (722). He "yearningly" tells her what she already knows, "That's always been my dream—some day to own my own clipper" (722). Now Christine is ready to present the idea of murder to Adam. At first Adam objects to the idea of poisoning Ezra; "It's a coward's trick" (724), and besides he would want to give Ezra a chance. Christine "now seeing the necessity of goading him" says, "Did he give your mother her chance?" (724). Adam is "aroused" and answers "no, damn him!", but Christine quickly touches on another one of Adam's weaknesses; "Are you going to prove, the first time your love is put to a real test, that you're a weak coward like your father?" (725). Adam "passionately" responds, "Christine! If it was any man said that to me—!" (725). Finally Christine "more tauntingly" says to Adam, "But perhaps your love has been only a lie you told me to take sneaking revenge on him of being a backstairs lover!" (725). Adam is "stung" and fiercely says to her "Stop it! I'll do anything you want! You know it!" Christine's parting words to Adam recapitulate three of his weaknesses, "Remember your mother's death! Remember your dream of your own ship! Above all, remember you'll have me—all your own—your wife!" (725). Another example of Christine's calculated cunning is when she teunts Ezra to death. She "becomes deliberately taunting... goading him with calculating cruelty" (746). Christine
tells Ezra, "You wanted the truth and you're going to hear it now! ...You filled me with disgust! ...It was I he [Adam] came to see, not Vinnie! I made him come! ...He's what I've longed for all these years with you—a lover! I love him! So now you know the truth!" (746).

Christine's cunning was successful with Adam and Ezra but unsuccessful with Lavinia and Orin. Orin is not taken in by Christine's trickery, until he has been given positive, visible proof of his mother's hypocrisy. Christine tries to win Orin to her side before Lavinia has a chance to try to win him to her side. Christine knew how to appeal to Orin as she had known how to appeal to Adam. She tells Orin, "I feel you are really my flesh and blood! She (Lavinia) isn't! She is your father's! You're a part of me!" (771) And Orin answers "(with a strange eagerness) Yes! I feel that, too, mother!" (771) Christine continues to stir Orin's old feelings of attachment for her: "I know I can trust you to understand now as you always used to. (With a tender smile) We had a secret little world of our own in the old days, didn't we? Which no one but us knew about" (772). Orin is touched and responds "You bet we did! No Mannons allowed was our password, remember?" (772) Christine says, "I want to make up to you for all injustice you suffered at your father's hands.... I loved you better than anything in the world!" (772). Orin completely falls into her tender trap, "Do you, Mother?"
Do you honestly?" (772). As Christine strengthens Orin's love for her she strengthens Orin's hatred of his father until he admits, "I won't pretend to you I'm sorry he's dead!" (772). Now that she has won that victory she tries to make him distrust Lavinia, "If only you won't let Vinnie poison your mind against me with her disgusting lies" (772). And Christine tries to convince Orin that Lavinia is "actually insane" (773). When Orin seems to doubt Christine she manages to make him feel ashamed and guilty that he ever entertained such doubts. "Oh Orin!" she cries, "You pretend to love me! And yet you question me as if you suspected me". And Orin "overcome by remorse" pleads "Mother! Please! Don't cry! I do love you! I do!" (774). When Lavinia interrupts the discussion between Orin and Christine, Christine feels "triumphant" that she has successfully won Orin's complete confidence through her chicanery and hypocrisy.

Lavinia also is not taken in by Christine's trickery. Lavinia sees right through her mother. This is because she is basically like her. The strength and grandeur that Aeschylus gave to Clytaemestra O'Neill gives to Lavinia, instead of Christine. The reason for O'Neill's interest in Lavinia is best explained in O'Neill's own words:

give modern Electra figure in play tragic ending worthy of character. In Greek story
she peters out into undramatic married banality. Such a character contained too much tragic fate within her soul to permit this—why should Furies have let Electra escape unpunished? Why did the chain of fated crime, and retribution ignore her mother's murdereress?—a weakness in what remains to us of Greek tragedy that there is no play about Electra's life after the murder of Clytemnestra. Surely it possesses as imaginative tragic possibilities as any of their plots.

O'Neill created Lavinia as a very different character from Electra, and because there are very few similarities between them, their motives, functions, and personalities are strikingly dissimilar. Electra's motives for desiring Clytemnestra's murder are relatively straightforward. She wants revenge for the father she loved against the mother she hates. Electra hates her mother because she "bought herself...a man, Aegisthus," (132) who helped her murder Agamemnon, and also because Clytemnestra "sold" (132) Electra and Orestes. Electra says, "Now I am what a slave is, and Orestes lives outcast from his great properties, while they [Aegisthus and Clytemnestra] go proud in the high style and luxury of what [Agamemnon] worked to win" (135-137). Electra angrily says, "My father was murdered.... I stood apart, dishonored, nothing worth, in the dark corner, as you would kennel a vicious dog" (445-447).

Electra's primary motive, therefore, is justice, first for her father, and then for herself, Orestes, and Iphigenia. She prays that an "avenger come" (143) and that "earth and
conquering justice...give aid" (147). She asks that force, right, and Zeus be on her side (245). "There has been wrong done," says Electra, "I ask for right" (398). "Our complaints are for your sake." (508), Electra says to Agamemnon's spirit.

Lavinia's motives for desiring Christine's murder, however, are complex. Like Electra Lavinia loves her father and hates her mother. But O'Neill has complicated the situation by having Lavinia in love with her mother's lover-Adam. Therefore, unlike Electra, Lavinia's primary motive is not clear. We do not know if Lavinia wishes to kill Christine primarily for revenge for Ezra, or primarily out of hatred and jealousy of Christine. Lavinia tries to make it appear that her primary concern is her duty to, and justice for, her father. In Homecoming, before Ezra's murder, Lavinia says to Christine, "It's my first duty to protect him (Ezra) from you!" (715). She tells Christine, "You ought to see it's your duty to Father" (718). When Lavinia says "I've got my duty to Father", Christine answers, "Duty! How often I've heard that word in this house" (729). The night of Ezra's return Lavinia gets angry as she thinks about Adam and Christine and she says to herself, "It's my duty to tell him (Ezra) about her? I will" (741). After Ezra's murder Lavinia tries to engage Orin's assistance in avenging Ezra's death. She tells Orin, "I'd rather suffer... than let the murderer of our father go unpunished!" (783).
Lavinia tries to keep Orin calm; "Remember you promised not to lose your head," she says to Orin, "There would be no justice if we let ourselves-" (800). When Lavinia tells Christine that she and Orin killed Adam, Lavinia explains, "He paid the just penalty for his crime. You know it was justice. It was the only way true justice could be done" (809). Just before Christine's suicide Lavinia says to herself, "It is justice!" Then there is the sound of a pistol shot and Lavinia says again, "It is justice! It is your justice, Father!" (810). As Lavinia looks at the portraits of the Mannons she addresses them saying, "I've done my duty by you" (826). Then as Orin tortures Lavinia in The Haunted she wildly cries out, "There was only justice!" (854). However, Lavinia's love for Ezra is as strong as her sense of duty to him. She tells Adam, "I love him better than anyone in the world! There is nothing I wouldn't do to protect him from hurt!" (704). She tells Ezra to his face, "You're the only man I'll ever love!" (735). If Lavinia tries to make it appear that her primary motive is justice for her father, Christine and Orin believe that her true primary motive is jealous hatred of Christine. In The Haunted Orin says to Lavinia, "You know damned well that behind all your pretense about mother's murder being an act of justice was your jealous hatred!... You wanted Brant for yourself!" (841). Lavinia fiercely answers, "It's a lie! I hated him!" (841). "Yes," Orin replies,
"after you knew he was her lover!" (841). In Homecoming Christine recognizes Lavinia's intention. "Oh, I'm not denying you wanted to save his (Ezra) pride—", Christine tells Lavinia, "and I know how anxious you are to keep the family from more scandal! But all the same, that's not your real reason for sparing me!...You wanted Adam Frant yourself!...And now you know you can't have him, you're determined that at least you'll take him from me!" (716).

Lavinia tries to deny his, "If I loved anyone—", but Christine interrupts exclaiming, "If! I think you do love him" (717). "I always hated him!" (717). Lavinia fiercely retorts, and later to Peter she says, "I hate the sight of him (Adam)!" (697). Lavinia's hatred and jealousy of Christine is as intense as her love for Ezra. Lavinia flares up at Christine and tells her "(with bitter hatred) Oh, I hate you! It's only right I should hate you!" (714).

When she is alone Lavinia cries out, "(in an anguish of jealous hatred), I hate you (Christine)! You steal even Father's love from me again!" (741).

Electra's function in the Oresteia is completely different from Lavinia's function in Mourning Becomes Electra. Although Electra appears in only one scene, she is instrumental in heightening the intensity of that scene. In Agamemnon Clytemnestra makes Agamemnon appear as a sinner who unjustly killed his daughter, who despite his words, acted as if he were equal to the gods by treading on the purple
carpet, and who was unfaithful to his wife by bringing Cassandra to his home. In *The Libation Bearers* Orestes and Electra make themselves appear just, as they make Clytemnestra appear unjust, by presenting Agamemnon as a most noble and worthy king and father who has been foully slain. Aeschylus uses Electra to magnify Clytemnestra's guilt, thereby magnifying the justice of Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra to follow. Electra accentuates Clytemnestra's guilt by mentioning the wrong done to Orestes and herself. They were sold, exiled, treated like kennelled dogs and slaves by Clytemnestra: for Aegisthus' sake. Electra claims that Clytemnestra is "no mother in her heart" (190) because she "hates her children" (191). Electra calls Clytemnestra "a cruel, cruel all daring mother" (108).

Not only is Electra angry because Agamemnon was murdered, but she is angry because of the dishonorable way in which he was murdered. Electra says that Agamemnon was "hid... in shrouds that were thought out in shame" (494). As Electra demonstrates Clytemnestra's guilt she demonstrates her own innocence and sense of justice. "There has been wrong done" (396) she asserts; therefore she asks for right and for the aid of justice, "I ask for right... (398) Let... conquering justice... give aid" (148). She asks her father to "hear one more cry" (500) and to pity them, "Your nestlings huddle suppliant at your tomb; look forth and pity them" (501).
Electra's function in the _Oresteia_ does not begin until this scene nor does it continue after this scene. She is not a continuing factor through the entire trilogy. However, Lavinia is important to the entire trilogy. Lavinia dominates the other characters and thereby dominates the whole action. It is Lavinia who persuades Orin to avenge their father's murder. This precipitates a series of consequences. Orin, convinced of his mother's love for Adam, kills Adam; this in turn causes Christine to kill herself; these events ultimately lead to Orin's suicide and Lavinia's realization that she too must suffer punishment.

Through Lavinia O'Neill develops the idea of the inherited family curse which must be played out to its ultimate conclusion. Lavinia not only inherits the Mannon look but also the Mannon Character, especially from her mother. Although Lavinia's resemblance to Christine is obvious in some respects, before her death, it becomes even more pronounced and complete after her death. The following two descriptions reveal the physical similarities and dissimilarities between mother and daughter before and after Christine's death:

She is twenty-three but looks considerably older. Tall like her mother, her body is thin, flat-breasted and angular, and its unattractiveness is accentuated by her plain black dress. Her movements are stiff and she carries herself with a wooden, square-shouldered, military bearing. She has a flat dry voice and a habit of snapping out her words like an officer giving orders. But in spite of these dissimilarities, one is
immediately struck by her facial resemblance to her mother. She has the same peculiar shade of copper-gold hair, the same pallor and dark violet-blue eyes...the same sensual mouth, the same heavy jaw. Above all, one is struck by the same strange, life-like mask impression her face gives in repose. But it is evident Lavinia does all in her power to emphasize the dissimilarity rather than the resemblance to her parent. She wears her hair pulled tightly back, as if to conceal its natural curliness, and there is not a touch of feminine allurement to her severely plain get-up. Her head is the same size as her mother's, but on her thin body it looks too large and heavy. (692)

At a first glance, one would mistake her for her mother as she appeared in the First Act of Homecoming. She seems a mature woman, sure of her feminine attractiveness. Her brown-gold hair is arranged as her mother's had been. Her green dress is like a copy of her mother's in Act One of Homecoming...The movements of her body now have the feminine grace her mother's had possessed. (825)

The basic similarity between Christine and Lavinia is noticeable before Christine's death. In Homecoming Adam tells Lavinia, "You're so like your mother in some ways. Your face is the dead image of hers. And look at your hair. You won't meet hair like yours and hers again in a month of Sundays" (704). One of the townspeople, Minnie, comments about Lavinia, "She looks like her mother in face" (693). Christine was right when she told Lavinia, "You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always schemed to steal my place!" (716). Christine fails to include that Lavinia is also trying to become the lover of her lover. After Christine's death Lavinia does take her mother's place. In The Haunted, Orin tells Lavin-
la, "You don't know how like mother you've become. I don't mean only how pretty you've gotten... I mean the change in your soul, too... Little by little it grew like mother's soul— as if you were stealing hers— as if her death had set you free— to become her!" (827). Later Orin again says to Lavinia "...now you are mother! She is speaking now through you" (854). When Peter first sees Lavinia after her trip to the islands he stops "startledly, thinks for a second it is her mother's ghost" (829). He "(stammers) Vinnie! I-I thought you were-! I can't realize it's you! You've grown so like your—" (829).

Aside from the physical resemblance between Christine and Lavinia, Lavinia has Christine's hypocritical, cunning, and calculating nature. Evidences of these characteristics in Lavinia are found throughout the trilogy in almost every relationship she has with the other characters. The first act of cunning takes place before the trilogy begins. This was when Lavinia went to New York City to spy on Christine. The next act of calculated cunning occurs when Lavinia makes Adam reveal his true identity to her. Lavinia makes the provocative remark to Adam, "But I suppose it would be foolish to expect anything but cheap romantic lies from the son of a low Canuck nurse girl!" (706). And Adam, so enraged that he forgets to ignore her, answers before he realizes he has given himself away. Lavinia's next act of trickery takes place between Christine and herself. Here Christine and Lavinia try to outwit each other, but Lavinia has the
power over Christine to make her succumb. Lavinia cleverly wrote to Ezra and Orin about Adam and Christine—"only enough so they'd be suspicious and watch" Christine. Christine says to Lavinia, "I see what it's going to mean—that you will always have this to hold over me and I'll be under your thumb for the rest of my life" (718). It is here in Homecoming that Christine issues the warning to Lavinia that Lavinia herself is to issue to Orin in The Haunted, thus indicating that the wheel has come full circle; the circle is complete as Lavinia has become altogether like her mother. Christine had said, "Take care Vinnie! You'll be responsible if—" (718), and Lavinia repeats "(the exact threat she had goaded her mother to make in Act Two of Homecoming.) Take care, Orin! You'll be responsible if—!" (843) It is in The Hunted that we see another act of Lavinia's cunning. This time we see Lavinia working on Orin. Christine and Lavinia are vying for his support and they each know what will move him to her side. When Lavinia starts to persuade him to see her side, in Act Three of The Hunted, Orin has already been persuaded to his mother's side. Therefore Lavinia's task is twice as difficult and since she succeeds, her victory is twice as great. At first Orin is stubborn and refuses to listen to what Lavinia has to say about Christine. Lavinia accuses Orin by saying, "You're still the spoiled crybaby that she can make a fool of whenever she pleases!" (784). Orin is "stung" and answers, "That's enough from you" (784). But Lavinia continues to attack. Seeing that one method is not successful she tries another.
"(With a calculated, scornful contempt)" (784) she says, "Then if I can’t make you see your duty one way, I will another! If you won’t help me punish her, I hope you’re not such a coward that you’re willing to let her lover escape!" (784): Lavinia knows this will be the way to win Orin to her side, and as Orin answers with "awakening suspicion" (784) she knows that this is the course of action to pursue. Furthermore, Lavinia is fully aware of the repercussions of this method because at the end of Act Two of *The Hunted* Christine pleads with Lavinia, "Don’t tell him (Orin) about Adam. He would kill him! I couldn’t live then! I would kill myself!" (778). This is exactly what does happen. Lavinia calculatively goads Orin by telling him, "she’d (Christine) forgotten you were ever alive...all she’s thought of is this low lover of hers-!" (785). She tells Orin that Christine is just waiting for a chance to "run off and marry him (Adam)" (785). Lavinia reveals all she found out from her trip to New York when she spied on Christine and Adam, "I heard her telling him, ‘I love you, Adam.' She was kissing him" (785). Orin, in a "murderous rage", cries out, "If that’s true I’ll hate her! I’ll know she murdered father then! I’ll help you punish her! But you’ve got to prove it!" (785). Lavinia has won her battle, because she has the proof that Orin demands. Lavinia is successful because she has destroyed the confidence that Christine had built up in Orin assuring him that she loved him.
and hated the Mannons. Now Orin sees that Lavinia can
prove Christine does not love him, and that she loves-
of all people—Adam Brant who is a Mannon. Lavinia clever-
ly arranges for her and Orin to follow Christine to Adam's
cabin on his ship. There Orin has positive proof of his
mother's hypocrisy and his sister's truthfulness. Lavinia
is thinking all the time. Although Orin begins to get
excited Lavinia remains calm and cool and tells Orin
exactly how to act. But Orin is still weak in the pre-
sence of his mother; therefore Lavinia has to keep
reminding him of what she has told him. When they go to
tell Christine that Adam is dead, Orin begins to weaken
in front of his mother. Therefore Lavinia sharply calls,
"Orin! After all that's happened, are you becoming her
crybaby again?...Leave her alone! Go in the house!...
March!" (809). Lavinia's "commanding tone" makes Orin
respond "automatically" and obey "mechanically". There-
after Lavinia, whenever she sees Orin weakening, snaps
out warningly and commandingly, "Orin!" In The Haunted
Lavinia repeats the same kind of hypocrisy towards Orin
that Christine had exhibited toward him in The Hunted.
Now, in her mother's place completely, Lavinia similarly
pretends to offer maternal love and care to Orin. But as
Christine was scheming to leave Orin for Adam so Lavinia
is scheming to have Orin for Peter. Orin, however, is
aware of Lavinia's intention. When Lavinia asks Orin,
"How can you still love that vile woman when you know all she wanted was to leave you without a thought and marry Adam" (839), Orin answers, "Yes! Exactly as you're scheming now to leave me and marry Peter!" (839). Lavinia's final act of treachery and cunning is letting Orin kill himself. She knew Orin was about to kill himself because he was going to clean his pistol, and after the shot she says, "Orin, forgive me!" (856).

While Christine was alive Lavinia possessed strength and grandeur, which Christine never had. But after Christine's suicide Lavinia loses her strength and becomes weak, anxious, and fearful, exactly the way Christine had been after Ezra's murder. While Christine was alive she and Orin were tied to Lavinia, but after Christine's death the tables turn and it is Lavinia who is tied to Orin. Now Lavinia is driven to distraction by Orin's overwhelming sense of guilt. "Can't you see," Orin says to Lavinia, "...I'm the Mannon you're chained to." (843). And he tells Hazel, "Let her talk all she likes. I'll have the upper hand for a change, from now on" (851). Just as Christine, in The Hunted, was nervous that Lavinia would reveal the truth about Ezra's death, Lavinia, in The Haunted, is afraid that Orin will reveal the truth about the deaths of Adam and Christine. Orin admits, "I long to spit it out- and confess" (839). And Lavinia answers, "Yes, that is what I live in terror of - that in one of your fits you'll
say something before someone" (839). As we have seen Christine's rising fear and hysteria in The Hunted, we can see Lavinia's parallel rising hysteria in The Haunted. Lavinia is still harshly commanding Orin around, but occasionally an uneasy note creeps into her voice. "Uneasily" she says to Orin, "Now please don't begin talking nonsense again, please. I" (827). She tries to make Orin rid himself of his "silly guilt about the past" (828). But Lavinia is left weak "because the strength she has willed into him has left her exhausted" (829).

From this point on Orin mocks and taunts Lavinia, thus increasing her anxiety. When Orin tells Peter about Lavinia's behavior on the islands she looks at Peter "with an anxious glance" (832). Lavinia continues to react with apprehension and fear to whatever Orin does or says. After Orin leaves the room, "the strain of Orin's conduct has told on her. She seems suddenly weak and frightened" (833). When Orin returns he finds Lavinia in Peter's arms. Lavinia is frightened but manages to be stern. In Act Two of The Hunted Lavinia finds Orin working on a history of the Mannon's. At first Lavinia does not know what Orin is doing. As she speaks to him her voice becomes "strident, as if her will were snapping" (838). She confesses, "I'm terribly nervous tonight" (838). It is a great effort for Lavinia to control herself and to keep calm. Lavinia's rising hysteria is noticeable in the way she talks to Orin. She speaks to
to him fiercely, furiously, angrily, tensely, and chokingly. She is "strangely shaken and trembling" (842). Lavinia sometimes stammers and sometimes "pleads distractedly" (842), to Orin. "Leave me alone! Leave me alone" (843), she wildly cries to Orin. While "frantically grabbing his arm and shaking him fiercely" she tells him, "You're like a devil torturing me!" (843). Then "she breaks down and sobs brokenly" (843). The Third Act of The Haunted opens with Lavinia torturously pacing up and down, muttering her thoughts aloud. "She is in a terrific state of tension. The corners of her mouth twitch, she twines and untwines the fingers of her clasped hands with a slow wringing movement which recalls her mother in the last act of The Hunted" (845). By the end of the act Lavinia loses complete control and turns on Orin in a "burst of frantic hatred and rage" (854), then "breaks down and sobs hysterically" (854). Act Four takes place three days later. By this time Lavinia has undergone a "remarkable change". She is again dressed in black and she is thin and haggard.

After Orin has killed himself Lavinia, addressing the Mannon portraits, says, "I'll live in spite of you!" (856) Like Christine, Lavinia desperately tries to achieve some peace, love, and happiness. Therefore, she struggles for Peter's love as Christine had struggled for Adam's love. But as Christine failed to win her happiness—Adam—, so
too did Lavinia fail to win her happiness-Peter. In the last act of the trilogy Hazel tries to take away Lavinia's last chance for happiness by asking her to give up Peter. At this request Lavinia becomes more uneasy, fearful, and desperate until finally her rage leaves her "weak and shaken" (861). "More and more desperately" (864) Lavinia wildly pleads with Peter to marry her "right away". Then as she accidentally calls Peter Adam, she suddenly realizes, "Always the dead between! It's no good trying any more!...Love isn't permitted to me" (865). She knows and accepts the destiny she must fulfill. "In a dead voice" (865) she tells Peter she cannot marry him, and she tells Seth, "I'm bound here to the Mannon dead" (866). Once again Lavinia is the grand and strong character she was before Christine's death. She even acts again with "calculated cozeness" (865), and "stiffens into her old, square shouldered attitude" (866). Seth is afraid Lavinia will commit the same weak and cowardly act of suicide as Orin and Christine, but Lavinia assures him:

Don't be afraid. I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment. And there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself!...I'll live alone with the dead...until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let to die! It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born!" (866-867)

This recalls Orin's earlier question to Lavinia in Act Two of The Haunted, "Were you hoping you could escape retribution? You can't!" and his comment addressed to the Mannon portraits in Act Three of The Hunted, "Death becomes the Mannons!" (780). Thus "mourning does become this Electra."12 While Christine lives Lavinia is victorious over Christine and Orin but then, until Orin's death, he is victorious over
Lavinia. It is ironic that neither Christine's death nor Orin's death is a victory for Lavinia. Each death is a step toward her inevitable defeat.

As we have seen, Electra and Lavinia are very different characters. O'Neill modeled his Electra after Aeschylus' Clytemnestra, and although there are no similarities between Clytemnestra and Electra there are many similarities between Christine and Lavinia. This is so despite Lavinia's attempt to disguise them.

On examining the characters of Orestes and Orin we find they possess very few common characteristics. We also see that their functions in the two trilogies are dissimilar. Orestes, like Electra, is more of an instrument for Aeschylus' thematic purpose than a character in his own right. Although the trilogy is titled after him Orestes does not appear in the first play and disappears before the close of the last play. He derives his importance, therefore, from the fact that Aeschylus uses him to demonstrate his idea of change from individual to collective justice. In The Libation Bearers he, like Electra, invokes the gods to aid him in revenge against his father's murderers by making them appear unjust and making himself appear just. However, unlike Electra, Orestes remains in the play to face the consequences of his actions. Once the trial begins Orestes' importance diminishes because he is no longer the major concern. Instead of Orestes, the system of justice is of primary importance.
Thus Orestes is not even needed in the last scenes. This is a conflict which must be resolved between the new and the old gods.

Orin is not as essential to O'Neill's theme as Orestes is to Aeschylus' theme. This is not to say that Orin is not important. Indeed he acquires something of the functions of the prophetess Cassandra. Although he does not have prophetic insight in *The Hunted* he does have it in *The Haunted*. It is Orin who writes the history of the Mannons and thereby can foresee the destiny of the remaining Mannons. As Orin said, "I thought if I could see it clearly in the past I might be able to foretell what fate is in store for us, Vinnie- but I haven't dared predict that-not yet" (840). But later in a burst of anger he does reveal his prediction, "Can't you see I'm now in Father's place and you're mother? That's the evil destiny out of the past I haven't dared predict! I'm the Mannon you're chained to!" (843). Like O'Neill, Orin has found Lavinia "the most interesting criminal" (840) of all because "So many strange hidden things out of the Mannon past combine in" her. (840). Orin, in Act Two of *The Haunted*, foresees what Lavinia is not to realize until the last act of *The Haunted*. He tells Lavinia, "Were you hoping you could escape retribution? You can't! Confess and atone to the full extent of the law! That's the only way to wash the guilt of our mother's blood from our souls!" (839). He tells Hazel, "No! She
Clavinia can't have happiness! She's got to be punished!" (848). And, just as Orin predicted, Lavinia comes to the realization: "I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's escaping punishment...I've got to punish myself!" (866) Because Orin came to understand Lavinia clearly, he made Lavinia face herself and thus made her aware of what she had to do. O'Neill has made Lavinia strong while Aeschylus had made Electra weak; in contrast O'Neill makes Orin weak while Aeschylus had made Orestes strong. Orestes knows that his mother is guilty. He does not have to be persuaded that she must be punished. He only hesitates once before killing his mother, and that is when she says to him, "Hold, my son. Oh take pity, child, before this breast where many a time, a drowsing baby, you would feed and with soft gums sucked in the milk that made you strong" (896-898). Orestes hesitates and asks Pylades, "What shall I do? Be shamed to kill my mother?" (899). But Pylades, in his only speech, reminds Orestes of his oath and his duty to Apollo. Orestes then, with strength and conviction, kills Clytemnestra. "You killed, and it was wrong," says Orestes to Clytemnestra, "Nor suffer wrong" (126).

Orin, however, is completely unaware of his mother's guilt. When Christine tells Orin that Lavinia suspects her of poisoning Ezra, Orin is "horrified" and says "What! No, by God, that's too much! If that's true she ought to be put in an asylum!" (774). Christine expresses to Orin her fear
that Lavinia might turn him against her. But Orin assures her soothingly, "She can't be so crazy as to try that!...
No matter what you ever did, I love you better than anything in the world" (775). Orin does make a qualification; he tells Christine, "I could forgive anything...except...that about Brant!" Before Lavinia speaks to him Orin is ashamed and angry that he ever entertained such doubts about his mother, "Christ, I won't have such thoughts! I am a rotten swine to—Damn Vinnie! She must be crazy!" (779). In fact, even when Lavinia says she has proof of Christine's guilt Orin is unwilling, at first, to even listen. "Never mind what you call proofs!" Orin tells Lavinia, "...if you think you're going to tell me a lot of crazy stuff about Mother, I warn you I won't listen! So shut up before you start!" (783). Orin can't believe that Lavinia can think her own mother capable and guilty of murder, "Good God, do you actually believe?" asks Orin. And when Lavinia tells him what she heard and saw, Orin says, "That's all your crazy imagination! God, how can you think—? Do you realize you're deliberately accusing your own mother—It's too horrible and mad! I'll have you declared insane...and put in an asylum!" (783). When Lavinia finally tells Orin about Christine and Adam, Orin doesn't want to believe. "Tell me you're lying," Orin "frenziedly" demands (785). But, becoming suspicious, he admits he will believe Lavinia as soon as
he has proof. "In anguished uncertainty" Orin says to Lavinia, "But you haven't proved anything yet! It's only your word against hers!...I'll help you punish her! But you've got to prove it! (785) Unlike Orestes, therefore, Orin must be persuaded, his mother's guilty. When Orin discovers his mother with Adam he does not hesitate, he is only too eager, to kill Adam. But again, unlike Orestes, Orin never thinks of murdering his mother, nor could he have murdered Christine as Orestes murdered Clytaemestra.

Another strong evidence of Orin's weak character is his intense Oedipus complex. Even after the war he is extremely attached to his mother, Orin's first words when he returns home from the war are "Where's mother? I thought she'd surely be waiting for me" (760). Before Orin learns of Christine's adultery and murder he tells her that she "comes before everything" (789) that she is his "only girl" (776), that he loves her "better than anything in the world" (775), and he recalls the past when their password was "no Mannon's allowed" (772) and how Christine used to let him brush her hair and how he loved to (777). He is "still the spoiled crybaby" (784). But even after Orin learns of Christine's adultery and murder he cannot sever the ties to his mother. When Orin tells Christine that her lover is dead, she begins to moan. He pleads with her to stop moaning and to forget Adam. Orin blames Ezra's murder on Adam and tells Christine that she wasn't responsible for anything because she was under Adam's influence. Orin still cannot
understand how his mother can love Adam and can no longer love him. He cries and pleads to Christine, "Mother! Don't moan like that!... Why do you grieve for that servant's bastard? I know he was the one who planned Father's murder! You couldn't have done that!... He hypnotized you!...

How else could you ever have imagined you loved that low swine! How else could you ever have said those things— you'll forget him! I'll make you forget him! I'll make you happy! We'll... go away on a long voyage... Mother! Don't you hear me? Why won't you speak to me? Will you always love him? Do you hate me now?... Say you forgive me!" (809).

The furies, who are a major factor in the Oresteia, disappear in O'Neill's trilogy and in their place we find only the guilty conscience of Orin. In the Oresteia the Furies are externally represented on the stage. Although Orestes is the only one to see them at the end of The Libation Bearers they become visible to everyone in the Eumenides. They form the chorus. In Mourning Becomes Electra the furies are internal. They never appear on the stage because they are only in the mind of Orin, as his deep sense of guilt.

"It was here," Orin tells Lavinia, "-she- the last time I saw her alive-" (825). "I was sure she'd be waiting for me in there, where- But she wasn't! She isn't anywhere... She's gone forever. She'll never forgive me now!... What is she to me? I'm not her son anymore! I'm Father's! I'm a Mannon! And they'll welcome me home!" (826)
In summarizing Orin's weak characteristics we see his inability to believe in his mother's guilt because of his unusually strong attachment to her, his insistence on proof which even then cannot arouse him to murder Christine, and his own strong, destructive sense of guilt which leads him to commit his final and most cowardly act-suicide. In summarizing Orestes' strong characteristics we see his sense of duty and honor towards his father and himself, his ability to believe in his mother's guilt, to carry through her punishment with conviction and belief in his righteousness, and the fact that suicide does not even occur to him.

The motives of Orestes and Orin are as dissimilar as their characters. Orestes kills both his mother and his mother's lover whereas Orin kills only his mother's lover. Orestes is clearly motivated by four forces, by Apollo, by his love for his father, his hatred of Aegisthus, and by the sense of injustice done to him. As Orestes says, "numerous desires converge to drive me on: the god's urgency and my father's passion and with these the loss of my estates,... the thought that these my citizens...must go subject to this brace of women; since his heart (Aegisthus) is female!" (L.P. 300-305) With regard to the first force, Apollo, Orestes says, "The big strength of Apollo's oracle will not forsake me. For he charged me to win through this hazard...told me to cut them down in their own fashion...He said that else I must my-
self pay penalty with my own life" (L.B. 269-277). In The Eumenides Apollo himself says to Orestes, "I will not give you up... For it was I who made you strike your mother down" (Eu. 64 & 84). The chorus too tells Apollo he is to blame for Orestes actions. "You are the one who did it; all the guilt is yours" (198-200), the chorus tells Apollo, "You gave this outlander the word to kill his mother" (Eu. 202). And Orestes at his trial, pleads, "Apollo shares responsibility for this" (465). When the chorus asks Orestes, "By whose persuasion and advice did you do this?" (Eu. 593), Orestes answers, "By order of this god, here (Apollo). So he testifies" (Eu. 594).

Like Electra, Orestes wants vengeance for Agamemnon's murder. He believes that justice and right demand this vengeance. In his first speech of Orestes in The Libation Bearers he cries, "Zeus, grant me vengeance for my father's murder" (L.B. 17). Orestes, like Electra, is angry that his father was dishonorably murdered. He was a "king who died no kingly death" (L.B. 479). "Shall she not pay for this dishonor," Orestes asks (L.B. 435). After he has murdered Clytaemestra, Orestes asserts, "I killed my mother not without some right. My father's murder stained her" (L.B. 1027). As he stands over the murdered Clytaemestra and Aegisthus, Orestes states: "it was in all right that I achieved this death, my mother's" (968). At his trial Orestes claims, "He (Agamemnon) died without honor when he came home. It was my mother... who..."
cut him down...I...killed the woman who gave me birth...
My father was dear, and this was vengeance for his blood" (Eu. 458-464).

As Orestes is angered by Clytaemestra's behavior toward Agamemnon so too is he angered by Clytaemestra's behavior with Aegisthus. He hates Aegisthus whose "heart is female" (L.B. 305); therefore he tells Clytaemestra "my purpose is to kill you over his body. You thought him bigger than my father while he lived. Die then and sleep beside him, since he is the man you love, and he you should have loved not only your hate" (L.B. 904). After he has murdered Aegisthus, Orestes tells the chorus, "of Aegisthus' death I take no count; he has his seducer's punishment, no more than law" (L.B. 989-990).

Still another motive which impels Orestes to murder Clytaemestra and Aegisthus is his feeling that he has himself been treated unjustly. Orestes prays to Zeus to direct him. "We both," he complains, speaking about Electra and himself, "are driven from the house that should be ours" (L.B. 253-254). When Clytaemestra is pleading with Orestes to spare her life Orestes answers, "No, you bore me and threw me away, to a hard life...You sold me" (L.B. 912-915). While Orestes stands over the dead bodies of Clytaemestra and Aegisthus he says, "Behold the twin tyrannies of our land, these two who killed my father and who sacked my house" (L.B. 973-974).

Orestes' motives are different. First of all there are no
gods compelling or sanctioning his actions. Second, Orin loves his mother and hates his father. "I'll tell you the truth," Orin tells Christine, "I won't pretend to you I'm sorry he's dead" (772). And he tells Lavinia, "Mother means a thousand times more to me than he ever did!" (784). This is the reverse of Orestes' feelings. Like Orestes, however, Orin hates his mother's lover. But Orestes hated Aegisthus for bringing dishonor to his family, for aiding in the murder of the father whom he loved, and for dispossessing him of what was rightly his, while Orin hated Adam partly for bringing dishonor to his family, but primarily for dispossessing him of his mother's love. Jealousy is Orin's primary motive for murdering Adam, whereas it is not even one of the several motives that prompted Orestes to murder Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. As Orin said, "I can forgive anything—anything!—in my mother—except...that about Brant!" (775). One of Orin's first questions to Lavinia after his return is, "What was that stuff you wrote about some Captain Brant coming to see mother?...By God, if he dares come here again, I'll make him damned sorry he did!" (762). Lavinia, knowing how deeply Orin is attached to his mother, provokes him into a jealous rage in which he cries out his disbelief.

In The Haunted after Christine's death Orin transfers the love he had for her to Lavinia. Orin now feels he is in his father's place and Lavinia is in her mother's place.
He tells Lavinia, "I love you now with all the guilt in me-the guilt we share! Perhaps I love you too much, Vinnie!... There are times now when you don't seem to be my sister, nor mother, but some stranger" (853). Now Orin feels the same jealousy toward Peter that he had previously felt toward Adam. Because of this jealousy Orin makes Lavinia promise to give up Peter as Lavinia had jealously insisted, in Homecoming, that Christine give up Adam. Orin says to Lavinia, "You realize the promise you made means giving up Peter? And never seeing him again?" (853). This is similar to the bargain Lavinia tried to make with Christine, "I won't tell him (Ezra-about Adam) provided you give up Brant and never see him again" (715-716). As Ezra was jealous of Adam so Orin is jealous of Peter, or any other man in whom Lavinia shows any interest. While Orin and Lavinia are talking about their vacation on the islands Orin becomes insanely jealous of Avahanni, a native whom Lavinia "desired". Orin complains, "with fierce jealousy," of her interest in Avahanni. Lavinia then reacts like her mother-"with a sudden flare of deliberately evil taunting that recalls her mother in the last Act of Homecoming, when she was goading Ezra Mannon to fury just before his murder," and Orin "reacting as his father had," grows livid with fury (842). Orin's last act of jealousy appears when he gives Hazel the history of the Mannon's that he has written. Handing her the paper he says to her, "if she (Lavinia) tries to marry Peter-"
the day before the wedding— I want you to make Peter read what’s inside” (848). Hazel then asks, "You don’t want her to marry Peter?” (848). "No," Orin answers, "She can’t have happiness! She’s got to be punished!" (848).

The other characters in the two trilogies are relatively minor, even Aegisthus and Adam, Ezra and Agamemnon. Because of their relative insignificance we will not need to examine them as closely as we examined the major characters.

O’Neill devoted more time to Adam than Aeschylus devoted to Aegisthus. We learn from Orestes that Aegisthus is a feminine, and thus a weak person, "since his heart is female" (Ag. 305). We also learn from Aegisthus himself that he is a weak person because he did not kill Agamemnon, but let Clytaemestra kill Agamemnon for him. The chorus recognizes Aegisthus’ weak and cowardly nature. They ask him, "How shall you be lord of the men of Argos, you who planned the murder of this man, yet could not dare to act it out, and cut him down with your own hand?" (Ag. 1633-1635) and they ask him again, "But why, why then, you coward, could you not have slain your man yourself? Why must it be his wife who killed...?" (Ag. 1643-1644). Adam, like Aegisthus, is a weak person. Adam has to be persuaded and aroused to anger by Christine before he agrees to plan Ezra’s death. But even after he agrees that Ezra must be killed, he leaves the actual murder to Christine while he safely sits and waits on his ship. Aegisthus’ primary motives for wanting Agamemnon’s death are justice and revenge, for his father and for him-
After Agamemnon has been murdered, Aegisthus enters saying, "O splendor and exaltation of this day of doom! Now I can say once more that the high gods look down on mortals' crimes to vindicate the right at last" (Ag. 1577-1579). Aegisthus exults over Agamemnon's death because, "Atreus, this man's father...drove my father forth, Thyestes, his own brother...forth from his city and his home" (Ag. 1583-1586). Aegisthus claims, "It was I, in my right, who wrought this murder...Now I can die in honor again, if die I must, having seen him caught in the cords of his just punishment" (Ag. 1604-1610-1611). He also mentions the injustice that Atreus did to him, "driven, a helpless baby in arms, to banishment" (Ag. 1606). Adam's motives for wanting Ezra's death are his love and revenge for his mother and his love for Christine. Adam tells Lavinia, "I swore on my mother's body I'd revenge her death on him" (709). And Adam tells Christine, "I'll do anything you want" (725). O'Neill in his work diary said,

"my Aegisthus character weaker, more human, and less evil character, has conscience of sort.... Aegisthus bears strong facial resemblance to Agamemnon and Orestes- his resemblance to Orestes attracts Clytaemestra- his resemblance to her father attracts Electra."

As O'Neill devoted more time to Adam than Aeschylus devoted to Aegisthus, so O'Neill devoted more time to Ezra than Aeschylus devoted to Agamemnon. However, Ezra and Agamemnon are no more important than Adam and Aegisthus. Ezra is an
entirely different person from Agamemnon. First of all their situations are different. Agamemnon has in some ways deserved his death, whereas Ezra has not deserved his. It was Agamemnon's decision to wage the war over one promiscuous woman. Ezra however, volunteered to be in a war that he had no part in originating. Agamemnon, besides waging a war for such an unimportant cause, committed a crime in order to permit him to carry through this war. This crime was the sacrifice of his own daughter, Iphigenia. Although Agamemnon started out to war as a minister of justice to take vengeance on Paris, he stepped beyond his duty and acted sacrilegiously... The Herald tells us what Agamemnon has done, "Gone are their [Trojan's] altars, the sacred places of the gods are gone...guilty of rape and theft, condemned, he lost the prize captured, and broke to sheer destruction all the house" (Ag. 527-528; 534-535). However, these are Agamemnon's sins before the play itself begins. Then in the play when Agamemnon comes home he nobly thanks the gods who helped to bring him home, and nobly tells Clytemnestra not to reverence him as a god but as a man. But then he commits another sin- the sin of pride- by treading on the purple carpet. Ezra, however, is not guilty of any of these or any other sins. Only, like Agamemnon, Ezra is carrying his father's curse. Where Agamemnon was so concerned over political matters, Ezra
is concerned with domestic matters. Agamemnon was politically motivated to enter into the war but Ezra was motivated by domestic reasons. Ezra desperately desires Christine's love but he feels she hates him. Ezra tells Christine:

I call to mind the Mexican War. I could see you wanted me to go. I had a feeling you'd grown to hate me...That was why I went. I was hoping I might get killed...When I came back you had turned to your new baby Orin. I was hardly alive for you any more...I made up my mind I'd do my work in the world and leave you alone in your life...That's why the shipping wasn't enough- why I became a judge and a mayor...Folks in town look on me as so able! Ha! Able for what? Not for what I wanted most in life! Not for your love! (739)

Ezra, unlike Agamemnon, is preoccupied with thoughts of death, love, and life, primarily death. Almost the moment Ezra is home he asks, "All victory ends in the defeat of death...But does defeat end in the victory of death?" (732). Ezra says he has had his "fill of death" (733) and would like to forget it but he cannot. He tells Christine, "It was seeing death all the time in this war got me to thinking these things...Death made me think of life. Before that life had only made me think of death!...Life was a dying. Being born was starting to die. Death was being born!(738),...

I'm sick of death! I want life!" (740) Both Agamemnon and Ezra are able men but Ezra is not the proud man that Agamemnon is. Another difference between the two is that Ezra loves Lavinia and hates and is jealous of Orin. O'Neill, in his work diary, explains:
"Agamemnon frustrated in love for Clytemnestra, adores daughter, Electra, who resembles her, hates and is jealous of his son, Orestes." In contrast, there is no indication from Agamemnon, in the Oresteia, of his feelings toward Electra or Orestes. This is because Aeschylus was not concerned with the "intense basic human interrelationships," as was O'Neill.

Because O'Neill's thematic purpose was different from Aeschylus' and because the nature of drama itself has changed, O'Neill did not need such characters as the Herald, nurse, and Cassandra. O'Neill was able to incorporate the function of these Aeschylean characters into his major characters. The Herald, for example, announces Agamemnon's return and tells what took place in Troy during the war. O'Neill, however, has Seth announce Ezra's return and Ezra himself relates what happened during the war. O'Neill was able to eliminate the minor character, the nurse, because of differences in the mechanics of the plot. Although Cassandra is one of Aeschylus' most powerful and dynamic characters, O'Neill is able to include this power in Lavinia, and Cassandra's prophetic capacity in Orin. O'Neill added two characters, Hazel and Peter, and the chorus are very minor figures and their characters are only revealed superficially. The importance of the chorus, in the Oresteia has been mentioned previously.

O'Neill's own general statement concerning characterization is this:
Characterization-Exclude as far as possible and consistent with living people, the easy superficial characterization of individual mannerisms- unless these mannerisms are inevitable fingerprints of inner nature- essential revelations. This applies to main people of trilogy. Townsfolk, on the other hand, should be confined to exterior characterization- main characters too interior- Peter and Hazel should be almost characterless,...they are the untroubled, contented "good", a sweet, constant unselfconscious, untempted virtue amid which evil passion works, unrecognized by them- (until end)- but emphasized by their contrast.

C. Theme and Imagery

Aeschylus' theme is Justice. He presents three different aspects of Justice, one in which right opposes right, one in which the blood bond opposes the marriage bond, and one in which individual retribution opposes collective retribution. In connection with this theme Aeschylus uses the eagle and hare imagery as symbols of justice, as Homer had done. Although Aeschylus begins by using the eagle and hare imagery as Homer had, he then reverses their significance thus making the imagery establish a contrast to Homer. In the first choral ode in Agamemnon the eagles are representative of the Atreidae, sons of Atreus, the ministers of justice. "Their cry of war went shrill from the heart, as eagles stricken in agony for young perished" (Ag. 48-50). Here the eagles are avenging their young; they are acting in the name of justice. But in the following choral passage, after Clytaemnestra's
entrance, the eagles are no longer the avengers; they are the destroyers and oppressors: "The wild bird portent hurled forth the Achaean's twin-stemmed power single hearted, lords of the youth of Hellas, with spear and hand of strength to the land of Teucrus. Kings of birds to the kings of ships,...they lighted, watched by all tore a hare, ripe, bursting with young unborn yet" (Ag. 109-119). Here the eagles, Memelaus and Agamemnon, are the "twin-stemmed power" which is brutally destroying the pregnant hare, Troy: "The grave seer of the host saw...the fighting sons of Atreus feeding on the hare" (Ag. 122-123). This injustice (instead of justice) angers the gods, "Artemis...is angered with pity at the flying hounds of her father eating the unborn young in the hare and the shivering mother. She is sick at the eagles' feasting" (Ag. 133-137). The eagle image does not occur again until The Libation Bearers where Orestes says:

If you (the gods) destroy these fledgelings of a father who gave you sacrifice and high honor, from what hand like his shall you be given the sacred feast which is your right? Destroy the eagles' brood (Orestes and Electra), and you have no more means to send your signs to mortals for their strong belief (L.B. 254-259).

Orestes uses the eagle image as it was used in Homer and as Aeschylus originally uses it in the beginning of the Agamemnon. There are four dominant images throughout the trilogy. The passage in which the eagles become the symbol of oppressors introduces three out of the four dominant images, animal, sickness, and fertility images. The eagle and the hare are only two of the many animals that appear as symbols in the Oresteia.
The "lion cub" (Ag. 717) represents Helen, whereas the "bloody lion" (Ag. 827) represents Agamemnon. Agamemnon sees himself as "a wild and bloody lion swarming above the towers of Troy to glut its hunger lapping at the blood of kings" (Ag. 827-828). Cassandra calls Clytemnestra a "viper double fanged" (Ag. 1233), and a "woman-lioness, who goes to bed with the wolf (Aegisthus), when her proud lion (Agamemnon) ranges far away" (Ag. 1258-1259). Clytemnestra refers to Cassandra's cries as "swanlike" (Ag. 1444). Like Cassandra, Orestes calls Clytemnestra a "deadly viper" (L.B. 248). Electra uses animal images to explain her want of pity: "Let her fawn if she likes. It softens not. For we are bloody like the wolf and savage born from the savage mother" (L.B. 420-422). Part of the reason why Electra is so "savage" is that she has been kenneled by Clytemnestra like a "vicious dog" (L.B. 447). And part of the reason for Orestes anger toward Clytemnestra is that she caught Agamemnon "like a beast" (L.B. 493). The chorus tells Orestes about Clytemnestra's dream in which "she dreamed she gave birth to a snake" (L.B. 527). Orestes tells the chorus, "I turn snake to kill her. This is what the dream portends" (L.B. 550). Then, when Orestes is about to kill Clytemnestra she realizes, "you are the snake I gave birth to" (L.B. 928). Even the nurse picks up the animal imagery by likening a baby to a beast (753). After Orestes has killed Clytemnestra he refers to her again as a "water snake" and a "viper" (L.B. 994). The chorus tells Orestes he has "liberated all the Argive city when (he) lopped the heads of
these two snakes (Aegisthus and Clytemnestra) with one clean stroke" (L.B. 1046-1047). When the furies begin to appear to Orestes he sees them "wreathed in a tangle of snakes" (L.B. 1050). In the Eumenides the ghost of Clytemnestra appears and her speech is dominated by animal images: "Sleep and fatigue, two masterful conspirators, have dimmed the deadly anger of the mother snake (Eu. 126-127).... The beast you are after is a dream, but like the hound whose thought of hunting has no lapse, you bay him on" (Eu. 131-132). Apollo, also, uses animal images. He calls the furies "foul animals" (Eu. 644), and warns them to leave this house or else they "may feel the flash and bite of a flying snake launched from his bow (Eu. 181-182). "Out then," Apollo orders, "you flock of goats" (Eu. 196).

The second dominant image is disease and sickness. The chorus asserts that "terror returns like sickness to lurk in the house" (Ag. 154), and it is "the sickening in men's minds" that brings "fresh cruelty" and "daring" (Ag. 222-223). Orestes claims he must avenge his father's murder, otherwise his father's spirit would punish him. Apollo "spoke of the sicknesses, ulcers that ride upon the flesh, and cling, and with wild teeth eat away the natural tissue, how on this disease shall grow in turn a leprous fur" (L.B. 279-282). The chorus is horrified by Orestes' and Electra's prayers for revenge, "my flesh crawls as I listen to them pray" (L.B. 464). The chorus says, "Sickness that fights all remedy. Here in the house
lies the cure for this" but only by "fierce wreak and bloodshed" (L.B. 470-474). Aegisthus sees the house as "already bitten and poisoned" (L.B. 841). Athene tells the chorus that the decision must be a just one or else the "venom...will return to infect the soil, and sicken" the land (Eu. 478-479). The chorus of furies is angered by the new gods, Athene and Apollo, and tells them, "I...shall let loose on the land the vindictive poison....This from itself shall breed cancer... and drag its smear of mortal infection on the ground" (Eu. 782-787).

The third dominant image is fertility. This image begins with the pregnant hare in the opening of the Agamemnon, "a hare, ripe, bursting with young unborn" (Ag. 119). Then again it is present in the choral passage just before Agamemnon's entrance:

Human wealth grown to fulness of stature breeds again nor dies without issue. From high good fortune in the blood blossoms the quenchless agony....Only the act of evil breeds others to follow....When the dawn of destiny comes and birth is given to the spirit none may fight nor beat down, sinful daring (Ag. 766-769).

Electra uses a fertility image in her prayers to her father. "Do not wipe out this seed of the Pelopidae", she prays (L.B. 503). And the chorus in The Libation Bearers says, "numberless, the earth breeds dangers....Torches blossom to burn along the high space between ground and sky" (L.B. 585-586). After the nurse goes to bring Aegisthus to the house the chorus prays that "the old murder in the house breed no more" (L.B. 805-806). In the Eumenides the chorus represents the furies. They feel that they have been wronged by Orestes and they are determined
that "he shall never go free. Cursed suppliant, he shall feel
against his head another murderer rising out of the same seed"
(Eu. 175-177). Athene asks the chorus, "Who are you?...Who
are like no seed ever begotten...in the likeness of any human
form" (Eu. 407-412). Apollo uses fertility images while he is
pleading for Orestes' release, "The mother is no parent of that
which is called her child, but only nurse of the new planted
seed that grows" (Eu. 658-660). The chorus of furies is angry
and declares that they will drip vindictive poison on the land
so that it "shall breed cancer" and be "leafless and barren"
(Eu. 784-785). Athene begs them, "Do not be angry any longer
with this land nor bring the bulk of your hatred down on it,
do not render it barren of fruit, nor spill the dripping rain
of death in fierce and jagged lines to eat the seeds" (Eu. 800-
803). But the chorus of furies repeat their curse to make the
land sick and sterile. Again Athen pleads with them, "Be
reasonable and do not from a reckless mouth cast on the land
spells that will ruin everything which might bear fruit....
Here is a big land, and from it you shall win first fruits in
offerings for children and the marriage rite for always"
(Eu. 829-836). As the furies' hate ebbs they want to put a spell
on the land but they ask Athene, "what shall it be?" (Eu. 902),
and Athene answers, "Let it come out of the ground,...and the
seed and stream of the soil's yield and of the grazing beasts
be strong and never fail our people as time goes, and make the
human seed, be kept alive" (Eu. 904-909). Finally the furies
"pronounce words of grace. Nor blaze of heat blind the blossoms
of grown plants. . . . Let no barren deadly sickness creep and kill.
Flocks fatten. Earth be kind to them, with double fold of
fruit in time appointed for its yielding" (Eu. 939-946).

The fourth and last dominant image is the net. Connected
with the net are coils, web, cord, yoke, tangle, and others.
Clytemnestra tells the chorus in Agamemnon that if Agamemnon
had been wounded as many times as she heard that he had been,
he would have been "cut full of gashes like a fishing net"
(Ag. 868). Cassandra, with her prophetic vision can foresee
the "net of death" (Ag. 1115). She cries out, "see there!... Caught in the folded web's entanglement she pinions him"
(Ag. 1125-1127). And the chorus refers to what they hear as
"tangled evil" (Ag. 1134). Cassandran tells the chorus, "I
wear the slave's yoke on my neck" (Ag. 1226). It was to serve
necessity that she acted hypocritically to Agamemnon. "How
else could I...fence high the nets of ruin", she explains
(Ag. 1375). Clytemnestra tells the chorus, "I will not deny
...as fisherman cast their huge circling nets, I spread dead-
ly abundance of rich robes, and caught him fast" (Ag. 1380-1383).
The chorus laments, "O king, my king how shall I weep for you?
...Caught in this spider's web you lie" (Ag. 1489-1492).
Aegisthus is pleased with Agamemnon's death. He tells the
chorus that Agamemnon was "caught in the cords of his just
punishment" (Ag. 1611). When Orestes confronts Electra for the first time Electra is not sure who he is and asks him, "Is this some net of treachery, friend, you catch me in?" (L.B. 320). Orestes prays for Zeus' help because his father "died entangled in the binding coils" (L.B. 248). Then Electra and Orestes invoke their father's spirit. Electra says, "think of the casting net that they contrived for you" (L.B. 492). She says that children are "like corks upon the net, (they) hold the drenched and flaxen meshes, and they will not drown" (L.B. 506-507). Orestes declares that Clytaemestra and Aegisthus shall die "by treachery tangled in the self same net" (L.B. 557). After Orestes murders Clytaemestra and Aegisthus he displays the net that caught Agamemnon and his murderers, "Behold again ...the engine against my wretched father they devised, the hands' entanglement, the hobbles for his feet....Stand around me in a circle and display this net that caught a man" (L.B. 980-984). Referring to the net he asks, "and this thing: what shall I call it and be right, in all eloquence? Trap for an animal or winding sheet for dead man? Or bath curtain? Since it is a net...to entangle a man's feet (L.B. 997-1000), ...now I can stand by to mourn and speak before this web that killed my father" (L.B. 1014-1015). Clytaemestra's ghost says, "he (Orestes) is out and gone away like any fawn so lightly, from the very middle of your nets" (Eu. 111-112). The furies howl, "The hunted beast has slipped clean from our nets and gone" (Eu. 147). At his trial Orestes explains, "It was my
mother who entangled him in subtle gyves" (Eu. 460). The last net imagery appears in Apollo's speech at Orestes' trial. Apollo explains that Clytemnestra "hooded the robe on him (Agamemnon), and in the blind and complex toils tangled her man" (Eu. 634-635).

As O'Neill in Mourning Becomes Electra altered his characters and structure, so too did he alter his theme from Aeschylus' Oresteia. Although Justice is not O'Neill's theme he adapted Justice as an external framework for his theme. As Aeschylus altered Homer's idea of justice, so O'Neill alters Aeschylus' idea of justice. Justice provides the only link between the themes of Mourning Becomes Electra and the Oresteia. All the characters in the Oresteia claim they are acting in the name of justice, but in O'Neill only one of the characters, Lavinia, makes this claim. When Lavinia tells Christine that she and Orin killed Adam, Lavinia tells Christine, "You know it was justice. It was the only way true justice could be done" (809). Then, after Christine kills herself, Lavinia repeats over and over again, "It is justice! It is your justice father" (810). When Orin pleads with Lavinia to confess their crime Lavinia says, "There is nothing to confess! There was only justice!" (854). O'Neill also associated Aeschylus' idea of justice with the concept of crime and punishment. Lavinia tells Orin that Christine "chose to kill herself as a punishment for her crime" (829). Then, when Orin tells Lavinia
that he is writing a history of the Mannons, he mockingly tells
her he is "studying the law of crime and punishment." (837).

O'Neill's primary theme, in Mourning Becomes Electra, is
Belonging. Included in this theme is the yearning for peace,
love, life, and security, which, O'Neill suggests, is to be
found in death or the womb. The two major images, the sea and
the South Sea Islands, symbolize everything for which the
characters yearn. O'Neill said he wanted to emphasize the
"sea background of family and symbolic motive of sea as means
of escape and release". The song "Shenandoah" serves as
O'Neill's "theme song" in this trilogy because it suggests
the "simple sad rhythm of hopeless sea longing". It is a
"song that more than any other holds in it the brooding rhythm
of the sea" (688). The song is heard in the opening and
closing scenes of the trilogy. Although it is heard seven
times throughout the trilogy it occurs only at the beginning
or at the end of a scene. The sea imagery, however, is not
confined to the song. The Mannons themselves come from a
shipping family. Although Ezra had been a ship builder he
gave up the ships and the sea, while Adam has made a career out
of them. Lavinia explains to Peter that Adam "went to sea when
he was young and...he's sailed all over the world" (697). Adam
himself tells Lavinia that he has lived most of his life at sea.
Adam even admits that he loves them more than he has ever loved
a woman. He tells Christine, "That's always been my dream--
some day to own my own clipper" (722). The central scene takes
place on a ship. It is in this scene that Adam tells Christine that he loves her more than his ship. "You've brought love—and the rest is only price...I'll give up the sea. I think it's through with me now anyway! The sea hates a coward" (799), he tells her.

However, the strongest, most powerful image as far as theme is concerned is the South Sea Islands. In his work diary O'Neill said:

Develop South Sea Island motive—its appeal for them all (in various aspects)—release, peace, security, beauty, freedom of conscience, sinlessness, etc.—longing for the primitive—and mother symbol—yearning for prenatal non-competitive freedom from fear—make this Island theme recurrant motive. 21

The Islands do appeal to all the characters, Adam, Lavinia, Orin, Christine, and Ezra. Adam is the first character in the play to mention them. He reminds Lavinia how interested she was when he told her of the islands in the South Seas where he was shipwrecked on his first voyage. Lavinia comments, "I remember your admiration for the naked native women. You said they had found the secret of happiness because they had never heard that love can be a sin" (706). "The Blessed Isles, I'd call the," says Adam, "You can forget there all men's dirty dreams of greed and power!" (706). Adam mentions the islands again while talking to Christine...He tells Christine that if Ezra were dead and he had his own ship they would go on a voyage, and on the way back
they would stop at the South Pacific Island. "By God," says Adam, "there's the right place for love and a honey-moon" (723). The islands are mentioned to Christine again, this time by Ezra. He does not refer specifically to an island in the South Seas but for him too. "some island" means release. He tells Christine, "I've been thinking of what we could do to get back to each other. I've a notion if we'd leave the children and go off on a voyage...find some island where we could be alone a while. You'll find I have changed. I'm sick of death! I want life!" (740).

For a third time the islands are mentioned to Christine, this time by Orin. He asks her if she has ever read a book about those islands. He tells Christine, "those islands come to mean everything that wasn't war, everything that was peace and warmth and security" (776). In Adam's cabin Christine tries to cheer Adam up by telling him, "we will be happy--once we're safe on your Blessed Islands" (799). But with "hopeless yearning" Adam answers, "aye--the Blessed Isles--Maybe we can still find happiness and forget!...I can see them now....The warm earth in the moonlight, the trade winds rustling the coco palms, the surf on the barrier reef singing a croon in your ears like a lullaby! There's peace, and forgetfulness for us there--if we can ever find those islands now" (799). After Christine learns of Adam's death she begins to moan. Her moaning is more than Orin can stand and he pleads with her, "Don't moan like that!...I'll make you happy! We'll
leave Vinnie here and go away on a long voyage—to the South Seas" (808). Orin and Lavinia actually do go to these mysterious islands. To Orin they bring terrible disillusionment. "They turned out to be Vinnie's islands, not mine. They only made me sick—and the naked women disgusted me" (831). But Lavinia loved the islands. She tells Peter, "I loved those islands. They finished setting me free. There was something there mysterious and beautiful—a good spirit of love—coming out of the land and sea. It made me forget death" (834); and she describes the islands almost exactly as Adam had described them to Christine, "The warm earth in the moonlight—the trade wind in the coco palms—the surf on the reef" (834). To her the islands meant even more than this; she saw them as a place where natives danced "naked and innocent—without knowledge of sin" (834). Then she tells Peter, "We'll make an island for ourselves on land" (834). Ezra, and Christine loved the islands because they never saw them; they always remained a beautiful dream. Ironically, the two members of the family who do get to the islands, are thwarted—Lavinia is forced to leave and Orin does not find his happiness there. Lavinia has loved the islands because they afforded her an opportunity to feel happiness and love—innocent, sinless love—which she so passionately desired. But she is not allowed to have happiness any more than the rest of her family; therefore she has to leave the islands. She
comes to realize that she cannot have happiness after she accidentally calls Peter Adam. Then she sees, "Love isn't permitted to me...I've got to punish myself" (865-866). Orin is disillusioned by the islands because he had hoped to find his mother there. When Christine was alive Orin asked her, "You're my lost island, aren't you, Mother?" (787) He had told Christine that while he was in the war he had dreamed of the islands: "There was no one there but you and me. And yet I never saw you, that's the funny part. I only felt you all around me. The breaking of the waves was your voice. The sky was the same color as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you" (776). After Christine's suicide Orin tells Lavinia, "It's the way to peace--to find her again--my lost island--Death is an Island of Peace, too--mother will be waiting for me there" (854).

O'Neill shows how a whole family, desiring life, happiness, and love, is fated to death, suffering, hate. The islands represent their intangible life, love, and happiness. The Mannon fate is summed up in Ezra's words: "That's always been the Mannon's way of thinking...life was a dying. Being born was starting to die. Death was being born" (738). Ezra desperately desired Christine's love, but could not have it because she hated him and loved Adam. Before the war life made Ezra think of death, but during the war death made him think of life. When Ezra returned from the war he violently hates death and violently desires life; "I'm sick of death! I want life" (740), Ezra tells Christine.
But he cannot have life; ironically the night he returns home he is murdered. Ezra and Orin both came home seeking life and found death. Orin said to Christine, "I hoped home would be an escape from death" (787). Orin came home hoping to find his mother's love waiting for him, but instead he found Adam the object of his mother's love. Thinking that if Adam were dead his mother would love him again, Orin murders Adam. But Adam's death causes Christine's death, and death is the only solution left for Orin. Adam loves Christine but although she loves him they are not permitted to live to enjoy their love. Christine tries desperately to have happiness and love. She, like Orin, resorts to murder, thinking that if Ezra were dead she and Adam could safely live and love. But her plans do not work; Adam is murdered. Once Adam is dead her chance for love and happiness is dead. Therefore, since she kills herself, death is the only life she chooses. Lavinia more than the other characters is frustrated in her attempts for love and happiness. She tries to become the wife of her father, the mother of her brother, and the lover of her mother's lover, and finally the wife of Peter. Lavinia pleadingly cries out to Peter,

: hold me close to you! I want to feel love!... we'll have children and love them and teach them to love life so that they can never be possessed by hate and death. (834)...Nothing matters but love, does it? That must come first! No price is too great, is it? Or for peace!...Oh, won't it be wonderful, Peter--
once we’re married and have a home with a garden and trees! We’ll be so happy! I love everything that grows simply up toward the sun--everything that’s straight and strong! I hate what’s warped and twists and eats into itself and dies for a life time in shadow. (855)...I want a little while of happiness...I want a moment of joy--of love" (864).

But, Lavinia, claims O’Neill, is “always fated to be her mother’s rival in love, always defeated”. But hard as they all try for happiness, life, and love they all fail. Their lives are a living death. This is symbolized by “life-like death masks” of the characters.

O’Neill, more than Aeschylus, emphasizes fate. In his work diary O’Neill states that Mourning Becomes Electra "is primarily [a] drama of hidden life forces--fate--behind lives of characters". He asserts that the “entire melodramatic action must be felt as working out of psychic fate from past--thereby attain tragic significance--or else!--a hell of a problem, a modern tragic interpretation of classic fate without benefit of gods--for it must be, before everything, remain modern psychological play--fate springing out of the family--.” O’Neill chose New England as his background because it was the "best possible dramatically for Greek plot of crime and retribution, chain of fate--Puritan conviction of man born to sin and punishment".

O’Neill explains that he wanted a method whereby he could symbolize the separateness of the Mannons, "the fated isolation of this family, the mark of their fate which makes them dramatically distinct from rest of world." His original
method was the use of masks, but he was displeased with that idea and substituted for it the idea of mask-like faces which could be effected by make-up. The mask-like technique serves a dual purpose. First, it is a "visible sign of the family fate". The Mannon look is continually being emphasized. Every time a relation of a Mannon enters the scene O'Neill describes his "striking resemblance" to the other Mannons. In his work diary O'Neill explained that this resemblance of characters by use of masks (changed to mask-like faces) intensify Mannon family resemblance between Ezra and Orin and Adam (and family portraits), and between Christine and Lavinia—peculiar gold-brown hair exactly alike in Lavinia and her mother—same as hair of dead woman, Adam's mother—hair of woman another recurrent motive—strange, hidden psychic identity of Christine with the dead woman and of Lavinia.

The Mannon look is such a strong characteristic that even Christine, who is a Mannon only by marriage, has it. As Azes says, "They grow it on their wives. Seth's growed it too...from bein' with 'em all his life" (691). The second purpose of the mask-like technique illustrates part of O'Neill's theme of life and death, as O'Neill says in his work diary, "the Mannon faces are like life-like death masks—(death-in-life motive, return to death-with-peace yearning that runs through plays)—this can be gotten very effectively by make-up, as can also the family resemblance." O'Neill conveys the sense of fate by the outward physical similarities among the Mannons, the inner character similarities
among the Mannons, the repetition of the same scene and words. As O'Neill says in his work diary, "Repetition of the same scene--in its essential spirit, sometimes even in its exact words, but different characters--following plays as development of fate--theme demands the repetition."
CONCLUSION

Thus we have seen how much O'Neill depended on Aeschylus' Oresteia for the effects of his play. There are many striking similarities yet there are striking dissimilarities between the two trilogies with regard to plot, character, theme, and imagery.

One major difference between Aeschylus and O'Neill is their idea of tragedy. Aeschylus sees man as a free agent; O'Neill sees man as a fated being. However, free or fated man, as seen by Aeschylus and O'Neill, is seen in relation to his society and the universe. Aeschylus shows man free to make choices; O'Neill shows man not free to make choices. Aeschylus' tragedy results from the nature of man himself; O'Neill's tragedy results from the nature of the universe. Aeschylus sees the universe as rational and good; O'Neill sees the universe as rational and evil.
FOOTNOTES TO PART I

1. Aeschylus, *Createia*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1953), note: all quotations from Aeschylus' *Createia* will be from this translation and will be followed by line references. Line references from the *Agamemnon* will be prefaced by the abbreviation *Ag..* Line references from *The Libation Bearers* will be prefaced by the abbreviation *L.B..* Line references from *The Eumenides* will be prefaced by the abbreviation *Eu..*.

2. Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), note: all quotations from Sophocles' *Oedipus* will be from this translation and will be followed by line references.

3. Euripides, *Hippolytus*, trans. David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), note: all quotations from Euripides' *Hippolytus* will be from this translation and will be followed by line references.


8. See above, p. 5.


11. Ibid., p. 11.
FOOTNOTES to PART II


2. Ibid., p. 531.

3. Ibid.


5. O'Neill, Work Diary, as quoted in Clark, p. 530.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., p. 533.

9. Ibid., p. 536.

10. Eugene O'Neill, Nine Plays (New York: Random House, 1954), note: all quotations from Mourning Becomes Electra will be from this edition and will be followed by the page reference.

11. O'Neill, Work Diary, as quoted in Clark, p. 530.


13. O'Neill, Work Diary, as quoted in Clark, p. 531.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 531.

16. Ibid., p. 533.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.
20. More specifically the song, "Shenandoah", is heard: at the beginning of Act One of Homecoming, beginning of Act Three of Homecoming, beginning of Act Four of The Hunted, the end of Act Five of The Hunted, beginning of Act One of The Haunted, the beginning of Act Four of The Haunted, and at the end of the last act of the trilogy.


22. Ibid., p. 531.

23. Ibid., p. 535.

24. Ibid., p. 531.

25. Ibid., p. 533.

26. Ibid., p. 531.

27. Ibid., p. 535.

28. Ibid., p. 531.

29. Ibid., p. 533.

30. Ibid., p. 535.

31. Ibid.
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ABSTRACT of

O'NEILL and AESCHYLUS: A STUDY in TRAGEDY

Philippa Blume
Colby College, 1959
When writing about a period we have a tendency to generalize and typify that period as a whole rather than to explore its individual, and therefore varying, components. Yet these components actually do not permit many generalizations to be made. We tend to forget how extensive an historical period really is and how varied one particular writer may be. The Aeschylus who wrote the Suppliants is an almost entirely different person from the Aeschylus who wrote the Cresteia. For this reason it would not be accurate to discuss all the Greek tragedies in terms of one tragedy alone, and yet it is also impossible to discuss all of them. Realizing this limitation I have selected certain Greek tragedies to illustrate both the variety and unity within one period. Aeschylus' Cresteia, Sophocles' Oedipus, and Euripides' Hippolytus are to be the examples.

We cannot dogmatically claim what was the major motivation or idea behind the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides. It is fairly safe to assume that they were partly concerned with winning a prize at the Dionysian festival for which the tragedies were originally written, but it is also safe to assume that the idea which recurs throughout a tragedy is the one which holds the greatest interest for the author.

The Greek view of the nature of the universe is fundamentally different from the Christian view. The Greeks
believed that the earth created the gods whereas Christians believe that God created the earth. Another major theological difference between the Greeks and Christians is that the Greeks believed in many gods but Christians believe in one God. Furthermore, the Greeks did not have a religious system as does Christianity. Nor did they have a sacred book or creed.

To a certain degree Aristotle’s definition of the tragic hero as being a man greater than he is in actual life, is true. The tragic heroes Agamemnon, Clytaemestra, Creates, Oedious, Jocasta, Hippolytus, and Phaedra, possess a certain grandeur and nobility that surpasses ordinary men. Yet the tragic hero has his weaknesses and failings as does every man. Aristotle’s other statement, declaring that the hero falls because of a harmatia (error or failing), is not usually true. The hero’s ruin is more likely to be a result of his entire character. Whether it is one failing or his general character, the hero is the master of his own fate. He alone makes the tragic choice which leads to the tragic action and fall.

Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides believed man to be a free agent. Being free, man is the only one responsible for his fate. Reinhold Niebuhr in Beyond Tragedy said that "Man is mortal. That is his fate. Man pretends not to be mortal. That is his sin." In reference to the first part of this statement the Greeks would have agreed
with Niebuhr. For man is not fated because of the will of the gods but man is fated because of his own will. Man is a victim of his nature, not a victim of a god. Man is free to will an act, but this will can be influenced by man's passions and limitations.

The second part of Niebuhr's statement, "Man pretends not to be mortal. That is his sin," is also applicable to Greek tragedy. We see evidences of this in Agamemnon's treading on the purple carpet, in the efforts of Clytemnestra and Orestes to right the wrong by themselves, in the denial by Oedipus and Jocasta of the order in the universe, and in Theseus' curse on Hippolytus. The characters themselves condemn these actions as the deeds of mortals pretending to be more than mortals.

In summarizing Part I we can say that Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides have shown that the nature of tragedy is to be found in man's relationship to the universe. These three tragedians illustrate this idea by showing how man, who is strong, clashes with the universe, which is stronger, thus ending in catastrophe and tragedy for men. The reason for man's tragedy is that his strength is in his will. This prompts man to act, but he is not always aware of the consequences of his actions. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides show man striving for ideals and trying to understand the universe.
In the Oresteia Aeschylus was interested in the nature of justice in the world. In Oedipus, Sophocles was interested in the laws and order of the world. In Hippolytus, Euripides was interested in the ideals that motivate and determine people's lives. Since the gods played an important role in the lives of the Greeks they also played an important role in their dramas.

O'Neill retells Aeschylus' story of Agamemnon, as Aeschylus had retold Homer's story of Agamemnon. O'Neill utilizes the reader's knowledge of the Oresteia in building up the effects of his own play, Mourning Becomes Electra. Although it is not essential to know Aeschylus' Oresteia in order to understand O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra, both understanding and enjoyment are enhanced by such knowledge. It is the purpose of the second part of this study, by revealing the similarities and differences between these two trilogies, to lead the reader to a greater appreciation of Mourning Becomes Electra.

The basic structure and characters are parallel, but this parallelism offers a basis for contrasts that are as important as comparisons. Contrasts occur between themes, imagery, structures, and characters. These contrasts are obvious and purposeful for they illustrate how fundamental ideals have changed between these two ages. They also show how drama itself has changed.
Some of the structural differences that occur between
Mourning Becomes Electra and the Oresteia are the following. Glytaemestra is murdered by her son; Christine
commits suicide. Orestes is released from his crime;
Crin commits suicide. The deviations in plot structure
and in character are even more striking. Lavinia is
O'Neill's most important character. She is present in all
three plays of Mourning Becomes Electra, but Electra is
present in only one play of the Oresteia. Lavinia, instead
of Christine, possesses the strength and grandeur that
Glytaemestra possesses. O'Neill's entire trilogy revolves
around this one character, while Aeschylus' trilogy does
not have one central character. O'Neill eliminates some
Aeschylean characters; the herald, the nurse, and Cassandra;
and he adds characters for whom there are no Aeschylean
equivalents--Hazel and Peter.

The themes and images of the two trilogies are
significantly different. Aeschylus uses images of fertility,
not and entanglement, animals, and disease, while
O'Neill uses images of the sea and the South Sea Islands.
Aeschylus' theme is Justice, individual retribution versus
state justice. Aeschylus is interested in man's relation
to the gods and the universe. The Oresteia is more than
a domestic tragedy, it is a political and dynastic tragedy
as well. O'Neill, however, is concerned with man's
relationship to man; the theme of Belonging. And, instead
of turning his interest outward and dealing with cosmic implications, O'Neill turns inward to explore the psychological nature of man. Therefore, Mourning Becomes Electra is primarily a domestic tragedy.

The major difference between Aeschylus and O'Neill is their idea of tragedy. Aeschylus sees man as a free agent, O'Neill sees man as a fated being. However, free or fated man, as seen by Aeschylus and O'Neill, is seen in relation to his society and the universe. Aeschylus shows man free to make choices; O'Neill shows man not free to make choices. Aeschylus' tragedy results from the nature of man himself; O'Neill's tragedy results from the nature of the universe. Aeschylus sees the universe as rational and good; O'Neill sees the universe as rational and evil.