THE USE OF THE MASK IN THE PLAYS OF EUGENE O'NEILL

APPROVED:

Major Professor

Minor Professor

Director of the Department of English

Dean of the Graduate School

THE USE OF THE MASK IN THE PLAYS OF EUGENE O'NEILL

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By

Roger Curtiss Rasco, B. A.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	THE TORTURED MASK OF FERTILITY	10
III.	A MASK FOR TRUTH, A MASK FOR LIES	22
IV.	THE UNMASKED AMONG THE MASKERS	47
V.	A FAMILIAL MASK.	68
VI.	THE IMPLIED MASK	79
VII.	A DUAL PERSONALITY	87
VIII.	CONCLUSION	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY		106

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Eugene O'Neill's use of the mask in his plays has magnetically attracted praise and criticism and simple bewilderment. To some the mask is a trick; to others it is a praiseworthy renovation of an ancient method of dramatization. To the uncritical theatre-goer, the mask has been something which is different, unusual, and thereby worthy of plaudits. Of course, the critics have their opinions. Such men as Joseph T. Shipley, H. G. Kemelman, A. Feldman, Bonamy Dobree, and Virgil Geddes are against O'Neill's use of the mask. Other writers, notably Barrett H. Clark, M. J. Moses, Lionel Trilling, Edwin A. Engel, and Doris V. Falk, applaud--or, at least, maintain an air of neutrality about--O'Neill's use of the mask. Then, of course, there is the all-important commentary on O'Neill's use of the mask by Eugene O'Neill himself, commentary which indicates clearly what the playwright was striving to achieve.

Joseph Shipley wrote in 1928 a small pamphlet entitled *The Art of Eugene O'Neill* in which he recognizes that, at least in *The Great God Brown*, O'Neill employed the mask in his "quest of a means of revealing that in man which usually lies hidden."[1] However, Shipley dislikes

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[1]Joseph T. Shipley, *The Art of Eugene O'Neill* (Seattle, 1928), p. 22.

O'Neill's use of the masks to reveal interior thoughts of characters or the implied use of a mask, as in *Strange Interlude*, for asides. Shipley thinks that O'Neill should have revealed inner truths by means of "situation, betraying word, and action."[2] Shipley does not consider that the mask or the aside has a place in good drama.[3]

H. G. Kemelman joins Shipley in opposing O'Neill's masks. Kemelman, in discussing *The Great God Brown*, says that the experiment in use of the mask, rightly considered,

> is merely a method of labelling the speeches of the characters. It cannot be considered an advance on modern dramatic technique. Indeed it is a step back, for only a poor artist needs labels to make his intentions clear.[4]

Kemelman further blasts O'Neill by saying that the mask is used only to cover "defective workmanship."[5] He continues to say that the audiences of intellectuals, stirred by "emotional romanticism," have mistaken "these little tricks of the showroom for bold originality."[6] To Kemelman, O'Neill is only a playwright who does not know how to write good drama and who does temporarily satisfy the taste of the intelligentsia.

Further derision concerning O'Neill's use of the mask comes from A. Feldman, writing in 1946. Feldman labels O'Neill's use of the

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[2]*Ibid.*, p. 27. [3]*Ibid.*

[4]H. G. Kemelman, "O'Neill and the Highbrow Melodrama," *Bookman*, LXXV (September, 1932), 491.

[5]*Ibid.* [6]*Ibid.*

mask as a trick which has been overworked because O'Neill knew no other way to reveal the true and false natures of his characters.[7]

Bonamy Dobrée also dislikes O'Neill's use of the mask, although he does praise him for having the courage to experiment. Dobrée writes:

> One can admire and applaud his experimental boldness, but one must insist that the things in which he has experimented are merely subsidiary, and a sign of weakness rather than of originality.[8]

Dobrée also labels the mask as a device or a trick. He disapproves of its use.

In 1934 Virgil Geddes wrote a pamphlet entitled _The Melodramadness of Eugene O'Neill_. As the title would suggest, Geddes is another who condemns the use of the mask. Of _Lazarus Laughed_ Geddes writes, ". . . the piece as theatre can be used only for playing with masks and the clothing of ancient times."[9] He bitingly comments that O'Neill's "asides, soliloquies, masks . . . are the old theatricality of the bad dramatist."[10]

Most of those critics who are against the mask condemn it as a trick, a device used to conceal the inadequacy of the playwright.

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[7]A. Feldman, "The American Aeschylus?" _Poet Lore_, LII (Summer, 1948), 154.

[8]Bonamy Dobrée, "The Plays of Eugene O'Neill," _Southern Review_, II, (July, 1936-April, 1937), 435-446.

[9]Virgil Geddes, _The Melodramadness of Eugene O'Neill_ (Seattle, 1934), p. 27.

[10]_Ibid._, p. 36.

However, those condemnatory critics are not the only ones to voice opinions; many critics favor O'Neill's use of the mask.

Sophus Keith Winther, writing in 1934, notes that O'Neill's use of the physically apparent mask in such plays as Lazarus Laughed and The Great God Brown is a step toward the asides of Strange Interlude.[11] Winther does not exactly disapprove of O'Neill's use of the mask, but he does add that perhaps in Lazarus Laughed the mask is used beyond its effectiveness in drama.[12] Winther is one of the first to indicate that use of the mask has improved or influenced O'Neill's later ability to develop the psychology of his characters in a more artistic manner.

Lionel Trilling, writing for the New Republic in 1936, discusses the antithetical nature of O'Neill's writings. He asserts that O'Neill's use of the mask is necessary for the revelation of what he has to say.[13] Only through the medium of the mask and abstractions and double personalities and drum beats and engine rhythms can O'Neill achieve "the integral and necessary expression of his temper of mind and the task it set itself."[14]

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[11]Sophus Keith Winther, Eugene O'Neill, A Critical Study (New York, 1934), p. 260.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Lionel Trilling, "A Revaluation," New Republic, LXXXVIII (September 23, 1936), 176.

[14]Ibid.

Edwin A. Engel definitely approves of O'Neill's use of the mask. Engel discusses the mask in great detail and concludes that its use is legitimate, resourceful, and daring.[15] Engel's book, The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill, approaches the question of the mask from a scholarly point of view.

Doris V. Falk also wrote a comprehensive study of O'Neill. Her book, Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension, gives information concerning what O'Neill himself thinks of the mask. Further, Falk analyzes O'Neill's use of the mask with perception:

> In all the plays from first to last, illusion-ridden characters hide from themselves and the world behind a mask. Always the illusion concerns the character's own identity; it is a conception of the self. When the character has more than one self-image, and is not sure which is the true one, or when he knows that at least one self is an illusion but still cannot put it aside, he wears a real or figurative mask.[16]

Clark, Engel, and Falk all presented the view of Eugene O'Neill concerning the use of the mask. Clark notes that O'Neill told him that in The Great God Brown the masks were not large enough, nor were they conventionalized, as much as he thought they should be.[17] O'Neill wanted the audience to see and to understand the meaning of the masks at once. Engel writes that O'Neill said that the mask is

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[15]Edwin A. Engel, The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill (Cambridge, 1953), p. 302.

[16]Doris V. Falk, Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension (New Brunswick, 1958), p. 18.

[17]Barrett H. Clark, Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays (New York, 1929), p. 163.

> the freest solution of the modern dramatist's problem as to how--with the greatest possible dramatic clarity and economy of means--he can express those profound hidden conflicts of the mind which the probings of psychology continue to disclose to us. He must find some method to present this inner drama in his work, or confess himself incapable of portraying one of the most characteristic preoccupations and uniquely significant spiritual impulses of his time. . . . A comprehensive expression is demanded here, a chance for eloquent presentation, a new form of drama projected from a fresh insight into the inner forces motivating the actions and reactions of men and women . . .--a drama of souls, and the adventures of "free wills," with the masks that govern them and constitute their fates.[18]

Falk notes that O'Neill said, in speaking of Mourning Becomes Electra and the Mannon family:

> What I want from this mask concept is a dramatic arresting visual symbol of the separateness, the fated isolation of this family. . . . [The] Mannon drama takes place on a plane where outer reality is a mask of true fated reality --unreal realism. . . .[19]

The comments made by O'Neill indicate his intentions in using the mask: it is to represent in an appropriate manner the bitter conflicts which are within his characters.

In "Memoranda on Masks," written by O'Neill for the first issue of The American Spectator, the playwright has the following comments to make:

> Looked at from even the most practical standpoint of the practising playwright, the mask is dramatic in itself, has always been dramatic in itself, is a proven weapon of attack. At its best, it is more subtly, imaginatively, suggestively dramatic than any actor's face can ever be.

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[18]Engel, p. 93.

[19]Falk, p. 130.

> Let anyone who doubts this study the Japanese Nō masks, or Chinese theatre masks, or African primitive masks. . . .[20]

O'Neill consciously emphasizes the dramatic effect of the mask on the audience. He seems to want to obtain a hint of unreality in his plays, and the artificial quality of the mask aptly meets his needs. Further, O'Neill cites in the same article his desire to express the psychological motivations of his characters: "For what, at bottom, is the new psychological insight into human cause and effect but a study in masks, an exercise in unmasking?[21]

In an article appearing in The New York Times O'Neill once again asserts what he is attempting to obtain by using the mask. Specifically speaking of The Great God Brown, O'Neill writes:

> It was far from my idea in writing "Brown" that his background pattern of conflicting tides in the soul of Man should ever overshadow and thus throw out of proportion the living drama of the recognizable human beings, Dion, Brown, Margaret, and Cybel. I meant it always to be mystically within and behind them, giving them a significance beyond themselves, forcing itself through them to expression in mysterious words, symbols, actions they do not themselves comprehend. . . . It is Mystery--the mystery any one man or woman can feel but not understand as the meaning of any event--or accident--in any life on earth. And it is this mystery I want to realize in the theatre.[22]

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[20]Eugene O'Neill, "Memoranda on Masks," The American Spectator, I (November, 1932), 3.

[21]Ibid.

[22]Eugene O'Neill, "The Playwright Speaks," The New York Times, February 14, 1926, Sec. 8, p. 2.

It is the mysterious flow of life's motivations that O'Neill wishes to study. The mask is his method of attacking man's ignorance of himself from a new point of view.

It is intriguing to notice that approval and disapproval of O'Neill's use of the mask follow an almost chronologically exact pattern. From 1928 to 1946, with the exception of neutral comments and the praise of Trilling in 1936, there is condemnation of O'Neill's use of the mask, the critics asserting that the mask is only an illegitimate device which is intended to hide the artistic weakness of O'Neill. However, the later commentaries by critics, particularly those in the 1950's, demonstrate a more reasonable, analytical, and scholarly interpretation of O'Neill's use of the mask. The result is approval.

The purpose of this thesis is to indicate the use of the mask by Eugene O'Neill. It is probably possible to say that the mask has been used or implied in all of O'Neill's works, but this thesis will be confined to discussion of the works in which the mask or the implication of the mask is specifically evident: The Great God Brown, Strange Interlude, Mourning Becomes Electra, Dynamo, Days Without End, and Lazarus Laughed. In The Great God Brown the mask is used physically to represent the second nature or personality of the main character, Dion Anthony. There is even the interesting exchange of masks between Dion Anthony and Billy Brown, when Brown adopts the mask of Dion Anthony. One finds no physical mask in Strange Interlude, but there is extensive use of soliloquies and asides which may be

studied in relationship to the mask. In O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra there also are no physically present masks, but the implication of a familial mask is definite, leading to effective analyzation of that play in relationship to the mask. Dynamo is similar to Mourning Becomes Electra because there again are no physically present masks, but the implication of their existence is strong and not to be ignored. Further rewarding studying in the use of the mask is done with Lazarus Laughed, in which play the mask is used to represent universal personality, age, and racial characteristics in addition to the real characteristics of the major figures. Finally there is the play Days Without End, which is perhaps the culmination of O'Neill's use of the mask. In this play the dual personality of one character is represented by two actors, one of whom is masked.

CHAPTER II

THE TORTURED MASK OF FERTILITY

The Great God Brown is a tragedy about the great god of America, the average successful American businessman; it is a tragedy about the great god of the world: the average man. It is representation of the true and the false desires in man: desires and truths and falsities which whirl in tortured souls. William A. Brown, the great god Brown, is a dissatisfied man; Dion Anthony, impassioned and limited, is a captive man. Cybel is a kind and immensely sympathetic woman; Margaret is an average and confused woman. The play consists of the flailing about of the various characters who are searching for satisfaction of their own desires in an attempt to achieve a life and a world which will be real and meaningful to themselves. It is a tragic and unrewarding search. It is the universal search of man for eternal and peaceful creation and existence.

The structure of the play consists of a prologue, four acts, and an epilogue. The Great God Brown begins on the pier of a casino and ends on the same pier, approximately eighteen years later. The actions of each act occur on the same day. The several scenes take place in the sitting room of Margaret Anthony's apartment, the office of William A. Brown, Cybel's parlor, the library of William A. Brown's home, and

the pier of the casino. The décor of each scene is thoroughly American.

It is rather difficult to discuss the plot of the play. It is a series of revelations of the true and false natures of the characters presented, the true and the false being the thesis and the antithesis whose synthesis is the unobtainable and tragic end. The Great God Brown is, on its primary level, a play of success and failure, of jealousy and love, of trust and distrust. The significance of the plot is more evident when one considers that the author's characters are all men and all women; the author's characters are those of the play and of the people who sit in the audience. The plot is the series of actions taken by the two main characters to achieve the end which attracts them.

Physical description of the characters should, perhaps, include the account given by O'Neill and the mask of the character. When the reader is first introduced to Dion, he is described as follows:

> Following them, as if he were a stranger, walking alone, is their son, DION. He is about the same height as young BROWN but lean and wiry, without repose, continually in restless nervous movement. His face is masked. The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face--dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately supersensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life--into the expression of a mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing and sensual young Pan. He is dressed in a gray flannel shirt, open at the neck, sneakers over bare feet, and soiled, white flannel trousers.[1]

Dion is an impassioned young man who comes from a family which is not spiritually complementary to him. The mother does have some

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[1]Eugene O'Neill, The Great God Brown, Prologue.

confidence in her son, although her husband is a cynical and conservative man who wants his son to have as hard a life as he has experienced. William A. Brown is the other principal character in the play. Billy is a young man who is apparently a success. He has normal intelligence and ambitions. Following is a description of the young Billy Brown:

> BILLY BROWN *is a handsome, tall and athletic boy of nearly eighteen. He is blond and blue-eyed, with a likeable smile and a frank good-humored face, its expression already indicating a disciplined restraint. His manner has the easy self-assurance of a normal intelligence.*[2]

His parents were proud of him; they wanted him to go to college, which he eventually did. However, Billy Brown is a failure. He has no creative ability; he is only a normal, average American businessman who has the ability to make money.

In order to present the play effectively Eugene O'Neill makes use of masks. Masks were once used in Grecian plays. Their purpose then was probably twofold: (1) to serve as a megaphone; (2) to identify the passions of the various characters. The need of a megaphone at that time is obvious, and the large masks indicating the passions of the characters better enabled the audience, in that day of bad lighting and large amphitheaters, to identify the characters. Of course O'Neill did not use the mask as a megaphone--though certainly he may have intended the mask to affect the sound of the actor's voice. Undoubtedly, however, O'Neill did intend to use the mask to reveal to the audience

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[2]*Ibid*.

the passions of the characters. O'Neill's use of the mask goes beyond what has just been listed. Since the mask is, perhaps, the key to the play, close investigation of the use of it can prove rewarding. The mask will be discussed in the subsequent pages of this paper from three points of view: that of the author, that of the characters, and that of the audience.

The mask does several things for the author. It reveals three things concerning the personality and character of Dion, Billy Brown, Cybel, and Margaret: (1) the masks reveal the true personalities of the characters; (2) the masks reveal the false personalities of the characters; (3) the masks reveal the interrelationship of the true and false sides of the characters. The last statement is complicated; however, it seems to be important and true. An example of the interrelationship of the true and the false natures of the characters can be found in Dion, Cybel, and Billy Brown. Dion best lends himself to analysis.

Dion is possessed by two natures. The one is the angelic, the divine spirit of man. He desires love and truth and creativity. He wants to paint ideal masterpieces; he wants to love Margaret as himself--not as his masked self. The masked Dion is antipodean to the angelic one in many ways. The masked Dion is the one who is wild, reckless, carefree, a man who lives materialistically and unhappily. However, the two Dions are not without their similarities. The unmasked Dion is kind and gentle and creative. The masked Dion is also kind, can also be gentle, and is definitely creative. The masked Dion's performance in Brown's office proves his ability to create. The

change in appearance of Dion's mask signifies the effect that internal torture can wreak upon his false visage. Dion's mask changes from that of an average wild and reckless young man to the mask of a tortured man. In Act I, seven years after the prologue, O'Neill, writing of Dion, says:

> His real face has aged greatly, grown more strained and tortured, but at the same time, in some queer way, more selfless and ascetic, more fixed in its resolute withdrawal from life. The mask, too, has changed. It is older, more defiant and mocking, its sneer more forced and bitter, its Pan quality becoming Mephistophelean. It has already begun to show the ravages of dissipation.[3]

Certainly there could be no ravager of Dion's mask if there were no relationship between the true and the false characters of Dion. One could scarcely imagine how O'Neill could have demonstrated the changes in Dion's appearance if he had made no use of the mask. It is important to recognize that though Dion may have his mask on, his behavior *is* affected by his true self.

The interrelationship of the true and the false sides of the characters is noteworthy when one notices that the masks do not always indicate a great difference in appearance. Margaret is the first example. O'Neill indicates that Margaret rarely uses her mask--when she does, her mask is almost *transparent*. Margaret is so much herself at all times that when she does use her mask, it only partially conceals her inner self. The mask is an excellent way for O'Neill to demonstrate Margaret's perpetual nature.

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[3] *Ibid.*, Act One, Scene One.

The mask is also a means whereby O'Neill may, indirectly, philosophize. The mere physical presentation of Dion's tortured mask can demonstrate far more effectively than words the chaos which may result when a person does not follow the path dictated by his inner being. Dion continues to wear his mask when he finds that Margaret does not know him and does not love him without his mask: without his carefree, gay, wild, and reckless manner. The result is the complete torment of Dion. Perhaps O'Neill is saying that until man decides to follow "the divine spark" within him, he is doomed to failure, doomed to torment, doomed to live in an earthly hell.

O'Neill has used the masks to establish the dual personalities of his main characters. He has used the absence of the mask as an opportunity to permit the audience to hear the inner thought of the characters, the result being a necessary ingredient of stream-of-consciousness to complement the normal speech. The use of the mask enables O'Neill to avoid the use of an impersonal individual narrator or chorus. The masks allow the character himself to give the necessary additional information for understanding his actions.

O'Neill, then, uses the mask in several ways. The absence of the mask often affords the means of presenting a dramatic stream-of-consciousness dialogue. The mask physically represents the false visage of the character; the absence of the mask indicates the true nature of the character. The mask notably affects the voice of the actors, thereby lending credence to the mystical aspect of the

character. The mask is a means of demonstrating the barrier that men can place between themselves and the outer world.

Discussion of the mask from the point of view of the character can be interesting. To the character the mask always seems to be a crutch upon which he can lean during his contact with society which is unpleasant to him. The mask is oftentimes a savior--particularly in the case of Dion. The tragedy is that Dion's savior is his satan. Dion speaks of his mask as armor, as skin. He does so in a magnificent passage when he says:

> Why am I afraid to dance, I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter? Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love, I who love love? Why am I afraid, I who am not afraid? Why must I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why must I hide myself in self-contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ashamed of my strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship? (*Clasping his hands above in supplication*) Why was I born without a skin, O God, that I must wear armor in order to touch or be touched? (*A second's pause of waiting silence--then he suddenly claps his mask over his face again, with a gesture of despair, and his voice becomes sardonic and bitter*) Or rather, Old Graybeard, why the devil was I ever born at all?[4]

After Dion has revealed his true self to Margaret by letting her see him without his mask, Margaret is frightened. Dion puts his mask on once again and says, "All's well. I'll never let you see again. By proxy, I love you."[5]

The characters themselves know that they wear masks. This is one of the surprising facets of the play. By allowing the characters to

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[4]*Ibid.*, Prologue. [5]*Ibid.*

realize that they sometimes wear masks, O'Neill gains a strong point: the characters themselves can comment on the masks, can realize the falsity of them.

Indeed, the mask is readily discarded if the individual feels safe in his surroundings. Dion often visits Cybel, the prostitute. Dion and Cybel have basic natures which are very similar, thereby allowing them to be honest with each other. Stage directions and conversation reveal the manner in which the two are at complete ease with each other:

> DION _is sprawled on his back, fast asleep on the sofa. His mask has fallen down on his chest. His pale face is singularly pure, spiritual and sad._ CYBEL _is seated on the stool in front of the piano. She is a strong, calm, sensual, blonde girl of twenty or so, her complexion fresh and healthy, her figure full-breasted and wide-hipped, her movements slow and solidly languorous like an animal's, her large eyes dreamy with the reflected stirring of profound instincts. She chews gum like a sacred cow forgetting time with an eternal end. Her eyes are fixed, incuriously, on_ DION'S _pale face._
>
> CYBEL (_calmly_). Stop acting. I hate ham fats. (_She looks at him as if waiting for him to remove his mask--then turns her back indifferently and goes to the piano_) Well, if you simply got to be a regular devil like all the other visiting sports, I s'pose I got to play with you. (_She takes her mask and puts it on--then turns. The mask is the rouged and eye-blackened countenance of the hardened prostitute. . . . . ._)
>
> DION (_slowly removes his mask. She stops the music with a jerk. His face is gentle and sad--humbly_) I'm sorry. It has always been such agony for me to be touched![6]

It has always been agony for Dion to be touched, but Cybel can touch him and soothe him. One can conclude that even while a character is

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[6]_Ibid._, Act One, Scene Three.

wearing a mask, the inner true personality is still struggling with and distraught by the antithetical and relatively false personality. Strangely enough, the latter personality is one which has been developed to protect the true one. In addition, they take upon themselves the characteristics which are dictated to them by society. Indeed, one could say that the characters have dictated themselves into their own situation. Their own natures intrinsically contained the element which caused their downfall. However, Cybel would gladly be a prostitute without the hardened and rouged face of a prostitute, but society dictates her features, her behavior. Dion is the same. He would gladly be the sincere, gentle, spiritually pure Dion always, but society now dictates his features.

Billy Brown also wears a mask; he too leads a double existence. Billy Brown and Dion Anthony are involved in one of the more complicated parts of the play: the exchange of masks between the two men. Billy Brown also wants a crutch, but he finds that his own mask is inadequate. Therefore, he chooses to take the mask of Dion, who has died before him. Billy Brown becomes Dion and begins to live the complicated double life of both Dion and Billy Brown. The exchange of masks leads to difficulty when one attempts to explain it.

O'Neill has written in an article published in The New York Times an explanation for the exchange of masks between Billy Brown and Dion Anthony:

> Brown has always envied the creative life force in Dion--what he himself lacks. When he steals Dion's mask of Mephistopheles he thinks he is gaining the power to live

> creatively while in reality he is only stealing that creative [sic] made self-destructive by complete frustration. This devil of mocking doubt makes short work of him. It enters him, rending him apart, torturing and transfiguring him until he is even forced to wear a mask of his success, William A. Brown, before the world, as well as Dion's mask toward wife and children. Thus Billy Brown becomes not himself to any one. And thus he partakes of Dion's anguish--more poignantly, for Dion had the Mother, Cybele--and in the end out of this anguish his soul is born, a tortured Christian soul such as the dying Dion's, begging for belief, and at the last finding it on the lips of Cybele.[7]

The mask has been discussed from the points of view of the author and the characters. Brief space should suffice to discuss the mask from the point of view of the audience. To them the mask is several things, all greatly related to the point of view of the author. The effect that the mask may have on the voice of the actor is an effect specifically designed for the audience. The physical aspect of the masks could achieve a rare dramatic effect. Of course, the masks greatly aid the audience in determining when the characters are being truthful or false.

Besides recognizing the importance of the masks in the play, one can also attach great significance to O'Neill's choice of names of his characters. _Dion_ is obviously related to the word _Dionysus_. Cybel is the name of an earth goddess. The name of William Brown is obviously a common American name used to represent the materialism and lack of meaning in American life. In the same _New York Times_ article previously quoted, O'Neill also mentions the names of the characters. In contrast to the pan-like quality of the Dion side of Dion Anthony's

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[7]Eugene O'Neill, "The Playwright Speaks," _The New York Times_, February 14, 1926, Sec. 8, p. 2.

personality, there is the Saint Anthony side. Margaret was so named in order to allude to the young and innocent Christian girl of Goethe's Faust, a girl who was also named Margaret.[8]

Dionysus is "a god of the general fertility of nature, and as such is related to the earth goddesses, to Poseidon, and to Priapus, but he is doubtless known best for only one of his many attributes, and that is as the god of the vine and the wine that it produces."[9]

> Cybel is an earth goddess who was commonly called Rhea. She was inexhaustibly fertile. . . . . When Dionysus was driven mad by Hera, Rhea cured him and taught him her religious rites. This instruction was to be expected, since Dionysus and the earth goddess, whatever her name, were both deities of fertility.[10]

Why Dion and Cybel of The Great God Brown felt a kinship with each other is readily apparent. The names of the two further exemplify the universal nature of the play.

The Great God Brown is a tragedy not only of American culture, but also of the many other cultures of the world which fail to satisfy the essential desires of man. Man always finds that he must wear a mask in order to protect himself. Man often finds that when he attempts to discard his mask, he is faced with scorn and derision. Man is trapped by himself, then. Man is the captive of his own false nature, itself real, itself true in its falsity. When man thinks that he is free of a mask, he

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Don S. Norton and Peters Rushton, Classical Myths in English Literature (New York, 1959), p. 133.

[10] Ibid., p. 140.

must be positive that he is not another Billy Brown, that he is not discarding an old mask for a new and equally inadequate one.

In The Great God Brown the mask is used to indicate several things. It shows the dual personalities of the major characters. It represents a protective mechanism for the innocent and pure personalities of Dion and Cybele. Created as protection for the inner personality, it destroys the life of the character. The mask as used by O'Neill reveals the possibility of adopting behavioral characteristics which are incompatible to the individual. As a means of denoting dual personalities and of dramatically affecting the audience, the mask is a success.

CHAPTER III

A MASK FOR TRUTH, A MASK FOR LIES

The world of reality and unreality may be interpreted in innumerable ways. Ideas, thoughts, comments and conversations may all be either true ideas, true thoughts, true comments and conversations, or they may be false. One must grudgingly admit that according to particularly peculiar situations, truth and falsehood may respectably and understandably exist side by side, the one not being any better or any worse than the other. Eugene O'Neill has explored the world of truth and falsehoods in his play *Strange Interlude*. Consisting of nine acts divided into two parts, *Strange Interlude* represents O'Neill's attempt to explore and to conquer the relatively unexplored and unconquered world of thoughts in relationship to speech and action. In order to achieve a reasonable degree of success in his endeavor, O'Neill has created a mask to be worn by his characters. Unlike the masks in *The Great God Brown*, those in *Strange Interlude* are not physical ones; rather are they masks of everyday words, of everyday situations, of everyday events, of everyday responses and barbs and banal comments on the weather. The masks are far more evident by their absence than by their presence, paradoxical as it may seem. When the masks are torn from the minds of the characters, one faces a strange combination of words, of tones, of odd, blank mannerisms, of sudden emotional and

irrational comments that reveal thoughts which had been carefully buried and carefully avoided--only to return when the earth above the thoughts had been spaded away by the particularly peculiar situations which had come to exist.

The mask is the presence of imitation thoughts in the form of intended normal speech. The absence of the mask is the presence of true thoughts being uttered by a no longer tethered mind.

The relationship between the presence and the absence of the masks is a complicated one which can best be understood, perhaps, by analyzation of the several major characters of the play: Professor Henry Leeds, Charles Marsden, Sam Evans, Edmund Darrell, and Nina Leeds. There will be discussion of the emotional, the physical, and the reasonable characteristics of each of the characters. There will be indications of those rare moments when some degree of confrontation occurs; they are moments when the character suddenly experiences a state of self-realization; they are moments when the mask is not there.

Henry Leeds fits the cultural image of a college professor: he is at ease in the classroom, where he is more than well equipped to deal with his version of reality. However, outside he is somewhat lost. Professor Leeds presents the reader with one of the first instances of confrontation. He first speaks to Charles Marsden; then he has a significant thought:

> Yes. That's exactly it. She knows in some queer way. And she acts toward me exactly as if she thought I had deliberately destroyed her happiness, that I had hoped for Gordon's death

> and been secretly overjoyed when the news came! (*His voice is shaking with emotion*) And there you have it, Charlie--the whole absurd mess!
> (*Thinking with a strident accusation*)
> And it's true, you contemptible! . . .
> (*Then miserably defending himself*)
> No! . . . I acted unselfishly . . . for her sake! . . .[1]

The Professor attempts to convince himself of the truth, but he hides that truth by denying that he is contemptible for having refused to allow his daughter to marry Gordon before Gordon went to Europe, to war, and to death. However, after conversing with Nina, who herself reasserts what his mind has been trying to assert, the Professor pitifully admits the truth. His mask of falsehood in speech and thought is torn from him by Nina's emotional outburst. Woodenly, the Professor comments;

> Let us say then that I *persuaded* myself it was for your sake. That may be true. You are young. You think one can live with truth. Very well. It is also true that I was jealous of Gordon. I was alone and I wanted to keep your love. I hated him as one hates a thief one may not accuse nor punish. I did my best to prevent your marriage. I was glad when he died. There. Is that what you wish me to say?[2]

Soon the battle of the masks is over for the Professor, and he loses the battle. The truth finally overwhelms him; he speaks woodenly; he speaks without his mask; he speaks the truth which he dreads to admit. And it is understandable, furthermore, to find that the Professor has regretted to admit the truth, because the truth is incompatible with what he believes is honorable, noble, and Grecian. He discovers

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[1]Eugene O'Neill, *Strange Interlude*, Act I.

[2]*Ibid.*

that his behavior has been that of a selfish father, one who hated to surrender the invisible crutch, Nina, upon whom he had leaned for the lifetime since the death of his wife. Few individuals wish to recognize their inadequacies; to his sorrow, the Professor is no exception to this rule.

The Professor himself cannot be termed a major character. He has been introduced in this paper as a prelude to consideration of Charles Marsden, once a student of the Professor. Marsden has become very much like the Professor himself; it may be justifiable to quote O'Neill's initial description of Marsden:

> Marsden is a tall thin man of thirty-five, meticulously well-dressed in tweeds of distinctly English tailoring, his appearance that of an Anglicized New England gentleman. His face is too long for its width, his nose is high and narrow, his forehead broad, his mild blue eyes those of a dreamy self-analyst, his thin lips ironical and a bit sad. There is an indefinable feminine quality about him, but it is nothing apparent in either appearance or act. He speaks with a careful ease as one who listens to his own conversation. The main point about his personality is a quiet charm, a quality of appealing, inquisitive friendliness, always willing to listen, eager to sympathize, to like and to be liked.[3]

One first meets Marsden in the Professor's study. The environment is well-suited to Marsden, since O'Neill describes the study as a place where past ages can be relived in order to avoid the present and the future. Marsden, by means of his inner thoughts, his absence of a mask, becomes identified as a man who has a latent sexual problem, who writes novels which are imitations of life, who lives by, with, and

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[3] Ibid.

for his mother. Marsden thinks of sex and his first experience in copulation:

> Why? . . . Oh, this digging in gets nowhere . . . to the devil with sex! . . . our impotent pose of today to beat the loud drum on fornication! . . . boasters . . . eunuchs parading with the phallus! . . .
>
> . . . back at the hotel I waited till they were asleep . . . then sobbed . . . thinking of Mother . . . feeling I had defiled her . . . and myself . . . forever ! . . . .[4]

Marsden's true character is further evidenced by his behavior when tragedy is occurring before his eyes. As the Professor and Nina battle with true speech about the Professor's behavior toward Nina and Gordon, as the Professor's life and real self are being revealed in disreputable nakedness, Marsden wants to avoid the entire situation, wants to leave. He seems to fail to recognize how much life is being enacted before him. Marsden timidly thinks:

> In short, forgive us our possessing as we forgive those who possessed before us. . . . Mother must be wondering what keeps me so long . . . it's time for tea . . . I must go home. . .[5]

Despite his weak nature, Marsden also experiences some degree of confrontation when he observes the Nina who has returned to her father's funeral:

> MARSDEN. (<u>staring after her--dully</u>)
> That isn't Nina. . . .
> (<u>Indignantly</u>)
> They've killed her soul down there! . . .
> (<u>Tears come to his eyes suddenly and he pulls out his handkershief and wipes them, muttering huskily</u>)

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[4]<u>Ibid</u>.

[5]<u>Ibid</u>., Act Two.

> Poor old Professor! . . .
> (Then suddenly jeering at himself)
> For God's sake, stop acting! . . . it isn't
> the Professor! . . . dear old Charlie is
> crying because she didn't weep on his
> shoulder . . as he had hoped! . . .[6]

The preceding quotation adequately demonstrates that the character can experience the mask both internally by means of false thoughts and externally by means of false speeches. Even though true thoughts would not necessarily be known by other characters, they are still denied and avoided by the characters in the fear that if the mask is allowed to disappear, the resultant consequences may be incompatible with what is expected of the individual. When Nina confesses to Marsden that she has had sexual intercourse with many men in the hospital in which she worked, Marsden's reaction is again one which indicates that he wishes to avoid reality and to return to the security of his mother's presence. Then, in a surprising scene, O'Neill causes Marsden to behave like the Professor, while Nina behaves and speaks like a small child. The result is astonishing, and the use of masks is an artistic one which heightens dramatic interest, audience self-identification, and suspense.

> MARSDEN. (Then suddenly in a matter-of-fact tone that is mockingly like her father's) Then, under the circumstances, having weighed the pros and cons, so to speak, I should say that decidedly the most desirable course--
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> NINA. (drowsily--her eyes shut) You sound so like Father, Charlie.

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[6] Ibid.

MARSDEN. (in the tone like her father's)--is for you to marry that young Evans. He is a splendid chap, clean and boyish, with real stuff in him, too, to make a career for himself if he finds a helpmeet who will inspire him to his best efforts and bring his latent ability to the surface.[7]

Of course Marsden is not physically the father of Nina. He does, however, become the emotional and spiritual father of the girl. It is to him that she confesses, and Marsden, himself responding to the confession, throws off his own mask and puts on the mask of Nina's father, Professor Leeds. It is significant that Marsden is very much like the Professor. Otherwise the exchange of masks would be impossible. It is clearly evident that Nina's adoption of the voice of a small girl is not incompatible when one considers the immense emotional strain under which she has labored. Her race back to a period of life when questions of seemingly important but actually unimportant points were brushed aside with facility by her father is justifiable. Were she to remain in the harsh world of reality, she might become insane. Her adoption of the mask of her childhood is another indication, further proof, of the O'Neill character's use of the mask for protection. In this instance the mask is emotional protection. The revealing series of comments is concluded in the following manner:

NINA. (drowsily) Yes. (Very sleepily) Thank you, Father. You've been so kind. You've let me off too easily. I don't feel as if you'd punished me hardly at all. But I'll never, never do it again, I promise--never, never!-- (She falls asleep and gives a soft little snore).

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[7] Ibid.

> MARSDEN. (still in her father's tones--very paternally--looking down) She's had a hard day of it, poor child! I'll carry her up to her room.[8]

When Marsden appears in Act Six the reader is faced with a man who has lost his mother and who thinks that he has lost all reason for living--except, perhaps, as he may hope to be loved by Nina. O'Neill writes that in Act Six "Marsden has aged greatly. His hair is gray, his expression one of a deep grief that is dying out into a resignation resentful of itself."[9] While Marsden considers his love for Nina, he has another confrontation with himself which is highly significant insofar as his character is concerned.

> . . . what would I offer her? . . . money? . . . she could get that from others . . . myself? . . . (Bitterly) What a prize! . . . my ugly body . . . there's nothing in me to attract her . . . my fame? . . . God, what a shoddy, pitiful! . . . but I might have done something big . . . I might still . . . if I had the courage to write the truth . . . but I was born afraid . . . afraid of myself . . . I've given my talent to making fools feel pleased with themselves in order that they'd feel pleased with me . . . and like me . . . I'm neither hated nor loved . . . I'm liked . . . women like me . . . Nina likes me! . . .[10]

It may seem to be surprising, but Marsden does have the courage to speak to himself, though he may not have the courage to speak to the world. He is honest to himself. And, though it may be excruciatingly painful, he thinks the following thoughts about "dear old Charlie," thoughts which are the result of Nina's constant use of that phrase in describing the faithfulness of Charles:

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[8] Ibid., Act Two. [9] Ibid., Act Six. [10] Ibid.

> Dear old Rover, nice old doggie, we've had him for years, he's so affectionate and faithful but he's growing old, he's getting cross, we'll have to get rid of him soon! . . .
> (<u>In a strange rage, threateningly</u>)
> But you won't get rid of me so easily, Nina! . . .
> (<u>Then confusedly and shamefacedly</u>)
> Good God, what's the matter with me! . . . since Mother's death I've become a regular idiot! . . .[11]

Marsden lets his thoughts rush on in their natural direction until their revelations of his true character are so disturbing that he must call an abrupt halt to his string of thoughts. It is significant that the halt brings guilty remembrance of his mother. There is further confrontation for Marsden as he analyzes and digests what is occurring when he, Evans, and Darrell are in the same room with Nina in Act Six:

> . . . her three men! . . . and we are! . . . I? . . . yes, more deeply than either of the others since I serve for nothing . . . a queer kind of love, maybe . . . I am not ordinary! . . . our child . . . what could she mean by that? . . . child of us three! . . . on the surface, that's insane . . . but I felt when she said it there was something in it . . . she has strange devious intuitions that tap the hidden currents of life . . . dark intermingling currents that become one stream of desire . . . I feel, with regard to Nina, my life queerly identified with Sam's and Darrell's . . . her child is the child of our three loves for her . . .[12]

The preceding comments in the mind of Charles Marsden are evidences of deliberate, calm, quiet consideration of a highly emotional problem, the problem of love. Marsden is a desperately lonely man; he does not mind sharing love as long as he has some small degree of love that he can claim for himself. O'Neill's use of the mask in this instance

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[11] <u>Ibid</u>. [12] <u>Ibid</u>.

reveals no new facts to the audience--other than the highly important fact that now one of the characters of the play seems to know what is going on. Marsden continues his confrontation, thinking:

> I would like to believe that . . . I would like to be her husband in a sense . . . and the father of a child, after my fashion . . . I could forgive her everything . . . permit everything . . .
> (Determinedly)
> And I do forgive! . . . and I will not meddle hereafter more than is necessary to guard her happiness, and Sam's and our baby's . . . as for Darrell, I am no longer jealous of him . . . she is only using his love for her own happiness . . . he can never take her away from me! . . .[13]

Marsden's thoughts are remarkable in their grasp of the situation. Marsden realizes that his peculiar paternal love has its place in the life of Nina. He realizes that Darrell and Evans cannot take his place with Nina because they offer different kinds of love that satisfy different requirements of Nina. It is true that Marsden does not give up his dreams of sexual satisfaction with Nina. He still regrets his own inability to live the sexual life which he has rejected because of his mother. Furthermore, he is honest enough to admit it to himself:

> What! . . . platonic heroic at my age! . . . do I believe a word of that? . . . look at her beautiful eyes! . . . wouldn't I give anything in life to see them desire me? . . . and the intimacy I'm boasting about, what more does it mean than that I've been playing the dear old Charlie of her girlhood again? . . .
> (Thinking in anguish)
> Damned coward and weakling! . . .[14]

Marsden is a person who knows himself. His angry rejection of the time-worn phrase "dear old Charlie" signifies his self-knowledge

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., Act Seven.

and his self-contempt. He does not admire himself, but he does have the courage to accept what he is and to realize what he is and to do what he is capable of doing. During Act Eight the major characters are spectators of a rowing race in which Gordon Evans is participating. It is an opportunity for everyone to drink, and Marsden does so to excess, the result being that for important moments Marsden's mask is torn away.

> MARSDEN. There, there, Nina Cara Nina! Don't worry your pretty head! It will all come out all right! We'll only have a little while longer to wait and then you and I'll be quietly married! (<u>Thinking frightenedly</u>)
>
> > The devil! . . . What am I saying? . . . I'm drunk! . . . all right, all the better! . . . I've wanted all my life to tell her! . . .
>
> Of course, I realize you've got a husband at present but, never mind, I can wait. I've waited a lifetime already; but for a long while now I've had a keen psychic intuition that I wasn't born to die before--[15]

Charles Marsden is and is not a complicated character. There are three definite characteristics which one may note about him: (1) he has been overly attended by and attentive to his mother; (2) he is definitely in love with Nina; and (3) he is afraid to live life to the optimum degree. All three characteristics become evident in both his speech and his thoughts. Also, it seems relatively safe to say that Marsden has full cognizance of his own abilities and inabilities. He, probably above all the other characters of the play, knows himself well. He has studied the truth in his own mind; he has analyzed his own behavior and that of those about him. He has sometimes been afraid

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[15]<u>Ibid.</u>, Act Eight.

of facing the truth about himself, but in the end he is resigned. The mask of life which he presented to other people was very largely a transparent mask: the other characters also knew Charlie. When the mask is removed, however, the audience is able to view an immensely tormented and weak man who is sensitive to a high degree. The other characters know the essential Charles Marsden. They do not know the Marsden who is continually dreaming guiltily about his lack of sexual love.

It must be admitted that Marsden was weak. However, he fought life until he reached a berth in which he could lie down in peace, with Nina, beneath a tree, near a rose, there to dream and to rest and to be, at last, complete. He could be a father, but he could not be a husband. That is Marsden's tragedy, one which O'Neill revealed admirably through use of black and white, shades of gray and blue, those false statements with true backgrounds, those statements in use of the mask that protected the individual with a mask of words.

Instead of saying "poor old Charlie," perhaps it would be more appropriate to say "poor old Sam Evans." Evans is indeed simply Evans. He is anything but a complicated figure. He has little need for a mask, and his revealed thoughts are not particularly significant. Certainly all others know Sam Evans as well as he knows himself. It is paradoxical and noteworthy that the least complex personality develops into the most successful one. Evans is the most successful character of the play in that he has more happiness at less cost than anyone else. He needs no mask for protection because his mother and Nina and Marsden

and Darrell have spent their lives protecting Evans--for one reason or another. Sam's few revealed thoughts are guilty ones caused by his temporary sense of inadequacy in his role as Nina's husband.

Where Sam Evans may be a simple character, Doctor Edmund Darrell, a scientific-minded man who allows himself to experiment with human lives, is not a simple character. Darrell is a complex person who goes from cool-headed analysis of any emotional problem to direct and regrettably unscientific participation in the emotional problems, and then back, once more, to his previous scientific world. While involved in the emotional conflict which surrounds him because of his physical love of Nina, Darrell is relatively helpless. He is given to introspection, and his masked and unmasked comments reveal a sensitive, intelligent, and well-meaning man. In Act Two O'Neill writes this about Darrell:

> _He is twenty-seven, short, dark, wiry, his movements rapid and sure, his manner cool and observant, his dark eyes analytical. His head is handsome and intelligent. There is a quality about him, provoking and disturbing to women, of intense passion which he has rigidly trained himself to control and set free only for the objective satisfaction of studying his own and their reactions; and so he has come to consider himself as immune to love through his scientific understanding of its real sexual nature._[16]

The overly confident young doctor of Act Two is a different man in Act Four, when Nina confesses to him the insanity of Sam Evans' family and the danger of her past pregnancy. Darrell and Nina begin to speak in the third person, a device which increases the aura of unreality of

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[16] _Ibid._, Act Two.

the entire scene and makes evident the sudden use of a mask to conceal reality itself from the persons who are making it. The third person mask is a detached manner of speaking the truth:

> DARRELL. . . . (In a cold, emotionless professional voice, his face like a mask of a doctor) A doctor must be in full possession of the facts, if he is to advise. What is it precisely that Sam's wife has thought so much of doing?[17]

Nina does not hesitate to reply to Darrell's question; she adopts the same manner, even to the extent of referring to herself in the third person.

> NINA. (in the same insistent tone) Of picking out a healthy male about whom she cared nothing and having a child by him that Sam would believe was his child, whose life would give him confidence in his own living, who would be for him a living proof that his wife loved him. (Confusedly, strangely and purposefully)
> This doctor is healthy. . . .[18]

The scene from which the above quotations were taken is among the most dramatic and impressive of the entire play. Indubitably the effect can be attributed to the unnatural use of the mask and the revealed thoughts of the characters. The conflicts in emotions and reasonings of Nina and Darrell are tremendous: they attempt to convince themselves that their act of copulation is solely for the benefit of Sam's happiness. Doctor Darrell is not emotionally capable of maintaining a scientific distance from the events which are occurring. It is an impressive scene.

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[17] Ibid., Act Four.

[18] Ibid.

Darrell's experiment with human lives, his prescription for happiness, have a definite effect upon him physically by Act Six. O'Neill writes:

> (. . . DARRELL *is pale, thin, nervous, unhealthy looking. There are lines of desperation in his face, puffy shadows of dissipation and sleeplessness under his restless harried eyes.* . . .)[19]

Darrell analyzes his degree of success in bitter terms:

> (*Then in a strange objective tone--thinking*)
> My experiment with the guinea pigs has been a success . . . the ailing ones, Sam, and the female, Nina, have been restored to health and normal function . . . only the other male, Ned, seems to have suffered deterioration.
> (*Then bitterly humble*)
> Nothing left but to accept her terms . . . I love her . . . I can help to make her happy . . . half a loaf is better . . . to a starving man . . .
> (*Glancing over at* EVANS--*bitterly gloating*)
> And your child is mine! . . . your wife is mine! . . . your happiness is mine! . . . may you enjoy my happiness, her husband! . . .[20]

Darrell's comments are bitter confrontations of his position in life. He has attempted to deliver happiness by prescription to other people. He has been trapped helplessly in the emotional quagmire which resulted. Darrell's position is similar to that of the idea expressed by Henry James in his novel *The Sacred Fount*. There a person was growing younger at the direct physical expense of another person, who was growing increasingly older. As Darrell becomes more and more unhappy, Evans becomes more and more happy and successful. Darrell thinks;

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[19] *Ibid.*, Act Six.

[20] *Ibid.*

> . . . I hope my experiment has proved something! . . .
> Sam . . . happy and wealthy . . . and healthy! . . .
> I used to hope he'd break down . . . I'd watch him and
> read symptoms of insanity into every move he made . . .
> despicable! . . . certainly, but love makes one either
> noble or despicable! . . . he only grew healthier . . .
> now I've given up watching him . . . almost entirely . . .
> now I watch him grow fat and I laugh! . . . the huge joke
> has dawned on me! . . . Sam is the normal one! . . . we
> are lunatics! . . . Nina and I! . . . have made a sane
> life for him out of our madness! . . .[21]

However, Darrell does have an internal strength which eventually saves him. He has the strength to leave, to go away, to do work out of the country, work which keeps him away from Nina for a while, at least. During one of the periods of absence Darrell succeeds in forgetting Nina to a great extent; in Act Eight one finds that he has considerably changed in appearance. Also, in Act Eight he utters the lines which probably do more than any others to free him definitely from Nina's power:

> No, Nina--sorry--but I can't help you. I told you I'd never meddle again with human lives! (More and more confidently) Besides, I'm quite sure Gordon isn't my son, if the real deep core of the truth were known! I was only a body to you. Your first Gordon used to come back to life. I was never more to you than a substitute for your dead lover! Gordon is really Gordon's son! So you see I'd be telling Sam a lie if I boasted that I--And I'm a man of honor! I've proved that, at least! (He raises his glasses and looks up the river--thinking exultantly)
>
> I'm free! . . . I've beaten her at last! . . . now come
> on, Navy! . . . you've got to beat her Gordons for
> me! . . .[22]

In Act Nine Darrell has returned once again to the Evans circle. The Darrell of Act Nine is a man who regrets his past attempts to

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[21]Ibid., Act Seven. [22]Ibid., Act Eight.

prescribe happiness for others. The ingredients for the prescription have been taken from Darrell's life, leaving him, until the last, empty of the necessary ingredients for happiness for himself. Darrell is one of the most interesting characters of the play because it is he who, probably above all others, changes to the greatest extent. He runs a gauntlet from an austere professional happiness to a bitter sadness to a sagacious resignation to life. He plays the role of doctor, of lover, of friend, a role which is a complex and many-varied one that demands the use of masks to reveal and to conceal his thoughts and analyzations concerning the behavior of himself and others.

Nina Leeds is the person who contributes most sorrow to herself and to others. She is the daughter of her father, Professor Henry Leeds; the wife of Sam Evans; the love of the old Gordon; the mistress of Edmund Darrell; the mother of the new Gordon; the peculiar, daughterly love of Charles Marsden. Being these many people in one person, Nina makes great use of the mask of words to conceal her true thoughts; she must use a mask to make her tortured life of physical, familial, and paternal love endurable.

The reader is introduced to a young woman who is quite evidently beautiful, sensual in a pleasant and non-revolting manner, but who is also deeply troubled and rebellious against the quiet, sane, almost insipid life which she has lived with her father. The loss of her love, Gordon, in Europe, in war, in death, has been too much for her to provide the proper emotional stabilization of her mind. She is overburdened with sorrow and doubt and despair and dissipated love. About this troubled

girl the air is filled with the agonizing and expected protestations of the spiritually anemic father, whose words rush forth to attempt, but only to attempt unsuccessfully, to bridge the gaping abyss which has opened between him and his daughter. The words of normality and reason are enough to spur Nina's true self into words which are not masking words, but emotionally pregnant words:

> NINA. (again with the strange intensity) I must pay! It's my plain duty! Gordon is dead! What use is my life to me or anyone? But I must make it of use--by giving it! (Fiercely) I must learn to give myself, do you hear--give and give until I can make that gift of myself for a man's happiness without scruple, without fear, without joy except in his joy! When I've accomplished this I'll have found myself, I'll know how to start living my own life again! (Appealing to them with a desperate impatience) Don't you see? In the name of the commonest decency and honor, I owe it to Gordon![23]

Nina, then, begins as another Cybel who loves humanity and wishes to love it physically. During the preceding passage Nina speaks less and less with the reservation of masked words. Her inner, her real, her true thoughts more and more become her spoken thoughts, reaching a high peak of self-truth and expression:

> But Gordon never possessed me! I'm still Gordon's silly virgin! And Gordon is muddy ashes! And I've lost my happiness forever! All that last night I knew he wanted me. I knew it was only the honorable code-bound Gordon, who kept commanding from his brain, no, you mustn't, you must respect her, you must wait till you have a marriage license![24]

By Act Two Nina's physical state reflects her past promiscuous experiences in the hospital. Nina still speaks with a remarkable degree

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[23]Ibid., Act One. [24]Ibid.

of truth. She seems to have discarded her mask of words as a result of her utter contempt for life as she had experienced it. In a moving and dynamic manner Nina speaks a key sentence in relationship to masks: "How we poor monkeys hide from ourselves behind the sounds called words!"[25]

Nina's callousness and, yet, great sensitivity are reflected in the following words which could not be termed masked words at all: they are true:

> . . . I've suddenly seen the lies in the sounds called words. You know--grief, sorrow, love, father--those sounds our lips make and our hands write. You ought to know what I mean. You work with them. Have you written another novel lately? But, stop to think, you're just the one who couldn't know what I mean. With you the lies have become the only truthful things. And I suppose that's the logical conclusion to the whole evasive mess, isn't it? Do you understand me, Charlie? Say lie-- (She says it, drawing it out) L-i-i-e! Now say life. L-i-i-f-e! You see! Life is just a long drawn out lie with a sniffling sigh at the end! (She laughs).[26]

Soon after her deluge of criticism of life and God, Nina reverts to a child-like status, confesses her promiscuity, begs punishment and forgiveness of Marsden, who becomes her father in a scene which has previously been noted during discussion of Marsden.

Act Three begins with a calm and contented Nina. However, it ends with emotional terror as Nina discovers that she is pregnant with a child who may be born to be insane. In Act Three Nina returns to use of the mask as she makes casual observations on Sam, his mother, Charlie Marsden, and the strange home in which they are having a

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[25] Ibid., Act Two.   [26] Ibid., Act Two.

belated honeymoon. In Act Four Nina explains her lack of children to Darrell; the resultant pregnance of Nina gives her the calm and contentment which she experienced at the beginning stages of her first ill-fated pregnance. Nina thinks beautiful words, all of which are revealed as O'Neill again makes use of the mask to reveal thoughts to the audience, yet concealing them from the other characters:

> There . . . again . . . his child! . . . my child moving in my life . . . my life moving in my child . . . the world is whole and perfect . . . all things are each other's . . . life is . . . and she is beyond reason . . . questions die in the silence of this peace . . . I am living a dream within the great dream of the tide . . . breathing in the tide I dream and breathe back my dream into the tide . . . suspended in the movement of the tide, I feel life move in me, suspended in me . . . no whys matter . . . there is no why . . . I am a mother . . . God is a Mother . . .[27]

It is extremely important for Nina to have a child. She needs the emotional satisfaction which can only come by being a Mother. She needs to fulfill the void in Evans' life which demands that he become a Father. It is small wonder that she seems contented and at peace.

In Act Six Nina has had her child. She sits in the living room, where she basks in the happy atmosphere of her three loves, Darrell, Evans, and Marsden. She has a moment of confrontation that is similar to the two which have been noted for Darrell and Marsden:

> (*more and more strangely triumphant*)
> My three men! . . . I feel their desires converge in me . . . to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb . . . and am whole . . . they dissolve in me, their life is my life . . . I am pregnant with the three!

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[27] *Ibid.*, Act Five.

> . . . husband! . . . lover! . . . father! . . . and the fourth man! . . . little man! . . . little Gordon! . . . he is mine too! . . . that makes it perfect! . . .[28]

By means of the confrontation, Nina can consider herself whole, complete, loved by four loves in four ways that satisfy her four desires. She is "pregnant with the three"; she is finally whole and knowledgeable of her good fortune. Nina begins to understand how the blessed world of Nina really whirls.

Act Seven shows that Nina physically reflects the peace which she finds when she resigns herself to all three loves--instead of fighting to have one to the detriment of the other. However, maintaining the necessary optimum degree of love in relation to all three does place great strain upon her in a physical, mental, and spiritual manner:

> NINA *is thirty-five, in the full bloom of her womanhood. She is slimmer than in the previous scene. Her skin still retains a trace of summer tan and she appears in the pink of physical condition. But as in the first act of the play, there is beneath this a sense of great mental strain. One notices the many lines in her face at second glance. Her eyes are tragically sad in repose and her expression is set and masklike.*[29]

"Her expression is set and masklike." Nina begins to think of the trouble which she has stirred into the lives of many people; she rationalizes; she experiences a minor state of self-confrontation:

> I want to rot away in peace! . . . I'm sick of the fight for happiness! . . . . poor Ned, I've made him suffer a great deal! . . . he has shared me for his comfort's sake with a little gratitude and a big bitterness . . . and sharing me has corrupted him! . . . (*Then bitterly*)

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[28]*Ibid.*, Act Six. [29]*Ibid.*, Act Seven.

> No, I can't blame myself! . . . no woman can make a man happy who has no purpose in life! . . . why did he give up his career? . . . because I had made him weak? . . .[30]

Nina is thoroughly confused at times. She speaks lovingly and pityingly of Charlie for a few lines--and suddenly she speaks thoughts with words which thunder blanket condemnation of all men:

> These men make me sick! . . . I hate all three of them! . . . they disgust me! . . . the wife and mistress in me has been killed by them! . . . thank God, I am only a mother now! . . . Gordon is my little man, my only man! . . .[31]

Nina then clutches internally for the love of Gordon, her son, the only one whom she can love with no reservations whatsoever. For the other three men in her life she had only partial love of a particular kind. On Gordon she could lavish all of the maternal love which was expected of her.

In Act Eight Nina again significantly takes upon herself the mask of her girlhood and refers to Charles Marsden as her father. She makes another confession, as in the first such scene:

> NINA. (_staring before her as if she were in a trance --simply, like a young girl_) Yes, Charlie. Yes, Father. Because all of Sam's father's family have been insane. His mother told me that time so I wouldn't have his baby. I was going to tell Madeline that so she wouldn't marry Gordon. But it would have been a lie because Gordon isn't really Sam's child at all, he's Ned's. Ned gave him to me and I gave him to Sam so Sam could have a healthy child and be well and happy. And Sam is well and happy, don't you think? (_Childishly_) So I haven't been such an awfully wicked girl, have I, Father?[32]

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[30]_Ibid_.

[31]_Ibid_.

[32]_Ibid_., Act Eight.

The death of Sam Evans, the success of Darrell in repudiating Nina, the engagement of Gordon to Madeline, all cause the Nina of Act Nine to be a definitely changed woman. O'Neill states:

> NINA _looks much older than in the preceding Act. Resignation has come into her face, a resignation that uses no makeup, that has given up the struggle to be sexually attractive and look younger._[33]

Act Nine itself furnishes good examples of the use of the mask in the play. The final Act is a quiet one in comparison to the others. There is absolute resignation; there is the discovery of inner emotional peace. In the closing lines of the play Nina reverts again to the status of a daughter in the presence of Charlie Marsden, who, in the mind of Nina, becomes her father; he adopts Professor Leed's manner of speech. She calls him father; she confesses her tiredness; she comes to Marsden for rest and peace and comfort. Nina is many women, but in the end she is herself, a simple child, an aging woman who has lived a life full of gropings for happiness.

Nina is the most complex character of the play. O'Neill's use of the mask serves to heighten not only Nina's effectiveness in the play, but also the effectiveness of the other characters. The greatest benefit of the masks is the increased amount of insight the audience achieves in knowledge of the various characters. The audience can view the character from the various points of view of his mind, his emotional outbursts, his everyday speech, and his tortuous maze of spoken and unspoken, accepted and unaccepted, ideas and thoughts.

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[33] _Ibid._, Act Nine.

The masks are always invisible, but their presence is always known by the audience and, in some rare occasions, by the characters. Nina wears the mask of a nurse, the mask of a promiscuous woman, and the mask of her girlhood. Charlie Marsden wears his own transparent mask and the mask of Nina's father. A professional doctor's mask is sometimes worn by Darrell, and Evans is merely Evans, who simply wears his own mask. The mannerisms of the characters, the tones of their speeches, the words of the characters, all indicate when the mask is being worn and when it has been thrown aside.

The mask is thrown aside when the character has reached a peak of emotional instability, the result being a forlorn or excited rejection of concern with what may happen when society learns the truth. When Nina wears her mask of a young girl, she does it as she is confessing to Charlie her past foul experiences. The confession is necessary in order to wipe guilt from her confused mind. It is true, too, that sometimes one mask is thrown aside, as in Nina's case, and another is put on again, another through which the truth may more easily be spoken. It is evident that presence of the mask does not mean that truth is not being spoken. Rather is the mask chosen as a more comfortable and compatible medium for the interjection of true and unpleasant ideas. As Darrell talks to Nina about the possibility of his becoming the father of a child for Sam, Darrell wears his professional doctor's mask: the comments are modified by use of no mask as his inner thoughts of what he is saying are revealed. It begins to become even more complicated when

one tries to assign only falsehood to the mask and only truth to no mask. It is better and more accurate to say that O'Neill seems to feel that we do, as Nina said, "hide behind the sounds called words."[34] Even when those words are truth, one must often present them through a mask that is itself emotionally capable of being the deliverer of the words. Even when the words are thoughts, one is hiding behind a mask--except for the brief and rare moments of personal confrontation.

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[34]Ibid., Act Two.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNMASKED AMONG THE MASKERS

Lazarus Laughed is a religious play. Consequently, O'Neill's talent leads him to write many lines which beautifully discuss man's relationship to life, death, and God. Also, once more O'Neill uses masks in a play. To determine exactly why he uses those masks, four characters are examined: Lazarus, Caligula, Pompeia, and Tiberius. In addition to the four characters just named, there are many more. O'Neill has an intricate arrangement whereby a precise number of characters appear and wear masks which represent nationality, age, and personality.

Three nationalities are eventually presented. They are the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans. Within each of the nationalities are the same types of age and personality that are found in the other nationalities. As for types according to age, O'Neill writes, "There are seven periods of life shown: Boyhood (or Girlhood), Youth, Young Manhood (or Womanhood), Manhood (or Womanhood), Middle Age, Maturity and Old Age. . . ."[1] O'Neill goes on to say that "each of these periods is represented by seven different masks of general types of character as follows: The Simple, Ignorant; the Happy, Eager; the

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[1]Eugene O'Neill, Lazarus Laughed, Act One, Scene One.

Self-Tortured, Introspective; the Proud, Self-Reliant; the Servile, Hypocritical; the Revengeful, Cruel; the Sorrowful, Resigned."[2] O'Neill adds that "each type has a distinct predominant color for its costumes which varies in kind according to its period."[3]

O'Neill's initial description of the masks seems to predict that the play will be a complicated one built about the conflicts between the various types and nationalities. However, as close examination of the four major characters will reveal, no such complications arise.

Lazarus has no mask. He is an individual who can face life and death and society without the aid of a concealing or, for that matter, revealing mask. Lazarus has no mask; he does have laughter, laughter which rings truth about him as he walks down a common street or in a common room to ask that men not only laugh and be happy, but also that they remember. That is one of the tragedies, usually, of man's existence: he remembers only the ill which occurs, and he seldom bothers to remember the joy, the pure godlike joy of living with laughter.

Lazarus is definitely related to the mask as an indication of how O'Neill thinks a person who has none can be. In Act Two O'Neill writes that "his figure appears in its immobility to be the statue of the god of the temple."[4] As Lazarus laughs and enjoys life, the vestiges of age gradually desert him. He becomes younger and younger; O'Neill describes him as being more youthful, seeming to be no more than

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[2]Ibid. [3]Ibid. [4]Ibid., Act Two, Scene Two.

thirty, and "His face is exalted and calm and beautiful. His eyes shine with an unearthly glory."[5] The most important aspect about Lazarus is his laughter, vividly described in the following manner:

> He turns, throwing back his head and stretching up his arms, and begins to laugh low and tenderly, like caressing music at first but gradually gaining in volume, becoming more and more intense and insistent, finally ending up on a triumphant, blood-stirring call to that ultimate attainment in which all prepossession with self is lost in an ecstatic affirmation of Life.[6]

In Act Two there is another description of Lazarus which warrants quotation to signify the effect upon a person who has thrown away the crutches of masks:

> . . . pulling a chariot in which LAZARUS stands dressed in a tunic of white and gold, his bronzed face and limbs radiant in the halo of his own glowing light. LAZARUS now looks less than thirty-five. His countenance now might well be that of the positive masculine Dionysus, closest to the soil of the Grecian Gods, a Son of Man, born of a mortal. Not the coarse, drunken Dionysus, nor the effeminate God, but Dionysus in his middle period, more comprehensive in his symbolism, the soul of the recurring seasons, of living and dying as processes in eternal growth, of the wine of life stirring forever in the sap and blood and loam of things.[7]

The absence of a mask not only affects the appearance of Lazarus. His comments, speeches, and assertions are more valid and truthful since he wears no mask. His words are those which are not usually uttered by men, but only by great savants:

> LAZARUS. (gaily mocking) Tragic is the plight of the tragedian whose only audience is himself! Life is for each man a solitary cell whose walls are mirrors. Terrified is Caligula by the faces he makes! But I tell

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[5]Ibid. [6]Ibid. [7]Ibid., Act Two, Scene One.

> you to laugh in the mirror, that seeing your life gay, you may begin to live as a guest, and not as a condemned one![8]

Then he reveals what he has thought as he lay in the cool, peaceful darkness of the grave, of death:

> He thought: "Men call this death"--for he had been dead only a little while and he still remembered. Then, of a sudden, a strange gay laughter trembled from his heart as though his life, so long repressed in him by fear, had found at last its voice and a song for singing. "Men call this death," it sang. "Men call life death and fear it. They hide from it in horror. Their lives are spent in hiding. Their fear becomes their living. They worship life as death!"[9]

Lazarus' advice to others, advice which could well be interpreted as the means of dissolving the masks of the people by more joyful participation in life, suggests a romantic ideal, flight to the woods, away from the cities, into life, away from death:

> LAZARUS. (*as to a crowd of children--laughingly*) Out with you! Out into the woods! Upon the hills! Cities are prisons wherein man locks himself from life. Out with you under the sky! Are the stars too pure for your sick passions? Is the warm earth smelling of night too desirous of love for your pale introspective lusts? Out! Let laughter be your new clean lust and sanity! So far man has only learned to snicker meanly at his neighbor! Let a laughing away of self be your new right to live forever! Cry in your pride, "I am Laughter, which is Life, which is the Child of God!"[10]

Nevertheless, there is an element of habitual humanity which has remained in Lazarus until Act Three. That element is loneliness, and he becomes free from loneliness after Miriam dies and reasserts that death is dead. Lazarus comments:

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[8] *Ibid.* [9] *Ibid.* [10] *Ibid.*

> That much remained hidden in me of the sad old Lazarus who died of self-pity--his loneliness! Lonely no more! Man's loneliness is but his fear of life! Lonely no more! Millions of laughing stars there are around me! And laughing dust, born once of woman on this earth, now freed to dance! New stars are born of dust eternally! The old, grown mellow with God, burst into flaming seed! The fields of infinite space are sown--and grass for sheep springs up on the hills of earth! But there is no death, nor fear, nor loneliness! There is only God's Eternal Laughter! His Laughter flows into the lonely heart![11]

Lazarus is an open man, a free man, a joyful man who loves life and loves death because for him there is only life. He speaks thoughts and ideas which are alarming to authority--perhaps only because they imply a change in the _status quo_, which is feared by many rulers. Certainly the change in the _status quo_ would be feared by both Caesar Tiberius and Caligula for obvious reasons. With the increase in laughter and joy, there would be no room for the terror which the Caesars used to continue their reign. The greatest tension occurs in the case of Caligula, who wishes to become both a Caesar like Tiberius and a laugher like Lazarus. The two together are, evidently, incompatible to each other.

Caligula is a strange figure. Indeed he wears a mask, although he does not know it. In a way, he has no real knowledge of his motivations. On the other hand, he does know that he wants to be Caesar in order to gain new power. His ambition, knowledge of truth, and love for Lazarus are engaged in a power struggle for possession of Caligula.

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[11] _Ibid._, Act Three, Scene Two.

The first glimpse of Caligula occurs in Act Two, Scene One, when O'Neill describes him:

> He wears a halfmask of crimson, dark with a purplish tinge, that covers the upper part of his face to below the nose. This mask accentuates his bulging, prematurely wrinkled forehead, his hollow temples and his bulbous, sensual nose. His large troubled eyes, of a glazed greenish-blue, glare out with a shifty feverish suspicion at everyone. Below his mask his own skin is of an anaemic transparent pallor. Above it, his hair is the curly blond hair of a child of six or seven. His mouth also is childish, the red lips soft and feminine in outline. Their expression is spoiled, petulant and self-obsessed, weak but domineering. In combination with the rest of the face there is an appalling morbid significance to his mouth. One feels that its boyish cruelty, encouraged as a manly attribute in the coarse brutality of camps, has long ago become naively insensitive to any human suffering but its own.[12]

Caligula, then, is an introspective man to an extent. Also, it is significant that his mouth is a boyish one--as though O'Neill were describing all men as boyish, because Tiberius is also described in much the same manner.

As Caligula first encounters Lazarus, the death of death as indicated by Lazarus appalls him. Caligula says, ". . . there must be death! . . . You have murdered my only friend, Lazarus! Death would have been my slave when I am Caesar. He would have been my jester and made me laugh at fear!"[13] Caligula must believe in death if he wishes to become Caesar. Caesar can exist only if death also exists.

Caligula continues to battle intensely against the laughter of Lazarus. He even attempts to subdue Lazarus' laughter with his

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[12] Ibid., Act Two, Scene One. [13] Ibid.

own laughter, but his defensive laughter crumbles into a cry of shame:

> CALIGULA. Kill! Kill laughter! Kill those who deny Caesar! I will be Caesar! Kill those who deny Death! I will be Death! My face will be bright with blood! My laughing face. Lazarus! Laughing because men fear me! My face of victorious Fear! Look at me! I am laughing, Lazarus! *My* laughter! Laughter of Gods and Caesars! Ha-ha-ha-ha! (*He laughs, his laughter fanatically cruel and savage, forced from his lips with a desperate, destroying abandon. For a moment, above all the chorus of other sounds, his voice fights to overcome that of* LAZARUS, *whose laughter seems now to have attained the most exultant heights of spiritual affirmation. Then* CALIGULA *breaks into a cry of fear and a sob, and, casting his sword aside, he hides his face in his hands and cries beseechingly*) Forgive me! I love you, Lazarus! Forgive me![14]

Caligula loves Lazarus; Caligula loves truth; Caligula loves ambition. At different times the different cries triumph over the different loves. In the same scene Caligula changes from love of Lazarus to love of ambition:

> LAZARUS. (*laughingly*) When men make gods, there is no God!
> CALIGULA. (*crouching beside* LAZARUS. *Plucks at his robe humbly*) You will not laugh at Caesar, Lazarus, will you--when I am Caesar? You will not laugh at gods when they make me a god? (LAZARUS *does not answer.* CALIGULA *forces a cruel vindictive smile*) I swear you shall not laugh at death when I am Death! Ha-ha--(*He starts to laugh harshly--then suddenly, terrified, slinks away and sidles off at right*).[15]

Eugene O'Neill causes Caligula to run a gauntlet from humility and what is almost monkey behavior to imperial arrogance. Caligula typifies the ridiculous behavior of men, who are able to pretend to be noble, but all too often are ignoble, not great.

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[14]*Ibid*. [15]*Ibid*., Act Two, Scene Two.

Caligula's admiration of Lazarus is indicated once more when he speaks about him to Miriam, Lazarus' wife.

> What is it troubles me about him? What makes me dream of him? Why should I--love him, Jewess? Tell me! You love him, too. I do not understand this. Why, wherever he goes, is there joy? You heard even the galley slaves laugh and clank time with their chains![16]

Caligula attempts to continue his sneering attitude toward Lazarus, but his love for Lazarus, his knowledge of the truth, cause him to confess again his love for Lazarus. Indeed, to Caligula it is a strange thing for him to love Lazarus, and he cannot understand why he does. The answer may be that within all men there is a desire for truth and love, and when that desire is made evident by the presence of truth and people whom one can love, then confusion well may be the result.

Caligula even thinks that he takes pride in being evil:

> LAZARUS. (suddenly laughs softly) Why do you delight in believing evil of yourself, Caligula?
> CALIGULA. (flying into a queer rage) You lie! I am what I am! (With grandiose pride) What could you know of a Caesar?[17]

Caligula further asks, "Why should I love you, Lazarus? Your laughter taunts me! It insults Caesar! It denies Rome!"[18]

There is a minor degree of confrontation in one scene for Caligula. There Caligula expresses what he wishes: to laugh and love all men as Lazarus does. However, he has been trained to believe in pain, and says:

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[16] Ibid., Act Three, Scene One. [17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., Act Four, Scene One.

> Do not take pain away from us! It is our one truth. Without pain there is nothing--a nothingness in which even your laughter, Lazarus, is swallowed at one gulp like a whining gnat by the cretin's silence of immensity! Ha-ha! No, we must keep pain! Especially Caesar must! Pain must twinkle with a mad mirth in a Caesar's eyes--men's pain --or they would become dissatisfied and disrespectful! Ha-ha![19]

Then Caligula pauses, thinks, and begins to speak words which express his true desire, a desire which is certainly not one for pain and unhappiness and sorrow on the earth or hereafter:

> I am sick, Lazarus, sick of cruelty and lust and human flesh and all the imbecilities of pleasure--the unclean antics of half-witted children! (With a mounting agony of longing) I would be clean! If I could only laugh your laughter, Lazarus! That would purify my heart. For I could wish to love all men, as you love them--as I love you! If only I did not fear them, despise them! If I could only believe--believe in them--in life--in myself!--believe that one man or woman in the world knew and loved the real Caligula--then I might have faith in Caligula myself--then I might laugh your laughter![20]

Lazarus replies that he, who knows Caligula, loves him. The following scene is a dramatically interesting one. Caligula attempts to stand by his old beliefs. He is afraid to believe that Lazarus can really care for him. He has had too much experience with the cruelties of life to be able to believe in love. Caligula wavers between hope and despair:

> You? You? You, Lazarus? (He begins to tremble all over as if in a seizure--chokingly) Beware! It is not good--not just--to make fun of me--to laugh at my misery--saying you love--(in a frenzy, he jumps to his feet threatening LAZARUS) Are you trying to fool me, hypocrite? Do you think I have become so abject that you dare--? Because I love you, do you presume--? Do you think I am your slave, dog of a Jew, that you can--insult--to my face--heir of Caesar--(He stutters and stammers with rage, hopping up

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[19] Ibid. [20] Ibid.

and down grotesquely, shaking his fist at LAZARUS, who smiles at him affectionately as at a child in a tantrum).

> . . . you cannot love me! There is nothing in me at bottom but a despising and an evil eye! You cannot! You are only being kind! (Hysterically) I do not want your kindness! I hate your pity! I am too proud! I am too strong! (He collapses weepingly, kneeling and cluthhing LAZARUS' hand in both of his).[21]

His statements are antipodean to his actions. He says that he is proud and strong, yet he gropes for the hand and the support of Lazarus. He says that he cannot believe Lazarus, that Lazarus' laughter can be experienced by Lazarus only because he is not a mortal completely, but partially a god. At first, Caligula refuses to believe that he, an ordinary man with his half-mask, can become happy and proud in an honest manner. Then he changes, and, "bursting suddenly into choking, joyful laughter--like a visionary,"[22] he says:

> I believe! I believe there is love even for Caligula! I can laugh--now--Lazarus! Free laughter! Clean! No sickness! No lust for death! My corpse no longer rots in my heart! The tomb is full of sunlight! I am alive! I who love Man, I who can love and laugh! Listen, Lazarus! I dream! When I am Caesar, I will devote my power to your truth. I will decree that there must be kindness and love! I will make the Empire one great Blessed Isle! Rome shall know happiness, it shall believe in life, it shall learn to laugh your laughter, Lazarus, or I--(He raises his hand in an imperial autocratic gesture).
>
> LAZARUS. (gaily mocking) Or you will cut off its head?
>
> CALIGULA. (fiercely) Yes! I will--! (Then meeting LAZARUS' eyes, he beats his head with his fists crazily) Forgive me! I forget! I forget![23]

He forgets as all men forget. He has the hope of the world before him, but he forgets that to use the old means of attaining the goal would be to

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[21]Ibid. [22]Ibid. [23]Ibid.

forbid attainment of the goal. At least Caligula can laugh at himself, however, as he does in the following scene, once again mentioning the part of a monkey:

> CALIGULA. (*Laughing*) I will! I do! I laugh at him! Caligula is a trained ape, a humped cripple! Now I take him out under the sky, where I can watch his monkey tricks, where there is space for laughter and where this new joy, your love of me, may dance! (*Laughing clearly and exultantly, he runs out through the arched doorway at rear*).[24]

Caligula knows his evil and cruelty, his lack of love and happiness. His evil has been a futile step toward happiness. Suddenly his love of Lazarus overcomes his love for what he has known in life, cruelty. He declares that as Caesar he shall become the friend of man, just as Lazarus is a friend of man. The tragedy is that to be Caesar, he does not inwardly believe that he can be a friend of men. To retain Caesar's power, Caligula must employ fear of death and pain and horror.

At least Caligula remembers his loyalty to Lazarus for a short period of time. When Lazarus is being burned at the stake, Caligula rushes in:

> CALIGUA. (*enters from behind* TIBERIUS. *His aspect is wild, his hair disheveled, his clothes torn, he is panting as if exhausted by running. He stares toward the flames stupidly--then screams despairingly above the chant)* Lazarus! I come to save you! Do you still live, Lazarus?[25]

However, Caligula still desires to be Caesar, and when Tiberius denounces Caesars and tells the people not to fear Caesars, Caligula's rage and hurt are phenomenal. He cannot face the loss of a life-time goal. His masked self reasserts itself, and he becomes the old,

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[24] *Ibid.* [25] *Ibid.*, Act Four, Scene Two.

scornful, cruel Caligula, although his jealousy and great sensitivity continue to be apparent:

> What do I hear, Lazarus? You laugh with your murderer? You give him your laughter? You have forgotten me--my love--you make him love you--you make him laugh at Caesars--at me! (Suddenly springs on TIBERIUS in a fury and grabbing him by the throat chokes him, forcing him back on the throne. . . .)[26]

After he kills Tiberius, Caligula mortally wounds Lazarus. He then exclaims, "I have killed God! I am Death! Death is Caesar!"[27]

The final address of Caligula constitutes the final lines of the play. In the address Caligula adopts the role of Caesar, the victor. He addresses the people in the arena and asserts his supreme authority as Caesar, all the while appearing ridiculous:

> CALIGULA. (keeping his absurd majestic pose, turns and addresses with rhetorical intoning, and flowing gestures, the body of LAZARUS high upon its stake, the flames below it now flickering fitfully) Hail, Caligula! Hero of heroes, conqueror of the Daemon, Lazarus, who taught the treason that fear and death were dead! But I am Lord of Fear! I am Caesar of Death! And you, Lazarus, are carrion![28]

Then Caligula sheds his learned role and speaks confidentially to Lazarus, attempting to justify his sudden killing of Lazarus. Caligula begins to doubt the value of his murder of Lazarus; he confesses his madness:

> I had to kill you, Lazarus! Surely your good sense tells you--You heard what the old fool, Tiberius, told the mob. A moment more and there would have been a revolution--no more Caesars--and my dream--! (He stops--bewilderedly) My dream? Did I kill laughter? I had just learned to laugh--with love! (More confusedly) I must be a little mad,

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[26] Ibid. [27] Ibid. [28] Ibid.

> Lazarus. It was one terror too many, to have been laughing your laughter in the night, to have been dreaming great yearning dreams of all the good my love might do for men when I was Caesar--and then, to hear the old howling of mob lust, and to run here--and there a high white flame amidst the fire--you, Lazarus!--dying!--Laughing with him--Tiberius--betraying me--who loved you, Lazarus! Yes, I became mad! I am mad! And I can laugh my own mad laughter, Lazarus--my own![29]

Caligula seems to realise that all men are mad in that they fight against what is good for them, they fight against what they are supposedly striving to obtain.

> And all of men are vile and mad, and I shall be their madmen's Caesar! . . . O my good people, my faithful scum, my brother swine, Lazarus is dead and we have murdered great laughter, and it befits our madness to have done so, and it is befitting above all to have Caligula for Caesar! (<u>Then savagely</u>) Kneel down! Abase yourselves! I am your Caesar and your God! Hail![30]

The confusion of the final lines of Caligula's speech is the confusion one finds in a demented mind. He says one thing; he believes another. He clings to an ambition; he clutches for love and Lazarus;

> (<u>lifts his head at the first sound and rises with the laughter to his feet, until, as it is finally lost, he is on tip-toes, his arms straining upward to the sky, a tender, childish laughter of love on his lips</u>) I laugh, Lazarus! I laugh with you! (<u>Then grief-stricken</u>) Lazarus! (<u>He hides his face in his hands, weeping</u>) No more! (<u>Then beats his head with his fists</u>) I will remember! I will! (<u>Then suddenly, with a return to grotesqueness--harshly</u>) All the same, I killed him and I proved there is death! (<u>Immediately overcome by remorse, groveling and beating himself</u>) Fool! Madman! Forgive me, Lazarus! Men forget![31]

He wishes to shed his Caesar role, but he can no longer do so, for men forget, and although he says that he shall never forget, he has already

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[29] <u>Ibid</u>. [30] <u>Ibid</u>. [31] <u>Ibid</u>.

done so. He forgets for the same reason that all men forget. All men are either trained to wear a mask or they artificially build one themselves. The mask represents their attempt to present a solid wall as defense against the man-made harshness of life in habit and tradition. Habit and tradition cause men to forget the new glimpses of reality, the new advances without masks, the new expansion into the areas unknown by men. Until many such advances have been made, men do not remember, do not decide to throw away the ancient tools, the old answers to life.

Caligula is not the only character who loves Lazarus. Pompeia also loves him, and her love demands that Lazarus love her as Pompeia, not as a representative of woman. Pompeia's despair is much like that of Caligula and much like that of all men: all men seem to wish to be particularly noticed as themselves, but not as man.

O'Neill first introduces Pompeia and describes her in the following manner:

> POMPEIA wears a half-mask on the upper part of her face, olive-colored with the red of blood smoldering through, with great, dark, cruel eyes--a dissipated mask of intense evil beauty, of lust and perverted passion. Beneath the mask, her own complexion is pale, her gentle, girlish mouth is set in an expression of agonized self-loathing and weariness of spirit. Her body is strong and beautiful. Her wig and dress are purple.[32]

She is "strong and beautiful." Her mouth is "set in an expression of agonized self-loathing. . . ." She plays the role of a mistress and dislikes the absence of a husband. She wishes to have more love than

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[32] Ibid., Act Three, Scene Two.

only physical love, yet she must have both, and she hopes that Lazarus may give her complete satisfaction.

Lazarus surprises her by saying that he loves her. The result of that expression of faith is significant:

> No! No! It is _my_ love, not Love! I want you to know _my_ love, to give me back love--for me--only for me--Pompeia --my body, my heart--me, a woman--not Woman, women! Do I love Man, men? I hate men! I love you, Lazarus--a man--a lover--a father to children![33]

Pompeia's reaction of jealousy of Lazarus' love for all men and women is strangely parallel to Caligula's reaction. It seems to be an assertion that men and women need to feel special attention. It is rebellion against group love and group happiness. It is the individual's cry for recognition. Pompeia immediately changes from a happy and lovingly passionate woman to a hysterical and despairingly contemptuous woman:

> Liar! Cheat! Hypocrite! Thief! (_Half hysterical with rage, pain and grief, she bends over_ MIRIAM _and smooths the hair back from her forehead_) Poor wife! Poor woman! How he must have tortured you! Now I remember the pity in your eyes when you looked at me! Oh, how his soothing gray words must have pecked at the wound in your heart like doves with bloody beaks! (_Then with sudden harshness_) But perhaps you were too dull to understand, too poor and tired and ugly and old to care, too slavish--! Pah![34]

And although Lazarus certainly has not tried to make Pompeia take Miriam's place as his wife, that is what Pompeia wants to believe, that is what she does believe:

> Did you think that I would take her place--become your slave, wait upon you, give you love and passion and beauty in exchange for phrases about man and gods--you who are neither a man nor a god but a dead thing without desire! You dared to

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[33] _Ibid._, Act Four, Scene One. [34] _Ibid._

> hope I would give my body, my love, to you! (*She spits in his face and laughs harshly*) You insolent fool! I shall punish you! You shall be tortured as you have tortured![35]

Pompeia does not consciously know she wears a mask, but she does consciously try to dismiss her past life and begin a meaningful new one. Rejected, she returns with triple hatred and hurt fury to a cruel state of passion which demands the satisfaction of Lazarus' death. It is also her death which she demands, because while Lazarus is being burned to death, she throws herself into the fire. In a sense she is similar to Tiberius.

Tiberius is the old Caesar whose death must occur before Caligula can begin to reign. O'Neill describes Tiberius Caesar in the following passage:

> *An old man of seventy-six, tall, broad and corpulent but of great muscular strength still despite his age, his shiny white cranium rises like a polished shell above his half-masked face. This mask is a pallid purple blotched with darker color, as if the imperial blood in his veins had been sickened by age and debauchery. The eyes are protuberant, leering cynical slits, the long nose, once finely modeled, now gross and thickened, the forehead lowering and grim. Beneath the mask, his own mouth looks as incongruous as* CALIGULA'S. *The lips are thin and stern and self-contained--the lips of an able soldier-statesman of rigid probity. His chin is forceful and severe. The complexion of his own skin is that of a healthy old campaigner.*[36]

Tiberius is interested in Lazarus' ability to become younger and younger. Tiberius hopes to discover some way to become younger himself, but he does not find any answer other than Lazarus' answer

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[35] *Ibid.* [36] *Ibid.*, Act Three, Scene Two.

that death is dead. More than any other character of the play, Tiberius experiences significant moments of confrontation:

> TIBERIUS. (broodingly--as if he had not heard--persuasively) Perhaps you ask yourself, what would Tiberius do with youth? Then, because you must have heard rumors of my depravity, you will conclude the old lecher desires youth for his lusts! Ha! Why, do not my faithful subjects draw pictures of an old buck goat upon the walls and write above them, Caesar? And they are just. In self-contempt of Man I have made this man, myself, the most swinish and contemptible of men! Yes! In all of this empire there is no man so base a hog as I! (He grins bitterly and ironically) My claim to this excellence, at least, is not contested! Everyone admits therein Tiberius is by right their Caesar! (laughs bitterly) Ha! So who would believe Tiberius if he said, I want youth again because I loathe lust and long for purity![37]

Tiberius knows himself, and beneath the clear and truthful eyes, laughter, and expression of Lazarus, Tiberius can speak of himself. He has been Caesar, and he knows what Caesar is. He willingly reveals to Lazarus the tale of his mother, of his early love, of his second wife. He speaks of bloodshed and murder whose only ends were his acquisition of power as Caesar. When he acquired that power, he indirectly killed his mother. Tiberius says:

> Why do I tell you these old tales? Must I explain to you why I want youth? It is my whim! I am Caesar! And now I must lie down and try to sleep! And it is my command that you reveal the secret of your youth to me when I awake, or else--(With malignant cruelty) I will have to revenge the death of a hope on you--and a hope at my age demands a terrible expiation on its slayer![38]

Tiberius is a man who has his complete life behind him, not ahead. He can only shed his mask and relive his life if he has new youth, which

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[37] Ibid., Act Four, Scene One.

[38] Ibid.

he hopes that Lazarus can deliver. Lazarus cannot do so; Pompeia incites Caesar Tiberius to destroy Lazarus; steps are taken to do so. In the final act Tiberius questions and doubts himself as never before; he is understandably anxious to know if there is hope for man on earth, if there is hope at all:

> Why do I feel remorse? His laughter dies and is forgotten, and the hope it raised dies--(*With sudden excitement*) And yet--he must know something--and if he would--even now he could tell--(*Suddenly rising to his feet he calls imploringly*) Lazarus![39]

Then, becoming fearful that his last chance to know the truth may soon disappear, he cries, "Lazarus! If you hear let your eyes answer, and I will grant the mercy of death to end your agony! Is there hope of love somewhere for men on earth?"[40] He continues, "Hear and answer, I beseech thee, who alone hath known joy! . . . How must we live? Wherein lies happiness?"[41]

To receive his answer Caesar commands the soldiers to remove the gag in Lazarus' mouth, and Lazarus begins to laugh. The following series of comments are made by Caesar:

> (*as if he realized something was happening that was against his will--trying feebly to be imperial*) I command you not to laugh! Caesar commands--(*Calling feebly to the* SOLDIERS) Put back--the gag! Stop his laughter!
>
> (*dreamily*) Then--pile the fire back around him. High and higher! Let him blaze to the stars! I laugh at him!
>
> (*in a sort of childish complaint*) You must pardon me, Lazarus. This is my Caesar's duty--to kill you! You have no right to laugh--before all these people--at Caesar. It is

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[39]*Ibid.*, Act Four, Scene Two. [40]*Ibid.* [41]*Ibid.*

> not kind. (*He sobs snuffingly--then begins to laugh at himself. Suddenly the flames waver, die down, then shoot up again and* POMPEIA'S *laughter is heard for a moment, rising clear and passionately with that of* LAZARUS, *then dying out*).[42]

Then Tiberius concludes his life and his cries with one final cry for life:

> I have lived long enough! I will die with Lazarus! I no longer fear death! I laugh! I laugh at Caesar! I advise you, my brothers, fear not Caesars! Seek Man in the brotherhood of the dust! Caesar is your fear of Man! I counsel you, laugh away your Caesars![43]

Caligula laughs away Tiberius.

It can be seen that all of the characters wear masks, except for Lazarus. The purpose of those masks is not the revelation of when a person is being truthful or when he is being false. Rather does O'Neill seem to determine that the masks represent the faces which men present to reality. The various visages are of different characteristics according to the age and the nationality and the personality of each person. But the mask for each person is unchanging in nature because the mask is the person's outlook on life.

It could be argued that no matter what nationality there may be, it yet contains the same percentage of personalities that all other nationalities contain. In brief, O'Neill says that man's characteristics are universal. One nationality can embody within itself as much happiness, cruelty, cheer, and deception as any other. Also, those personality characteristics of the mask are difficult to change because of the various

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[42]*Ibid.* [43]*Ibid.*

experiences of the past which have produced those masks. They were not simply selected and adopted for no reason whatsoever. They were developed by each character according to his experiences of success and of failure in life. They were selected by the character himself, although, of course, it would be ridiculous to ignore the obvious motivations for selection. Mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, rulers, and gods, all affected the decisions of the characters in their choices of masks. They did not operate in a void. Had they done so, they themselves would have been voids.

Perhaps it may be more clearly and succinctly stated if one asserts that O'Neill uses the mask in Lazarus Laughed in order to represent the tendency of society to hold to the status quo because of habits and traditions and mores. With no mask whatsoever, Lazarus presents a new point of view concerning the nature of reality. It pleases the characters at first, but when the view is no longer before them in the brilliant example of Lazarus' ringing, crystal-clear laughter, they forget. Habits and traditions automatically flood away the new concept that Death is dead; the old concept wins by force of time.

In Lazarus Laughed the mask is significant as an indication of the personalities and real natures of the characters. The mask is not an artificial one: it is the representation of the real individual. Yet, despite the reality of the mask, there are the rare occurrences when the hint of another personality appears in the questioning behavior of the character. Then Caligula or Tiberius or Pompeia earnestly desire to shed the old masks in order that they may adopt new personalities

which would enable them to live new lives. Caligula strives to throw away his mask, but ambition to become Caesar overcomes his desire to laugh and to be happy. However, one finds that Pompeia and Tiberius do have the supreme courage to destroy their old lives by adopting Lazarus' laughter. Pompeia performs the greatest sacrifice by throwing herself into the fire with Lazarus. Therefore, in _Lazarus Laughed_ the masks are, for the major characters, very close to the inner personality, although the second personality does sometimes make itself evident.

CHAPTER V

A FAMILIAL MASK

When Eugene O'Neill wrote Mourning Becomes Electra he undoubtedly planned for the mask to be of major importance to the play. In performance it might be possible for the casual observer to miss the significance of the mask; but in reading the play, one can at least notice the many times that O'Neill refers to a face as being particularly mask-like. Further investigation indicates that O'Neill uses two types of masks in the play: one which is used to denote the universal types of townspeople; another which is used to represent the type that is peculiarly characteristic of the Mannon family. In neither case is the mask an actual physical one. The first type is not used much because the townspeople do not hold significant parts in the play. However, the second type of mask pervades the entire play; it is the peculiar, queer, mysterious mask of the Mannon family.

Mourning Becomes Electra is a trilogy, the three plays being "The Homecoming," "The Hunted," and "The Haunted." The trilogy quite closely parallels the trilogy written by Aeschylus. The divisions of the play and its theme are not so important for the purposes of this chapter as are the tensions and masked characteristics of the various persons in the play.

The first use of the mask maybe discussed and dispensed with rather quickly. In the first act of "The Homecoming" several townspeople are being shown about the grounds of the Mannon estate by Seth Beckwith, the gardener. O'Neill writes that the townspeople "are types of townsfolk rather than individuals, a chorus representing the town come to look and listen and spy on the rich and exclusive Mannons."[1] In the final play of the trilogy, "The Haunted," O'Neill again introduces some townspeople who are not significant individuals, but "a chorus of types representing the town as a human background for the drama of the Mannons."[2] One of O'Neill's uses of the mask is a method to introduce a human background for the main action which centers about the Mannon family.

The second type of mask is that which represents the constant characteristics of the Mannon family. One of the townspeople, Mrs. Borden, comments that the Mannons do not let anyone see what they feel.[3] Even the house itself fits the Mannon mask because "the pure white temple front seems . . . like an incongruous mask fixed on the somber stone house."[4] Another townsman emphasizes the masked quality of the Mannons:

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[1]Eugene O'Neill, Mourning Becomes Electra, "The Homecoming," Act One.

[2]Ibid., "The Haunted," Act One, Scene One.

[3]Ibid., "The Hunted," Act One.

[4]Ibid., "The Homecoming," Act Three.

> Secret lookin'--'s if it was a mask she'd put on. That's the Mannon look. They all has it. They grow it on their wives. Seth's growed it on too, didn't you notice--from bein' with 'em all his life. They don't want folks to guess their secrets.[5]

Orin Mannon describes the Mannons as he contemptuously describes his father:

> Death becomes the Mannons! You were always like a statue of an eminent dead man--sitting on a chair in a park or straddling a horse in a town square--looking over the head of life without a sign of recognition--cutting it dead for the impropriety of living![6]

The Mannons are a masked family which seems to have existed for many years in a state of mysterious living death. It is a family whose members wear a mask of solemnity, prudery, and stern, puritan passivity. They are a family which interests and intrigues the towns-people. The family is outwardly successful, but the hate which boils to the surface in the play accentuates the grim character of the family. Each living member of the Mannon family attempts to escape the mask, the traditional characteristics of the family, but even when the person is only half a Mannon, it is relatively impossible to escape.

One finds, then, that there are five characters who struggle with the Mannon mask and attempt to escape it. They are Ezra Mannon, Christine Mannon, Orin Mannon, Captain Adam Brant (the son of Marie Brantome, a nurse who scandalized the family by marrying a Mannon young man), and Lavinia Mannon. Captain Brant will not be considered in this chapter because he only further exemplifies behavior which can

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[5]Ibid., Act One. [6]Ibid., "The Hunted," Act Three.

be found in both Ezra and Orin Mannon. These members of the Mannon family are fighting for escape, but each blow for freedom simply locks them more certainly in the grasp of their Mannon ancestors, who are themselves the same as the living Mannons. O'Neill mentions three portraits of Mannon ancestors and says that "all the faces in the portraits have the same mask quality of those of the living characters in the play."[7]

First indication of Ezra Mannon's physical characteristics comes from the view of a painting:

> He is a tall man in his early forties, with a spare, wiry frame, seated stiffly in an armchair, his hands on the arms, wearing his black judge's robe. His face is handsome in a stern, aloof fashion. It is cold and emotionless and has the same strange semblance of a life-like mask that we have already seen in the faces of his wife and daughter and BRANT.[8]

When Mannon finally does appear in the play, O'Neill describes him in similar terms, again emphasizing the mask-like quality of his being:

> He is a tall, spare, big-boned man of fifty, dressed in the uniform of a Brigadier-General. One is immediately struck by the mask-like look of his face in repose, more pronounced in him than in the others. He is exactly like the portrait in his study, which we have seen in Act Two, except that his face is more lined and lean and the hair and beard are grizzled. His movements are exact and wooden and he has a mannerism of standing and sitting in stiff, posed attitudes that suggest the statues of military heroes. When he speaks, his deep voice has a hollow repressed quality, as if he were continually withholding emotion from it. His air is brusque and authoritative.[9]

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[7] Ibid., Act Two. [8] Ibid., "The Homecoming," Act Two.

[9] Ibid., Act Three.

The preceding description of Ezra Mannon is even more interesting when one compares it to the words he speaks in the following scene. There Ezra Mannon is trying to escape from his past life of stern unhappiness. He wants to love Christine; he wants Christine to love him. His self-knowledge and attempt to shed his mask are evident:

> Something queer in me keeps me mum about the things I'd like most to say--keeps me hiding the things I'd like to show. Something keeps me sitting numb in my own heart--like a statue of a dead man in a town square. . . . I want to find what that wall is marriage put between us! You've got to help me smash it down! We have twenty good years still before us! 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 together--to the other side of the world--find some island where we could be alone a while. You'll find I have changed, Christine. I'm sick of death! I want life! Maybe you could love me now! (_In a note of final desperate pleading_) I've got to make you love me![10]

It is the Mannon mask, the Mannon family tradition which is the something queer in Ezra Mannon that makes him want to be silent. In the preceding lines Ezra Mannon is speaking his true desires and thoughts, which are indeed not the accepted wishes of the Mannon mask. Ezra Mannon says that he is tired of death and that he wishes to live and to love and to be free. His pleas to his wife for love and happiness and life are answered with murder as she kills him with poison. Even in death the mask-like quality of the Mannons is entirely apparent:

> _His body, dressed in full uniform, is laid out on a bier draped in black which is placed lengthwise directly before the portrait of him over the fireplace. His head is at right. His mask-like face is a startling reproduction of the face in the portrait above him, but grimly remote and austere in death, like the carven face of a statue._[11]

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[10]_Ibid._ [11]_Ibid._, "The Hunted," Act Three.

Christine Mannon is the wife of Ezra Mannon. Because of her great contact with the Mannon family, she also wears the Mannon mask:

> Her face is unusual, handsome rather than beautiful. One is struck at once by the strange impression it gives in repose of being not living flesh but a wonderfully life-like pale mask, in which only the deep-set eyes, of a dark violet blue, are alive. Her black eyebrows meet in a pronounced straight line above her strong nose. Her chin is heavy, her mouth large and sensual, the lower lip full, the upper a thin bow, shadowed by a line of hair.[12]

Christine fights with all her strength to rid herself of the Mannon mask. It is a strain for her to break away and to state the horrible truth, but by stating the truth, she does begin to break away. The following comments are confessions to her daughter of her hatred of her husband:

> CHRISTINE. (*with strident intensity*) You would understand if you were the wife of a man you hated!
>
> CHRISTINE. (*grabbing her by the arm*) You will listen! I'm talking to you as a woman now, not as mother or daughter! That relationship has no meaning between us! You've called me vile and shameless! Well, I want you to know that's what I've felt about myself for over twenty years, giving my body to a man I--[13]

Christine has lived a tragic life and that alone is enough to justify labeling her a Mannon. All of the Mannons must be unhappy, Christine could scarcely be more unhappy than she is, and every act that she performs in order to free herself from the Mannon mask paradoxically causes her to wear the Mannon mask even more than before. Christine murders her husband in order to achieve peace, but her lack of subsequent peace and her knowledge of her bitter state of being are evident in the following lines:

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[12] *Ibid.*, "The Homecoming," Act One. [13] *Ibid.*, Act Two.

> If I could only have stayed as I was then! Why can't all of us remain innocent and loving and trusting? But God won't leave us alone. He twists and wrings and tortures our lives with others' lives until--we poison each other to death! . . . Don't mind what I said! Let's go in, shall we? I would rather wait for Orin inside. I couldn't bear to wait and watch him coming up the drive--just like--he looks so much like his father at times--and like--but what nonsense I'm talking! Let's go in. I hate moonlight. It makes everything so haunted.[14]

Actually it would be more appropriate for Christine to blame the Mannons, not God, for not leaving people, or, at least, the Mannons themselves, alone.

Another Mannon who is especially interesting is Orin Mannon. Orin also exhibits the general physical characteristics of the Mannons:

> There is the same life-like mask quality of his face in repose, the same aquiline nose, heavy eyebrows, swarthy complexion, thick straight black hair, light hazel eyes. His mouth and chin have the same general characteristics as his father's had, but the expression of his mouth gives an impression of tense oversensitiveness quite foreign to the General's, and his chin is a refined, weakened version of the dead man's.[15]

Because he despises his father and particularly loves his mother, in the early part of the play Orin is not exceptionally like his father. However, an interesting transformation occurs in him after he begins to consider himself the murderer of his mother, who committed suicide after she discovered that Orin and Lavinia had murdered her lover, Captain Adam Brant. Orin becomes more and more like his father, almost as though he were putting on his father's identity, a new mask which is simply an intensification of the masculine Mannon characteristics which were already within him:

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[14] Ibid., "The Hunted," Act One. [15] Ibid.

> He carries himself woodenly erect now like a soldier. His movements and attitudes have the statue-like quality that was so marked in his father. He now wears a close-cropped beard in addition to his mustache, and this accentuates his resemblance to his father. The Mannon semblance of his face in repose to a mask is more pronounced than ever. He has grown dreadfully thin and his black suit hangs loosely on his body. His haggard swarthy face is set in a blank lifeless expression.[16]

The Mannons are people who can be savagely cruel, and Orin's transformation leads him to plot to reveal all of the family's scandalous secrets by writing them down in manuscript form. He becomes even more like his father:

> He looks almost as old now as his father in the portrait. He is dressed in black and the resemblance between the two is uncanny. A grim smile of satisfaction twitches his lips as he stops writing and reads over the paragraph he has just finished.[17]

Lavinia realizes what he is doing, but she is unwilling to reveal the truth of their past life. Orin does recognize what he has done and his position in life. He knows that his life is condemned.

> No, we've renounced the day, in which normal people live--or rather it has renounced us. Perpetual night--darkness of death in life--that's the fitting habitat for guilt! You believe you can escape that, but I'm not so foolish![18]

Orin's tension finally leads him to the precise confrontation of the truth which can liberate him from his Mannon treachery and his self-torture. He realizes that only in death can he truly be free, and he commits suicide.

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[16] Ibid., "The Haunted," Act One, Scene One.

[17] Ibid., Act Two, Scene One. [18] Ibid.

Orin Mannon and Iavinia Mannon are directly parallel to each other. Whereas Orin loves his mother and would wish to become the husband of his mother and the father of his sister, Lavinia would like to be the wife of her father and the mother of her brother. It is a tragic family.

Lavinia develops much as Orin does. She is completely Mannon in the early part of the trilogy, but later she becomes very much like her mother in a remarkable transformation of appearance and behavior which again affords a parallel to Orin. Early in the play, O'Neill writes that

> . . . . <u>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 black eyebrows meeting in a straight line above her nose, 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</u> LAVINIA <u>does all in her power to emphasize the dissimilarity rather than the resemblance to her parent</u>.[19]

However, in "The Haunted," Lavinia has adopted the characteristics, the mask, one could say, of her mother:

> LAVINIA <u>appears in the doorway at rear. In the lighted room, the change in her is strikingly apparent. At a first glance, one would mistake her for her mother as she appeared in the first Act of</u> "Homecoming." <u>She comes forward slowly. The movements of her body now have the feminine grace her mother's had possessed</u>.[20]

For a long time Lavinia was in active competition with her mother because her mother was exactly what she wished to be. Naturally she

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[19] <u>Ibid</u>., "The Homecoming," Act One.

[20] <u>Ibid</u>., "The Haunted," Act One, Scene Two.

hated her, and naturally she did not allow herself to be like her mother while she was still living. However, upon the death of Catherine, Lavinia was able to adopt those characteristics which she so admired in her mother. She did indeed become Catherine.

After Orin commits suicide, Lavinia finds that she has successfully defended the Mannon honor and secrets. She has been motivated by her Mannon characteristics, and she yet wants to be free of the Mannon influence, the Mannon mask. As she thinks that she finally may be free, she is yet, tragically, completely a Mannon:

> But I'm through with you [the Mannon ancestors] forever now, do you hear? I'm Mother's daughter--not one of you! I'll live in spite of you! (_She squares her shoulders, with a return of the abrupt military movement copied from her father which she had of old--as if by the very act of disowning the_ MANNONS _she had returned to the fold--and marches stiffly from the room_).[21]

However, Lavinia is unable to live happily because she cannot marry the young man whom she loves. The mysterious aspect of the Mannon family has ruined her last opportunity for happiness. Hers continues to be a wholly tragic life; like the other Mannons, she does not find love at all.

Throughout the play are the words "mask-like," "wooden," "artificial," words used by O'Neill in the stage directions to indicate the masked quality of the various characters. It can scarcely be denied that O'Neill has used the Mannon mask as a representative of the familial characteristics which are so much a part of the family that no amount of

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[21] _Ibid._, Act Three.

self-torture and self-confrontation can save the Mannons from themselves. The mask is not a physically evident one, but it is entirely evident as a result of the similar physical appearances of the Mannons and their similar actions. The Mannon mask is not fully explainable; O'Neill does not indicate why it exists. He does, however, quite clearly demonstrate its importance in the trilogy called *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

CHAPTER VI

THE IMPLIED MASK

Eugene O'Neill's Dynamo is a play in three acts which makes some use of the implied mask and the adopted mask. There are many occasions when the thoughts of the characters are revealed to the audience by means of the implied mask. The adopted mask occurs when Reuben Light experiences a direct transformation from shy innocence to blustering boldness. Reuben adopts a new mask of behavior to conceal and to replace his former self.

The play is somewhat concerned with religion; electricity becomes the god of Reuben Light, and he worships the dynamos in a small power plant. Since Reuben's father is a religious fanatic, the resulting conflicts can easily be imagined. Reuben's father is a man for whom Reuben has little respect and no love. The atheist who lives next door, a Ramsey Fife, has long been arguing with Reverend Hutchins Light about the merits of atheism in comparison with theism. Great animosity exists between the two families, and with the time-worn device of love, O'Neill leads his play into quick development. Reuben and Ada, the daughter of Ramsey and May Fife, are the sparks which ignite the fuel.

There are many subtle conflicts between the characters of the play that are best indicated by use of the impliedmask and subsequent revelation of inner thoughts to the audience. Ramsey Fife indicates his almost contemptuous true opinion of his wife:

(He looks at her and sees she is not listening any more)
Look at her . . . in a dope dream again . . .
I might as well be married to a cow . . .
(Then amusedly)
Well, she's a damn funny woman . . . I've never seen her equal anywhere . . .[1]

Then, there is also the contempt which Amelia Light has for her husband, the minister, as revealed in the following lines:

> MRS. LIGHT. (Thinks scornfully) He is always so sure of what God wills! . . . but Reuben'll never be a minister if I can prevent it! . . . I'd rather see him dead than go through the poverty and humiliation I've had to face![2]

There are so many dissatisfactions being evidenced that one is scarcely surprised when Hutchins Light is dissatisfied with his wife:

> MR. LIGHT. (Turns away and leans out of the window staring into the night) Comforts of life . . . she has always desired the comfortable path . . . where the spirit decays in the sinful sloth of the flesh . . .[3]

Hutchins Light is considerably self-conscious about sex, but when he suspects that Reuben is courting Ada Fife, he is at least honest with himself and confesses that he should not cast the first stone at Reuben:

> MR. LIGHT. (Thinking gloomily) I must be honest with myself . . . who am I to cast the first stone at Reuben if he desires a woman? . . . hasn't my love for Amelia been one long desire of the senses? . . . I should understand Reuben's weakness and forgive him . . . (Then his resentment smoldering up) But to betray me to Fife! . . . that would go deeper! . . . it would be treachery to God! . . .[4]

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[1]Eugene O'Neill, The Dynamo, Act One, Scene Two.

[2]Ibid., Act One, Scene One. [3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., Act One, Scene Three.

May Fife is an interesting woman who appears to be the only completely content person in the play. She has a set of characteristics which may, perhaps, be called a mask. Her physical resemblance to a dynamo is marked and undeniably intentional. Her weight, her hair, her speech and thoughts and humming, all bring to mind the image of a dynamo:

> <u>His wife is tall and stout, weighing well over two hundred. Her face must have once been one of those rosy-cheeked pretty doll-like faces and in spite of its fat, it has kept its girlish naiveté and fresh complexion. Her figure is not formless nor flabby. It suggests, rather, an inert strength. A mass of heavy copper-colored hair is piled without apparent design around her face. Her mouth is small with full lips. Her eyes are round and dark blue. Their expression is blank and dreamy. Her voice is sentimental and wondering. She is about forty years old.</u>[5]

Her quiet dreams reveal significant information about her relationship with Fife before their marriage. Revelation of their premature sexual relationship is a direct prelude to the sexual relationship which one eventually finds between Reuben and Ada:

> When I first met Ramsay he was a linesman . . . I loved him at first sight . . . he was so romantic looking with those steel climbing things on his legs . . . and he wore a colored handkerchief round his neck just like a cowboy . . . Pa and Ma warned me linesmen were no good . . . they just ruined you and went their way . . . they were wrong about Ramsay . . . except he did ruin me . . . I said, why is it wrong when I love him? . . . Pa yelled to get out, I'd disgraced the family . . . I never expected Ramsay'd marry me . . . he was the roving kind . . . but as soon as he knew he'd got me into trouble he spoke right up . . . "Oh, hell, then I guess I've got to marry you" . . . and I said yes, and I was awful happy . . . and five months after Ada was born and he

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[5]<u>Ibid</u>., Act One, Scene Two.

> was crazy about her from the first . . . and we've all been happy ever since . . . (*She sighs contentedly*)[6]

May Fife's thinking is indicative of her love for the power plant and the dynamos. She even hums and sounds like a dynamo:

> Ramsay is always so cranky when he's at the plant . . . I love the plant . . . I love the dynamos . . . I could sit forever and listen to them sing . . . they're always singing about everything in the world . . . (*She hums to herself for a moment--an imitation of the whirring purr of a dynamo*)[7]

Reuben Light is initially an innocent, shy, and weak young man:

> *He is seventeen, tall and thin. His eyes are large, shy and sensitive, of the same gray-blue as his father's. His mouth is like his father's. His jaw is stubborn, his thick hair curly and reddish-blond. He speaks timidly and hesitatingly, as a much younger boy might. His natural voice has an almost feminine gentleness.*[8]

His use of the implied mask again reveals important familial relationships to the audience, for one can quickly discover how much Reuben loves his mother and is ashamed of his father:

> What do I care about him anyway? . . . he hates Fife because he's scared of him . . . he's scared to take up Fife's challenge to debate about whether there's a God or not . . .[9]

The shy, young Reuben suddenly experiences a transformation which changes not only his physical characteristics over a period of time, but also his entire attitude toward life, his parents, and religion. Because Reuben finds that his mother, whom he loved and trusted more than any other person, has not warranted his faith, he adopts a new mask of

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, Act One, Scene Three.

[8] *Ibid.*, Act One, Scene One.

[9] *Ibid.*

behavior. The transformation begins as Reuben's father is punishing him for seeing Ada and associating with the Fifes:

> REUBEN. (_Expecting the next blow, thinking with a grim elation_) Come on! . . . hit again! . . . hit a million times! . . . you can't make me show her you hurt me! . . . (_Then stealing a glance up at his father's face_) He looks scared! . . . it was that lightning! . . . I'll never be scared of lightning again! . . . (_Then resolutely_) I'll be damned if I'm going to let him beat me! . . . (_He jumps to his feet and faces his father defiantly_)[10]

Reuben has a complete lack of respect for his father, and the latter's fear of lightning is an excuse for Reuben to jeer at his father. Further, the shy, sensitive, innocent young man bitterly denounces his mother:

> Picture my being scared of that boob all my life! What did you ever see in him, to marry him? He's yellow! . . . But you're yellow, too, And I'm yellow. How could I help being? It's in my blood. (_Harshly_) But I'll get him out of my blood, by God! And I'll get you out, too! . . . You're not my mother any more! I'll do without a mother rather than have your kind![11]

The complete change which occurs in Reuben is well indicated in the following description that O'Neill writes of him:

> _Nearly nineteen now, his body has filled out, his skin is tanned and weather-beaten. In contrast to his diffident, timid attitude of before, his manner is now consciously hard-boiled. The look on his face emphasizes the change in him. It is much older than his years, and it is apparent that he has not grown its defensive callousness without a desperate struggle to kill the shrinking boy in him. But it is in his eyes that the greatest change has come. Their soft gray-blue has become chilled and frozen, and they burn in their depths with a queer devouring intensity. He is dressed roughly in battered shoes, dungaree trousers faded by many_

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[10]_Ibid._, Act One, Scene Three. [11]_Ibid._

> washings, a blue flannel shirt open at the neck, with a dirty colored handkerchief knotted about his throat, and wears the coat of his old suit.[12]

Reuben's subsequent actions are precisely those one would expect of a person who shows the characteristics which Reuben has adopted. He thinks nothing whatsoever of seducing Ada Fife and refusing to marry her.

Although Reuben Light does adopt a new set of characteristics, it must be admitted that he does not do so without some doubt. As he first returns home he begins to feel sorry for his father and almost speaks kindly to him when he discovers that his mother is dead. The Reuben Light who has adopted a new personality strives too hard to prove that he is a new person for one not to believe that he still retains some vestiges, at least, of his previous self. His life becomes one obsession with the new religion that he has found, the religion of electricity, whose symbolic representative on earth is the dynamo. The following scene describes the similarity of the dynamo to a massive idol:

> . . . there is a clear view of a dynamo, huge and black, with something of a massive female idol about it, the exciter set on the main structure like a head with blank, oblong eyes above a gross, rounded torso.[13]

As Reuben's thoughts are revealed one finds that he directly associates the dynamo with May Fife:

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[12] Ibid., Act Two, Scene One.

[13] Ibid., Act Two, Scene Three.

> It's like a great dark idol . . . like the old stone statues of gods people prayed to . . . only it's living and they were dead . . . that part on top is like a head . . . with eyes that see you without seeing you . . . and below it is like a body . . . not a man's . . . round like a woman's . . . as if it had breasts . . . but not like a girl . . . not like Ada . . . no, like a woman . . . like her mother . . . or mine . . . a great, dark mother! . . . that's what the dynamo is! . . . that's what life is! . . .[14]

Reuben probably becomes completely insane. His deification of electricity leads him to attempt to learn an important secret, one which can, he thinks, be revealed to him only if he purifies himself and does not fall prey to the sins of the flesh. O'Neill describes the surroundings of the power plant, saying that "the oil switches, with their spindly steel bodies (the containers inside looking like bellies), their six cupped arms stretching upward, seem like queer Hindu idols tortured into scientific supplications."[15] Reuben thinks thoughts which are directed to the dynamo:

> Mother! . . . have mercy on me! . . . I hate her now! . . . as much as you hate her! . . . give me one more chance! . . . what can I do to get you to forgive me? . . . tell me! . . . yes! . . . I hear you, Mother! . . . and then you'll forgive me? . . . and I can come to you? . . .[16]

Reuben finally kills Ada and unintentionally destroys himself by electrocution.

There are, then, two major uses of the mask in the play. In one way there is the use of the implied mask which enables the author to

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[14]*Ibid.* [15]*Ibid.*, Act Three, Scene Two.

[16]*Ibid.*

reveal the inner thoughts of the characters to the audience. These thoughts are often mixtures of unimportant, natural thought with significant ideas which reveal important relationships between the characters of the play. The other use of the mask is its adoption by Reuben, who transforms himself from a shy, innocent, and relatively normal young man to an aggressive, bold, and abnormal man. His adoption of the new characteristics, the new mask, is not unreasonable insofar as motivation is concerned. One can well understand how a young man who has lost all faith in his parents could begin to live a new life.

CHAPTER VII

A DUAL PERSONALITY

Days Without End is a play in which Eugene O'Neill's use of the mask is particularly interesting. The main character of the play is John Loving, whose personality is split into two distinct types: one is represented on stage by John Loving himself; however, the other is represented by a masked character known as Loving. Loving wears the only mask found in the play, and the use of the mask is centered about the characters of John Loving and Loving. Naturally a thorough understanding of the use of the mask in *Days Without End* demands that one understand the masked and the unmasked characters of John Loving. To understand them one must note their physical, mental, and spiritual characteristics. Then it is necessary to relate in what ways the two characters called Loving contest the wills of each other. There are dynamic conflicts.

John Loving and Loving are exactly alike physically. O'Neill first describes John as being

> *forty, of medium height. His face is handsome, with the rather heavy, conventional American type of good looks--a straight nose and a square jaw, a wide mouth that has an incongruous feminine sensitiveness, a broad forehead, blue eyes. He is dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and collar, a dark tie, black shoes and socks.*[1]

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[1] Eugene O'Neill, *Days Without End*, Act One.

One sees quickly that John Loving and Loving are exactly alike, because Loving is

> _the same age, of the same height and figure, is dressed in every detail exactly the same. His hair is the same--dark, streaked with gray. In contrast to this similarity between the two, there is an equally strange dissimilarity. For_ LOVING'S _face is a mask whose features reproduce exactly the features of_ JOHN'S _face--the death mask of a_ JOHN _who has died with a sneer of scornful mockery on his lips. And this mocking scorn is repeated in the expression of the eyes which stare bleakly from behind the mask._[2]

Loving is the same as John Loving insofar as physique and dress are concerned. The chief difference between the two is t he facial expression: Loving wears a "sneer of scornful mockery." The facial expressions are different because of the terrific mental conflicts which continue between them. John Loving is essentially a man who wants to find peace for his troubled soul, peace in religion, peace in love, while he lives on earth. Loving is the part of John Loving that wishes to surrender to death immediately, the part that wishes to stop the tortuous mental and physical struggle which John Loving has experienced in his search for complete spiritual happiness. Indeed the battle is a tremendous one which is waged in a manner that clearly reveals the internal turmoil of John Loving's mind and soul.

To indicate this internal struggle O'Neill makes effective use of the mask. Other characters on the stage do not see the masked Loving. O'Neill writes that the other characters "are quite unaware of Loving's

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[2] _Ibid._

existence, although at times one or another may subtly sense his presence."[3] Nevertheless the words of Loving are not lost to the other characters. Unlike other plays when O'Neill uses the mask to represent the internal thought of a character, and that internal thought is heard only by the audience and not by the other characters, the latter do hear what Loving says, although they think that John Loving is speaking. That John Loving cannot control what Loving says is a highly significant indication of the tumultuous state of John Loving's mind. The following series of quotations prove that John Loving cannot completely control the speech of Loving and that the other characters attribute Loving's comments to John:

> LOVING. The first part will particularly interest you, Uncle. I am afraid you will be terribly shocked--especially in the light of your recent mystic vision!
>
> FATHER BAIRD. I'm very curious to hear it, Jack. When will you tell me?
>
> LOVING. (*Defiantly*) Now!
>
> JOHN. No-- I--
>
> LOVING. (*With harsh insistence*) The first part concerns my hero's boyhood here in New York, up to the age of fifteen.
>
> JOHN. (*Under* LOVING'S *compulsion, he picks up the thread of the story*) He was an only child. His father was a fine man. The boy adored him. And he adored his mother even more. She was a wonderful woman, a perfect type of our old beautiful ideal of wife and mother.[4]

Initially John Loving's attitude toward Loving is completely defensive. John can do little other than correct the exclamations of Loving whenever possible. There are also periods within the play when the two characters, John Loving and Loving, are alone together.

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[3]*Ibid.* [4]*Ibid.*

Then a verbal repartee occurs, Loving usually being the winner. In Act Two, one such event occurs:

> JOHN. (Suddenly--his face full of the bitterest, tortured self-loathing--aloud to himself) You God-damned rotten swine!
>
> LOVING. (Mockingly) Yes, unfit to live. Quite unfit for life, I think. But there is always death to wash one's sins away--sleep, untroubled by Love's betraying dream! (He gives a low, sinister laugh) Merely a consoling reminder--in case you've forgotten! (JOHN listens fascinatedly, as if to an inner voice. Then a look of terror comes into his face and he shudders.)
>
> JOHN. (Torturedly) For God's sake! Leave me alone![5]

One may wonder what led John Loving into the peculiar state of two existences. Father Baird, John Loving, and Loving all combine forces to present a picture of the earlier John Loving whose search for meaning in life and faith in life and death led him to his double existence. John Loving's progress through the ideas of the world is indicated by Father Baird:

> Not a moment's peace did he give me. I was the heathen to him and he was bound he'd convert me to something. First it was Atheism unadorned. Then it was Atheism wedded to Socialism. But Socialism proved too weak-kneed a mate, and the next I heard Atheism was living in free love with Anarchism, with a curse by Nietzsche to bless the union. And then came the Bolshevik dawn, and he greeted that with unholy howls of glee and wrote me he'd found a congenial home at last in the bosom of Karl Marx. He was particularly delighted with the thought they'd abolished love and marriage, and he couldn't contain himself when the news came they'd turned naughty schoolboys and were throwing spitballs at Almighty God and had supplanted Him with the slave-owning State--the most grotesque god that ever came out of Asia![6]

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[5]Ibid., Act Two. [6]Ibid., Act One.

Father Baird then indicates the third period of John Loving's development, when he turned to the religions not connected with his own culture for safety, security, hope, salvation and love and life:

> First it was China and Lao Tze that fascinated him, but afterwards he ran on to Buddha, and his letters for a time extolled passionless contemplation so passionately that I had a mental view of him regarding his navel frenziedly by the hour and making nothing of it![7]

After John Loving had searched the world's ideas for a religi on of his own, he found an intimate and personal religion in his love for the woman who became his wife, Elsa Loving. Father Baird says:

> I enjoyed a long interval of peace from his missionary zeal, until finally he wrote me he was married. That letter was full of more ardent hymns of praise for a mere living woman than he'd written before about any of his great spiritual discoveries.[8]

It is evident that O'Neill has ensured that John Loving's development of a double personality was not accidental. There was qualified motivation. John Loving first lost faith in God when his parents were killed. From those moments of tragedy he began to live a life of tragedy, or, at least, a life of despair in search of faith. There was the pent-up despair of hope and security in a highly sensitive and sincere man who needed security of some kind before he became totally insane. The security sought by Loving was that offered by death, a death so complete that there would be only darkness and quietness and peace and dust to love the dust of Elsa.

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[7]*Ibid.* [8]Ibid.

John's great love for Elsa is evident. Moreover, the scorn and the derision of Loving toward any security short of death is clear. Loving did not dislike the person of Elsa so much as he disliked the idea of John's putting his faith in another belief which could easily disappear by the death of Elsa. The following lines indicate that Loving only put his faith in the definiteness of death:

> He was never courageous enough to face what he really knew was true, that there is no truth for men, that human life is unimportant and meaningless. No. He was always grasping at some absurd new faith to find an excuse for going on![9]

John then replies to the above comment by asserting his love and faith in regard to Elsa:

> And he did go on! And he found his truth at last--in love, where he least expected he ever would find it. For he had always been afraid of love. And when he met the woman who afterwards became his wife and realized he was in love with her, it threw him into a panic of fear. He wanted to run away from her--but found he couldn't.[10]

The great incentive for the occurrence of Loving was John's fear of the temporariness of his new-found faith and love:

> JOHN. Yes, he--he came to be afraid of his happiness. His love made him feel at the mercy of that mocking Something he dreaded. And the more peace and security he found in his wife's love, the more he was haunted by fits of horrible foreboding--the recurrent dread that she might die and he would be left alone again, without love. So great was the force of this obsession at times that he felt caught in a trap, desperate--[11]

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[9]Ibid., Act Three, Scene One. [10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid.

It is definitely clear that John had a great fear of death, and to death is exactly where Loving wanted to drive not only John but also Elsa. John needed Love and great companionship; he was afraid to be alone, afraid to die, afraid to have faith once again.

At some times John Loving is apparently the only person to hear the masked Loving's comments, as in the following scene when Loving expressly states his opinion on death and life:

> At last you see the empty posing of your old ideal about man's duty to go on for Life's sake, your meaningless gesture of braving fate--a childish nose-thumbing at Nothingness at which Something laughs with a weary scorn! Shorn of your boastful words, all it means is to go on like an animal in dumb obedience to the law of the blind stupidity of life that it must live at all costs! But where will you go--except to death? And why should you wait for an end you know when it is in your power to grasp that end--now!
>
> Surely you cannot be afraid of death. Death is not the dying. Dying is life, its last revenge upon itself. But death is what the dead know, the warm, dark womb of Nothingness--the Dream in which you and Elsa may sleep as one forever, beyond fear of separation![12]

Elsa is lying in the same room in which Loving states the above comments, but she does not really hear Loving, although she does sense his presence. Soon after the preceding comments Loving begins to lose control of John Loving as the latter begins to speak of God:

> JOHN. (Mechanically) Dust within dust. (Then frightenedly questioning) Dust? (A shudder runs over him and he starts as if awakening from sleep) Fool! Can the dust love the dust? No! (Desperately) O God, have pity! Show me the way!
> LOVING. (Furiously--as if he felt himself temporarily beaten). Coward![13]

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[12]Ibid., Act Four, Scene One. [13]Ibid.

John Loving and Loving have an intensely emotional conversation with one another. John remembers the faith which his parents once had in God, and mention of that faith is enough to cause Loving to retreat. The following lines are the conversation; they are the beginning of John's decisive steps, no longer hesitant steps, back to the old church near his home where he once prayed as a small boy. Loving attempts to bar the way of John, but John's determination is too great:

> JOHN. If I could see the Cross again--
> LOVING. (*With a shudder*) No! I don't want to see! I remember too well!--when Father and Mother!
> JOHN. Why are you so afraid of Him, if--
> LOVING. (*Shaken--then with fierce defiance*). Afraid? I who once cursed Him, who would again if-- (*Then hurriedly catching himself*) But what superstitious nonsense you make me remember. He doesn't exist!
> JOHN. (*Takes a step toward the door*) I am going!
> LOVING. (*Tries to bar his path*) No!
> JOHN. (*Without touching him, makes a motion of pushing him aside*) I am going. (*He goes through the door to the study, moving like one in a trance, his eyes fixed straight before him.* LOVING *continues to try to bar his path, always without touching him.*
> LOVING. (*In impotent rage*) No! You coward! (JOHN *goes out the door in rear of study and* LOVING *is forced out before him.*)[14]

The final scene occurs when the two characters of John Loving are standing in the church before the cross, the symbol of love, forgiveness, and eternal happiness on earth and in heaven. The sight of the truth of the cross weakens Loving; yet he still attempts to fight the mind of John Loving:

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[14] *Ibid.*

> LOVING. (*As they enter--desperately, as if he were becoming exhausted by the struggle*) You fool! There is nothing here but hatred!
> JOHN. No! There was love! (*His eyes fasten themselves on the Cross and he gives a cry of hope*) The Cross!
> LOVING. The symbol of hate and derision!
> JOHN. No! Of love! (LOVING *is forced back until the back of his head is against the foot of the Cross.* JOHN *throws himself on his knees before it and raises his hands up to the figure of Christ in supplication*) Mercy! Forgive![15]

Where the truth stands before the two characters of John Loving, there is the death of the one and the beginning of new life for the other, John Loving.

> LOVING. (*Stumbles weakly from beneath the Cross*) No! I deny! (*He turns to face the Cross with a last defiance*) I defy Thee! Thou canst not conquer me! I hate Thee! I curse Thee!
> JOHN. No! I bless! I love!
> LOVING. (*As if this were a mortal blow, seems to sag and collapse--with a choking cry*) No![16]

Soon afterwards, the Loving personality of John Loving dies.

There are a few occasions when the presence of Loving is subtly felt by one or two of the other characters. John Loving was unfaithful to Elsa because of an adulterous act with Lucy. Lucy, a good friend of Elsa, describes the scene to Elsa, although Loving's name is not revealed. In the next quotation one can readily detect where John Loving lost control over Loving's behavior:

> . . . he pushed me away, as if he were disgusted with himself and me. But I wouldn't let him go. And then came the strange part of it. Suddenly I don't know how to explain it, you'll think I'm crazy, or being funny, but it was

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[15]*Ibid.*, Act Four, Scene Two. [16]*Ibid.*

> as if he were no longer there. It was another man, a stranger whose eyes were hateful and frightening.[17]

The preceding lines indicate the experience of Lucy. In another instance Father Baird senses the presence of Loving as Loving persists, even while Elsa is in danger of dying, in declaring that there is no God:

> LOVING. There is no God!
> FATHER BAIRD. (Sternly). Do you dare say that--now!
> JOHN. (Frightenedly) No--I--I don't know what I'm saying--It isn't I--
> FATHER BAIRD. (Recovering himself--quietly). No. I know you couldn't blaspheme at such a time--not your true self.[18]

John Loving himself speaks of the "hidden spirit of evil" which surrounds him. As he is discussing the supposed plot development of his novel, a novel which is actually completely autobiographical, John comments about his experience in adultery with Lucy:

> He had not the slightest desire for this woman. When she threw herself into his arms, he was repelled. He determined to end the game. He thought of his wife--(He forces a laugh) But, as I've said, there was the unknown to reckon with. At the thought of his wife, suddenly it was as if something outside him, a hidden spirit of evil, took possession of him.[19]

It is not difficult to find characters in other Eugene O'Neill plays who are somewhat similar to John Loving. In each case that an individual is torn between a real self and a masked self, there is a parallel to John Loving. Perhaps Dion Anthony of The Great God Brown is the

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[17] Ibid., Act Two. [18] Ibid., Act Four, Scene One.

[19] Ibid., Act Three, Scene One.

most similar to John Loving. Both are faced by two selves, only one of which can bring peace, the other bringing tortuous despair. However, O'Neill represents Dion with only one actor who uses a mask. The resemblance between Dion and John Loving is evident; they were searching for love. Further, the conflict between Dion Anthony and Billy Brown parallels the conflict between John Loving and Loving. The death scenes are particularly similar. In them Dion was facing Billy Brown, just as Loving faced John Loving; the death scenes both had dramatic intensity. Caligula and John Loving are alike in their anxious seeking for meaning in life and death, that same search causing each character to develop vital and significant inner selves which strive to attain the command of the whole person.

It may be possible to say that in Days Without End O'Neill achieves his optimum development in the use of the mask. There are the usual internal conflicts of the main character. These conflicts have become so great that it is as though the one person were two. And O'Neill represents the one character, John Loving, as two. He thereby attains the greatest possible effect and indicates the almost continuous battle for the mind and the body of John Loving. In other plays O'Neill has used the mask to reveal the internal thoughts of the characters. In Days Without End there are those occasions when only John Loving hears the comments of Loving, so that one could say that O'Neill is once again using the mask to reveal internal thoughts to the audience. The important thing is that whereas other characters are generally capable of concealing their secret selves, John Loving is usually

totally unable to control his inner thoughts as they are represented by Loving. It is an interesting use of the mask, one which clearly, distinctly, and dramatically emphasizes the manner in which a man may be torn apart by conflicting ideas and emotions, by conflicting dual personalities.

In reading the play or, one may suppose, even in seeing the play, the possibility arises that the person will forget that John Loving and Loving both actually occupy the same body. By creating the need for another actor on the stage, O'Neill was--instead of inviting confusion--probably only acutely accenting the real danger of a person's becoming two personalities as he searches and questions and rushes about the world to discover something in which he can have faith, something or someone that he can love or be loved by. The tragedy of the tumultuous life of John Loving is that he once had strong faith which had become nonexistent. Naturally he feared to venture again to trust and to believe in that which may disappear quickly, without warning. The easy answer, according to Loving, is death--especially since one knows that he shall die and that death is the end and that he can control, if he so desires, the coming of that death. John Loving was running away from his basic belief and faith in love and god; he thought that he was running toward what he was running away from. O'Neill seems to be saying that John Loving, and the name Loving was not accidentally chosen by O'Neill, is a representative of all men who knowingly search for something in which they may, with security, place their faith.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

There are many critics who object to O'Neill's use of the mask. The introductory chapter indicated that their objections centered about the "trickery" of the mask. Some critics labelled the mask as evidence of the inarticulateness of Eugene O'Neill. It does not seem reasonable to say that the mask is a cheap device which has been used to conceal the lack of artistry of Eugene O'Neill. To discuss the use of the mask in an orderly fashion, it may be wise to classify the various types of masks used by O'Neill. The masks may be divided into the following two major divisions: the physically evident mask and the implied mask.

The physically evident mask is present in such plays as The Great God Brown, Lazarus Laughed, All God's Chillun' Got Wings, and Days Without End.

In The Great God Brown the mask was used primarily to indicate to the audience the double natures of Dion Anthony and Cybel and Billy Brown. In each case the mask represented a specific set of characteristics which society generally saw and always expected to see in the individual. Dion Anthony wore the mask of a Mephistopheles to cover the face of a Saint Anthony. The growing conflict between the two antipodean personalities resulted in no compromising personality that

could face the world. The battle between the two personalities ended in death. The mask of Cybel, the earth-goddess, the prostitute, was one dictated by society: she wore harsh features to protect her innocent concern for all men. For both Dion Anthony and Cybel the mask was primarily a protective device, yet it did more to destroy than to protect the innocence of the true character.

In Lazarus Laughed the masks were again used specifically for the proper, immediate identification of the characteristics of the major personages of the play. Caligula and Caesar Tiberius and Pompeia never remove their masks because they are representative of the actual physical state of their bodies. However, psychologically the major characters attempt to disown the impulse which has led them to live imperfect and masked lives; they try to attain the life of peace and quiet and calm repose, free of fear. Only Caligula fails completely in achieving this new state. In a sense, the mask in Lazarus Laughed is real and is not. Insofar as it represents the actual physical state of the characters, it is real. However, for the particular physical states to exist, certain personality factors had to exist, and those personality factors do change for Pompeia and Caesar Tiberius, although there is not enough time before their death for any physical appearances to change. In addition, O'Neill used the mask for minor characters to show that the same age and personality types exist in men of all races. O'Neill used the mask to indicate the universality of types of personalities: the sad, the happy, the wise, and the foolish are to be found in all nations, at all ages, in all races.

In All God's Chillun' Got Wings the use of the mask, a large, artistically carved and savagely primitive mask of an African Negro, is subtle and not quite so important as the apparent masks in the other plays. All God's Chillun' Got Wings is a play which may be construed as being racial in theme, although it would seem to be more defensible simply to say that the play reflects the ambition and lack of success of two sensitive people who are, almost coincidentally, a Negro and his Caucasian wife. The mask comes to represent all that the woman despises in the Negro race. The mask hangs in the room on stage, always overlooking the final dramatic scenes of the play. It serves as a constant dramatic symbol which is visually present and highly effective.

In Days Without End the use of the mask has progressed to a more significant stage. The duality of the main character is indicated by the presence of a second actor who wears a mask. His is the only mask in the play. In this play O'Neill uses the mask to exemplify further the conflict which can result when a person is torn between two natures, two personalities. The two actors who represent one person dramatically indicate the conflicts which may occur.

Whenever O'Neill has used the physically evident mask, it has not been an easy method of avoiding the responsibility of a dramatist. He has used it to indicate to the audience specifically what is occurring on the stage. In The Great God Brown the mask is essential to the development of the action. Though in other plays it may seem less necessary, one wonders how else O'Neill could have dramatically

presented his characters in Lazarus Laughed, All God's Chillun' Got Wings, or Days Without End.

The second classification of masks is that of the implied mask, which occurs when asides and soliloquies are spoken; the familial masks, which occur in Mourning Becomes Electra; and the adopted mask, which occurs in Dynamo.

In Strange Interlude the asides appear to constitute an implied mask through which a character speaks thoughts which he does not wish others to know. Only in the asides is the truth bared to the audience, which hears what the characters are actually thinking. O'Neill's asides are different from those of Shakespeare or Marlowe, in whose plays the character reveals to the audience only what he wants the audience to know, not what he is trying to conceal from other characters. Thus the men and women in Strange Interlude are speaking their true thoughts, through which O'Neill reveals to the audience some of their basic reasonings and motivations.

Further use of the implied mask, although in a different fashion, is found in Dynamo. There O'Neill uses again the device of the aside and adds to it the symbol of the dynamo shown as a machine and also revealed in the person of May Fife. Further, Reuben Light himself takes advantage of an adopted mask, although he does, as do other O'Neill characters, suffer qualms about his adoption of a new set of personality traits. He lives to achieve, first of all, an image; then he lives to find faith in a dynamic god.

There is also the familial mask of Mourning Becomes Electra, another form of the implied mask. There are no physically evident masks, but the implication of the presence of a familial mask--or of definite familial characteristics--is there, not to be denied. So certainly do the Mannon family characteristics shape the lives of the Mannons that even Captain Brantome, who is only half Mannon, has the familiar countenance of the clan. All of the characters bear not only a marked physical resemblance to each other, but also marked sexual, mental, and spiritual resemblances. The familial mask exists. In the same play O'Neill repeats the use of a mask to represent the universal characteristics of the townspeople: the gossips, the merchants, the bankers.

The plays discussed in this thesis indicate that O'Neill did experiment with the mask in several ways. The physically apparent mask, the adopted mask, the implied mask, the familial mask--all indicate the range of O'Neill's experimentation, if one may legitimately call the mask experimental. O'Neill was searching for the most appropriate method of revealing all of the truth about life and the motivations experienced in living. He did not abide by all of the conventions of the theater; he had the courage to attempt to reveal the true nature of his characters by means of the little-used mask.

In later years O'Neill used the mask very little, a fact which may indicate that he had grown tired of the device. A play written late in his career, entitled A Long Day's Journey Into Night, does nevertheless indicate the influence of O'Neill's earlier experimentation precisely

because the mask was and is an effective method of indicating the presence of both truth and falsehood at the same time. Such internal conflict is typical of the life of the characters of O'Neill: they reveal truth and falsehood within themselves and attempt to reconcile the one with the other. In *A Long Day's Journey into Night* there is great conflict between the characters. In addition, there is the highly familiar conflict within each character which is similar to conflict experienced by masked characters in other plays. O'Neill does not use the mask in *A Long Day's Journey into Night*, but he does continue to investigate the problem of dual personalities. James Tyrone lives the life of a skinflint father and a heroic stage star; his wife lives the life of a mother faced with her own dope addiction. James Tyrone, Junior, the eldest son, is no more than a drunkard; but he states the truth of his jealousy of Edmund, the younger son, in a moment of drunken sobriety that brings to mind occasions in other plays when the mask has been discarded so that truth can be known. There continues to be the same search for the understanding of the psychology of man; O'Neill abandons the mask as a method of dramatizing the search.

There are those who can condemn O'Neill's use of the mask; there are those who may praise him. However, the correct point of view will probably be taken by the audience, which will approve of the mask and not term it alien to the play. In the final analysis it is apparent that O'Neill has used the mask for the benefit of the audience in order to present better the internal conflict between truth and falsehood.

It is significant that O'Neill used the mask in the early part of his career and not in the later. The mask was an experiment, and it taught O'Neill how to present his psychological studies in a more artistic manner. When one compares what is probably his finest mask-play, The Great God Brown, with A Long Day's Journey into Night, the greater artistry of the later play is readily apparent. O'Neill finally learned that intense words and dramatic action were superior to mechanical artificiality. It definitely is not regrettable that O'Neill used the mask, however, for it did teach him to understand the psychology of people and the most appropriate and artistic method of presenting his creations.

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