

Inconsistency of Electra's Personality

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I. Introduction

Mourning Becomes Electra (hereinafter referred to as *Electra*) was premiered on Broadway at the Guild Theatre on 26 October, 1931. The play is five hours long, extraordinarily lengthy for a drama, although it ran for 150 performances and was a great success. The framework of this play was modeled on the Greek trilogy *Oresteia*, by Aeschylus. *Electra* is divided into three plays: *Homecoming*, consisting of four acts; *The Hunted*, five acts; and *The Haunted*, four acts (five scenes). Four male and three female characters play the major roles. Apart from the scene in Act 4 of the second play, which is located on a ship, the story mainly takes place in the Mannon family's house, a building styled after Greek temple architecture which is located on a hill near a port city in New England.

O'Neill first conceived of the idea for this play in 1926 but did not write it until 1929, which means that *Electra* is the author's final work of the 1920s, a period during which O'Neill wrote prolifically. In this sense, the work is the result of his accumulated experience during the 1920s. Many scholars and critics have reviewed and analyzed the play from various points of view, and in this paper I intend to re-examine these critical commentaries in order to reveal the play's intrinsic value and, in particular, examine the well-known view

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that this play is, in its context, closely related to Greek drama. The author himself has commented on this. In his working notes, he comments, "Is it possible to get modern psychological approximation of Greek sense of fate into such a play, which an intelligent audience of today, possessed by no belief in gods or supernatural retribution, could accept and be moved by?"¹⁾ In the same note, O'Neill reveals that he used "psychological fate" in place of "human fate on God's will." With regard to this, Doris Alexander argues, "O'Neill appears to have two definitions on 'psychological fate', which is the Puritan conscious fate and the other is the fate that exists between parents and child. In the play, the author characterizes psychological fate from these two aspects."²⁾ O'Neill used "psychological fate" to create his world on the stage.

An attempt to adapt a classical Greek play to the modern world by means of "psychological fate" alone, however, appears to be adventurous. The presentation of the tragedy which resides in human psychology on stage is a very difficult task, especially in this case, because it is not possible to demonstrate all of the conditions and tragic progression of the background story. To this end, it is extremely important to observe each of the characters, the family, and the community, as well as the historical background of the ancient Greek tragedy, and to clarify differences with the modern play.

To analyze these factors, we have to examine the drama from a structural viewpoint, with the historical development of the tragedy as a vertical axis and the universality of the drama as a horizontal axis. I aim to understand and elaborate the conflicts related to family love, struggle, adversities, and settlements, which are represented by plotting on the cross-section of the above axes, not only from an objective viewpoint but also in relation to aspects of the inner psychological elements of the characters.

Electra, O'Neill's masterpiece of the 1920s, presented not only the psychoanalytic method but also Jungian archetypal psychology,³⁾ as well as Nietzsche's philosophy covering a wide range of subjects from the Puritan ego to self-realization. As a consequence, the play achieved its goal of reaching a higher level of study, namely, anthropology. O'Neill himself admits in a letter to Martha

Carolyn Sparrow that he was not just influenced by Freudian theories alone.

After all, every human complication of love and hate in my trilogy is as old as literature, and the interpretations I suggest are such as might have occurred to any author in any time with a deep curiosity about the underlying motives that actuate human interrelationships in the family. In short, I think I know enough about men and women to have written *Mourning Becomes Electra* almost exactly as it is if I had never heard of Freud, Jung or the others.... I am no deep student of psychoanalysis. As far as I can remember, of all the books written by Freud, Jung, etc., I have read only four, and Jung is the only one of the lot who interests me. Some of his suggestions I find extraordinarily illuminating in the light of my own experience with hidden human motives.⁴⁾

With the above in mind, I would like to focus on love and hatred, struggle, adversities, death and life, youth and age, parental and sister-brother relationships, antipathy in wife-husband relationships, and conflicts of the conscious and subconscious related to these elements, in the Mannon house in New England, at the same time clarifying differences of historical background and noting the modernization of Greek drama. Because of this, an emphasis on the vertical axis (the historical background) alone is not sufficient, and a horizontal axis (Greek tragedy) is necessary.

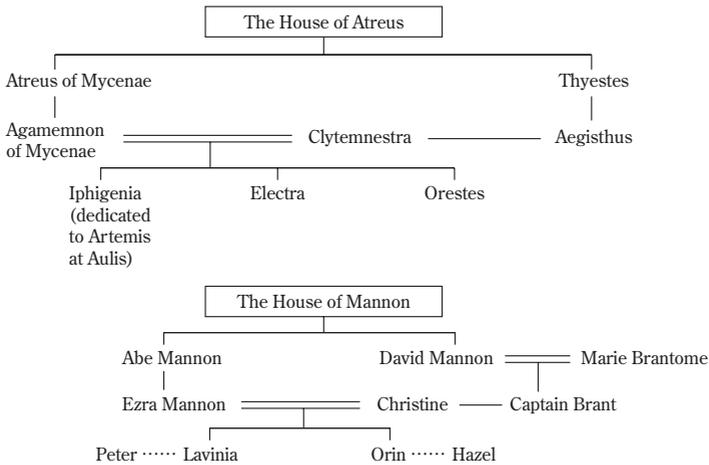
I have highlighted the Mannon family, plotted on the cross-section of the above-mentioned graph, as well as the people surrounding them (the Chorus), and examined the conflicts of society, family, and individuals. In this sense, the play is not just a modernization of Greek tragedy but an integration by the author of Greek elements and New England. The significance of the play lies in how O'Neill's unswerving efforts to present these factors in the form of a drama enabled him to create an outstanding literary work, his masterpiece of the 1920s.

II-i Similarities Between Greek Drama and O’Neill’s Play

Electra was born from the author’s profound respect and admiration for Greek drama, as has been pointed out by many critics. It is certainly true that O’Neill followed some of the techniques of Greek drama, an example of which is the structural similarity between the plot of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* trilogy and *Electra*. This is even more apparent from the family trees of Atreus and the Mannons, as shown in Fig. 1.

O’Neill created *Electra* in three plays, based on *Oresteia*. Not only does the storyline resemble the Greek trilogy, but also the names of the characters. Ezra Mannon appears from its pronunciation to be a modernized version of Agamemnon; similarly, his wife, Christine, derives from Clytemnestra, and Orin from Orestes.

The stage effects used in *Electra* resemble those of Greek drama as well. This is evident from the following stage directions:



(Notes: ==husband and wife – unmarried relations … represents love affairs)

Fig.1. Family trees of Atreus and Mannons.

Behind the driveway the white Grecian temple portico with its six tall columns extends across the stage.
The temple portico is like an incongruous white mask fixed on the house to hide its somber gray ugliness.

(Homecoming · Act One)

Another similarity with Greek drama is that each character in *Electra* is described as having the appearance of wearing a mask.

O'Neill chided himself, after watching his own play, that his intention of creating a theatrical atmosphere had been lost, by saying, "With *Mourning Becomes Electra*, masks were called for in one draft of the three plays. But the classical connotation was too insistent. Masks in that connection demand great language to speak –which let me out of it with a sickening bump! So it evolved ultimately into the "masklike faces," which expressed my intention tempered by the circumstances. However, I should like to see *Mourning Becomes Electra* done entirely with masks, now that I can view it solely as a psychological play, quite removed from the confusing preoccupations the classical derivation of its plot once caused me. Masks would emphasize the drama of the life and death impulses that drive the characters on to their fates and put more in its proper secondary place, as a frame, the story of the New England family."⁵⁾

Consequently, O'Neill made use of mask-like faces rather than masks, something towards which he showed some regret later on. If he had employed this tool, he might have succeeded in showing a clear borderline between the world of semblance and reality. This is evident in the main character, Lavinia, to whom is attributed Freudian aspects as well as a Jungian character, while at the same time she holds Nietzschean views. O'Neill might have thought that the use of a "mask" elucidated the complex psychology of the main character with a vivid image.

The Chorus, which plays a critical role in Greek drama, is used to represent the people surrounding the Mannon family. The late Professor Kunio Yamanouchi, in his book, *Eugene O'Neill: A Comprehensive Research and Study Guide* (English), writes, "Chorus

has two-sided roles in O'Neill's play, the first represents the 'mob' and second is the function of a chorus (as performing musical entertainment)."⁶⁾ Certainly, as Yamanouchi points out, the Chorus appears to play these two roles. However, in *Electra* the mob or the townspeople serve as the disseminators of a rumor on the one hand, and on the other they pay tribute to the family. In this sense, the Chorus represents the collective subconscious layer of a community or a group of local people, so that it is not just a group or playing a role as entertainment. The group or Chorus plays a single role, but it represents two contradictory factors which imply the dual, conflicting characters of the group. The common factor of the group or Chorus in all of O'Neill's plays is that they are one unit which constitutes society, and in this respect the implication of a Chorus in ancient Greek drama and in O'Neill's play, taking place in New England, has the same significance.

The mob or Chorus is a part of the community or society, and thus they represent the collective layer of the subconscious. This group of people or collective subconscious surrounds the Mannon family, where each of the characters evidences a tragic experience as triggered by an evil cycle of sexual desire, hatred, revenge, and crime. In this way, too, the play is similar to the Greek trilogy.

II-ii Differences between Greek Drama and O'Neill's Play

In Greek drama, the lineage of a family or clan was considered a higher priority than the crime of adultery. O'Neill's play, however, is based on the intrinsic values of Puritanism, whereby, in consequence, adultery was considered weightier than the continuation of the family. The Mannons are from an aristocratic family which has honored and respected traditional values. In the lines below, Lavinia accuses her mother of lecherous conduct and of committing adultery.

LAVINIA — I asked the woman in the basement. He had hired the room under another name, but she recognized his descrip-

tion. And yours too. She said you had come there often in the past year.

CHRISTINE — (*desperately*) It was the first time I had ever been there. He insisted on my going. He said he had to talk to me about you. He wanted my help to approach your father —

LAVINIA — (*furiously*) How can you lie like that? How can you be so vile as to try to use me to hide your adultery?

CHRISTINE — (*springing up — with weak indignation*) Vinnie!

LAVINIA — Your adultery, I said!

CHRISTINE — No!

LAVINIA — Stop lying, I tell you! I went upstairs! I heard you telling him — “I love you, Adam” — and kissing him! (*with a cold bitter fury*) You vile! — You're shameless and evil! Even if you are my mother, I say it! (*Christine stares at her, overwhelmed by this onslaught, her poise shattered for the moment. She tries to keep her voice indifferent but it trembles a little.*)

(Homecoming · Act Two)

The core difference with Greek drama, as evidenced here, is the Puritan rules which bind the Mannon family and which cause friction among family members. These confrontations, which each individual character faces, represent the Freudian concept of conflicts deep within an individual's psychology. In addition, the conflicts of love and hatred between family members and the people of the town are intricately described as complications of human emotions.

One such conflict is shown in the following lines. This is from the scene where Lavinia accuses Christine of the murder of Ezra, and Christine becomes desperate to persuade Orin to her side.

CHRISTINE — She found some medicine I take to make me sleep, but she is so crazy I know she thinks — (*then, with real*

terror, clinging to him) Oh, Orin, I'm so afraid of her! God knows what she might do, in her state! She might even go to the police and — Don't let her turn you against me! Remember you're all I have to protect me! You are all I have in the world, dear!

ORIN — (*tenderly soothing her*) Turn me against you? She can't be so crazy as to try that! But listen. I honestly think you — You're a little hysterical, you know. That — about Father — is all such damned nonsense! And as for her going to the police— do you suppose I wouldn't prevent that — for a hundred reasons — the family's sake—my own sake and Vinnie's, too, as well as yours — even if I knew —

(The Hunted · Act Two)

Furthermore, in line with Puritan tenets, Lavinia accuses Christine of incestuous conduct in Part One, Act Two, and Christine, in turn, threatens her.

LAVINIA — I won't tell him, provided you give up Brant and never see him again — and promise to be a dutiful wife to Father and make up for the wrong you've done him!

.....

CHRISTINE — Suppose I refuse! Suppose I go off openly with Adam! Where will you and your father and the family name be after that scandal? And what if I were disgraced myself? I'd have the man I love, at least!

(Homecoming · Act Two)

As is evident from these lines, the Puritanism of each character's psyche underlies their thoughts and behavior. In other words, the tragedy of the characters and the family is triggered by conflicts with the Puritan community. Overcoming these conflicts may signify true modernization.

But instead, one of the characters tries to conquer the traditions of Puritan society. Ezra, the head of the family, realizes that his married life, chained by Puritan law, is without love. So, with his wife he decides to restart life in the pursuit of true love.

MANNON — Before that life had only made me think of death! ...That's always been the Mannons' way of thinking. They went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying

.....
CHRISTINE — What has this talk of death to do with me?

MANNON — ...But listen, me as your husband being killed that seemed queer and wrong — like something dying that had never lived. Then all the years we've been man and wife would rise up in my mind and I would try to look at them. But nothing was clear except that there'd always been some barrier between us — a wall hiding us from each other! ...

I came home to surrender to you — what's inside me. I love you...

You'll find I have changed, Christine. I'm sick of death! I want life! Maybe you could love me now!

(Homecoming · Act Three)

Why was Ezra supposed to die? He has not committed any sin for which he has to atone. In fact, he contributed to the town and its people. His achievements were praised and respected by the townspeople as noble and virtuous, and as proof that he was motivated by good conduct. He was not able to extricate himself from the fate of the Mannon family chained to Puritan morals. In this sense, Ezra is a “tragic person in a true sense.”

III. Re-examination of the Prevailing Criticism Regarding the Psychoanalysis of *Mourning Becomes Electra*

Many critics have pointed out the impact of deep psychoanalytical methods on *Electra*.⁷⁾ The focus of attention is on Freudian psychoanalysis used in the play, such as the Oedipus Complex and the Electra Complex, evident in the relationship between parents and children, and sister and brother, in the Mannon family. For example, in Part One, Act Two, when Lavinia tells Christine that she witnessed her private meeting with Adam Brant, Christine admits her

incestuous conduct, recognizing that her secret can no longer be hidden. She reveals that the affection she felt towards Ezra before getting married turned into hatred on the very first night she spent with her husband after marrying him. She uncovers the truth that she offered her body without love. Lavinia protests against Christine in the following lines:

LAVINIA — (*wincing again — stammers harshly*) So I was born of your disgust! I've always guessed that, Mother — ever since I was little — when I used to come to you — with love — but you would always push me away! I've felt it ever since I can remember — your disgust! (*then with a flare-up of bitter hatred*) Oh, I hate you! It's only right I should hate you!

Christine, in turn, argues:

CHRISTINE — I know you, Vinnie! I've watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you're doing now! You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always schemed to steal my place!
(Homecoming · Act Two)

In the above lines, Christine points out the Electra Complex in her daughter Lavinia.

Christine's confession to Lavinia reveals that her love towards Ezra disappeared and that she conspired with her lover, Brant, and succeeded in murdering her husband. But it was Christine's love for Orin which caused this suffering, and if Orin and Ezra had not been drafted and sent to war, her incestuous affair with Brant would not have happened.

CHRISTINE —...And most of the time I was carrying him, your father was with the army in Mexico. I had forgotten him. And when Orin was born he seemed my child, only mine, and I loved him for that! ... Well, I hope you realize I never would have fallen in love with Adam if I'd had Orin with me.
(Homecoming · Act Two)

Lavinia's Electra Complex is also evident in her next lines. She controls Orin, makes a black mourning dress, watches her mother, blames Christine for her incestuous conduct, and determines to take vengeance for her father.

LAVINIA — I realize only too well! You and I, who are innocent, would suffer a worse punishment than the guilty — for we'd have to live on! It would mean that Father's memory and that of all the honorable Mannon dead would be dragged through the horror of a murder trial! But I'd rather suffer that than let the murder of our father go unpunished!... And Father knew she'd poisoned him! He said to me, "She's guilty!"

(The Hunted · Act Three)

Lavinia uses Orin's envy and his jealous heart, since he wholeheartedly loves his mother and does not trust his sister's words, to control his mind so that he will kill Brant, Christine's lover. She reveals her emotions with some final accusatory words aimed at her mother :

LAVINIA — (*finally speaks sternly*) He paid the just penalty for his crime. You know it was justice. It was the only way true justice could be done. Mother! What are you going to do? You can live!

(The Hunted · Act Five)

Lavinia's unbearable accusation causes Christine to commit suicide, and Lavinia cold heartedly says to herself, "It is justice!" But the justice she implies is not the justice of the social code. Rather, it signifies Lavinia's underlying motive, rooted in her Electra Complex.

Orin similarly expresses something of an Oedipus Complex. He often talks about the islands in the south, but in the following lines, signs of his Oedipus Complex are evident :

ORIN —... I only felt you all around me. The breaking of the waves was your voice. The sky was the same color as your eyes. The warm sand was like your skin. The whole island was you.

He continues with the following confession:

ORIN — And I'll never leave you again now. I don't want Hazel or anyone. (*with a tender grin*) You're my only girl!
(The Hunted · Act Two)

The above lines exemplify the key elements of Freudian psychoanalytical theory. In other words, Orin's sexual desire has evolved on the surface of another form. The southern islands—a paradise where no death, no next life, no sin nor hatred exist, a land of peace, the land of Utopia as Orin describes it—is the place he always dreamed of. The water, the sky, the sand, all of his imagined paradise, in fact symbolize the flesh of his mother.⁸⁾ In this respect, Freud's influence on *Electra* is quite strong, and it is quite natural for the critics to point this out.

Not only are the Oedipus Complex and the Electra Complex key elements represented in the play, but most importantly there is the conflict between the individual conscious and unconscious as Freud describes it, and the Puritan self that tries to overcome such a conflict. This is seen in the following lines.

CHRISTINE — So hadn't you better leave Orin out of it? You can't get him to go to the police for you. Even if you convinced him I poisoned your father, you couldn't! He doesn't want — any more than you do, or your father, or any of the Mannon dead — such a public disgrace as a murder trial would be! For it would all come out! Everything! Who Adam is and my adultery and your knowledge of it — and your love for Adam!
(The Hunted · Act Two)

When Orin knows that Lavinia is getting married to Peter, his jealousy is directed towards Lavinia and he reveals that she has had affairs with many men on the island. This signifies that the Oedipus Complex in Orin against his mother is now directed onto Lavinia, as seen in the following lines.

PETER — You stopped at the Islands?

ORIN —...I guess I'm too much of a Mannon, after all, to turn into a pagan. But you should have seen Vinnie with the men! —

LAVINIA — Orin! Don't be disgusting!

ORIN — Picture, if you can, the feelings of the God-fearing Mannon dead at that spectacle!

(The Haunted · Act One Scene Two)

The Oedipus Complex inside Orin consumes him with jealousy, but this is not the only hidden feeling he has. Orin puts stress on the Mannon family ancestors by talking in a strong tone and putting pressure on his sister. This signifies the emergence of a strong Puritan ego within Orin. His Puritan sense of self can be seen in the following scene when, saying that Lavinia resembles their mother, he mentions the ancestors of the Mannon family.

ORIN — I mean the change in your soul, too. I've watched it ever since we sailed for the East. Little by little it grew like Mother's soul — as if you were stealing hers — as if her death had set you free — to become her!

LAVINIA — Now don't begin talking nonsense again, please!

ORIN — Don't you believe in souls any more? I think you will after we've lived in this house awhile! The Mannon dead will convert you.

he turns to the portraits mockingly

Ask them if I'm not right!

(The Haunted · Act One Scene Two)

The next lines also stress Orin's Puritan consciousness. Orin blames himself for the suicide of his mother and protests against Lavinia.

ORIN —... But she wasn't! She isn't anywhere. It's only they —

he points to the portraits

They're everywhere! But she's gone forever. She'll never forgive

me now!

LAVINIA — Orin! Will you be quiet!

ORIN — Well, let her go! What is she to me? I'm not her son any more! I'm Father's! I'm a Mannon! And they'll welcome me home!

(The Haunted · Act One Scene Two)

At this point, I would like to clarify concerning a Jungian perspective of this play. The most appropriate embodiment of Jung's theory in the play appears in the scene where Ezra comes back from the war and meets Christine face-to-face. With a sense of burning envy inside, through jealousy of the relationship between Christine and Adam, Ezra calmly explains that he wants to restart his life with Christine, that he regrets his past behavior, and that he does not want to be left alone. Lavinia, on the other hand, in jealousy and resentment, is frustrated at being unable to tell her father of Christine's unfaithful conduct and looks up at the door to her parents' bedroom.

LAVINIA — I hate you! You steal even Father's love from me again! You stole all love from me when I was born!

(then almost with a sob, hiding her face in her hands)

Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? What harm had I done you?

(Homecoming · Act Three)

The stronger her desire towards maternal love, the deeper Lavinia's hatred towards her mother becomes. In the above lines, Jung's archetypal psychology can be observed.

A certain ambivalence is also evident in the relationship between the Mannon family and the Chorus (i.e. the people) surrounding the house. The Mannon family, which is bound to a Puritan consciousness, and the Chorus, which is the representation of the collective unconscious and which disseminates rumors, appear to be in conflict with each other, though the people surrounding the family

also respect and honor the house. This can be seen in lines spoken by Seth, who for a long time has served the Mannons as a gardener. Seth, Amos Ames, his wife Louisa, and Louisa's cousin, Minnie, the main members of the Chorus, represent the people of the town. Except for Seth, these people try to find out about the Mannon family, since the family is conservative and tries to hide family matters. But Seth talks boastfully about the Mannons.

SETH —...He learned law on the side and got made a judge. Went in fur politics and got 'lected mayor. He was mayor when this war broke out but he resigned to once and jined the army again. And now he's riz to be General. Oh, he's able, Ezra is!

AMES — Aye. This town's real proud of Ezra.

SETH —...Wal, I've got to see Vinnie....And if Ezra's wife starts to run you off fur trespassin', you tell her I got permission from Vinnie to show you round.

LOUISA — Seth is so proud of his durned old Mannons!
(Homecoming · Act One)

In addition, Seth always cares about Lavinia. In the final scene Seth does not leave Lavinia. He stays with her to sing Shenandoah, a boatmen's song, in a rather sad tone.

Jung's life cycle⁹⁾ is also represented by the Mannon family itself. The Mannons are viewed as a tragic family with an adverse destiny repeating an evil cycle of fate. After the suicide of David, Ezra's brother, Ezra is murdered by his wife and her lover, Adam Brant, who is then killed by Orin and Lavinia, followed by Christine's suicide and Orin's death, repeating the evil cycle of family destiny.

Each of these events entails a common factor. They signify the eternal recurrence¹⁰⁾ (eternal life) explicated by Nietzsche. The life cycle is processed in Lavinia in the form of an emotional transference to Christine. Orin, on the other hand, identifies himself with his father but fails to achieve self-realization, and as a result he de-

stroys himself. The characters who appear on the stage die one after another. What, then, is the significance of the life of Lavinia, who is left alone at the last? She expresses, through her Dionysian statements, the power of the will that lies deep in the psyche and which implies the power of authority¹¹⁾ as well as individualization, self-conquest, and value-creation, and this is one of the features of Nietzschean concepts. Lavinia, at the end, falls into a state of self-renunciation, shutting herself off from the outside world, because, as a matter of fact, she has just realized her negative self.

Lavinia confronts her mother and, by doing so, she gradually becomes like her mother and evolves to be Lavinia-Christine. Orin also opposes his father, but he adopts his father's character and becomes like his father. This, in fact, signifies the process of conflict, transference, and unification without any masks. O'Neill used the mask and the soliloquy to express the conflicting factors of the personal conscious and the subconscious, and the conscious and the collective conscious.

O'Neill tried to embody the collective conscious and eternal recurrence, elements which cannot be represented merely by the use of a mask, because these elements are factors that are at the depths of the human psyche. In other words, a mask is a semblance, just like a bubble on the surface, unlike eternal recurrence, or the underlying true ego that flows in the abyss of the deep sea. Moreover, the mask and the eternal recurrence of the intrinsic self are not only the conflicting elements. In other words, those bubbles which have materialized on the water surface of reality have also developed from the deep sea. They represent the "true semblance (*schein*)."

In this respect, the dualism of the mask is manifested on the stage. This is similar to O'Neill's *The Great God Brown*, published in 1926, where Dion and Brown confront each other but are later transformed into Dion-Brown, which reflects Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. In that work Nietzsche explains that, in the birth of tragedy, Apollo is no longer the god of the mask (the art of the mask) but has formed the shape of Dionysus, the god of tragedy (the art of tragedy). In other words, Apollo is absorbed by Dionysus and harmonizes into a single embodiment.¹²⁾

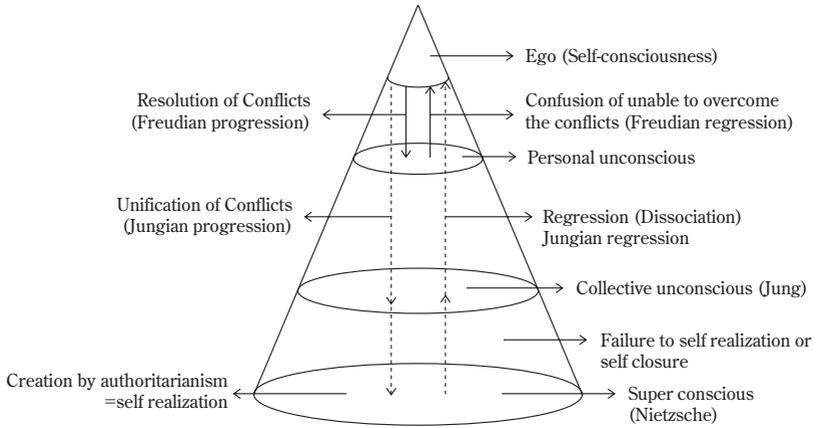


Fig.2. The organizational structure of three major theories that constructed the main core of *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

Electra is, in some ways, an extension of *The Great God Brown* in terms of being an experimental play using philosophical and psychological theories. In this sense, *Electra* is not only an adaptation of a classical Greek trilogy but is also a tragedy that uses Nietzsche’s concepts outlined in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Figure 2 explains the roles of the Freudian, Jungian, and Nietzschean concepts in O’Neill’s play, simplifying the complexity of the play for a better understanding of its significance.

Conclusion

This play is the result of O’Neill’s accumulated experience. It is evident that *Strange Interlude* and *Dynamo* had a latent influence on *Electra*. Particularly noteworthy is the impact of *Dynamo*, where O’Neill’s efforts to create a new god who replaces “the god of science and machine” are clearly demonstrated. O’Neill tried to consolidate the gods under “the Real God,” but was not able to expand his theory beyond the “Puritan God,” “the god of machine,” and

“the god of *Dynamo*, the projection of Freudian and Jungian theories of conflicts.” He was confined within the framework of these conceptualisms. O’Neill tried to express all this through the main character, Reuben, and to represent complex human affairs on a two-dimensional stage (stage and audience) using the four gods. The limitations of this experimental theatrical expression lay in the fact that he tried to express a three-dimensional play, or a virtual play, using a two-dimensional method, or a bilateral technique. O’Neill created *Dynamo* to realize “the god of science and machine,” but in *Electra* he placed the destiny (the genes) of the Mannon family at the center of the play, to replace *Dynamo*’s god of science and machine. In this way he successfully created the central backbone of the theme in *Electra*. Genes, as part of the process of cloning humans, indicate the inheritance of a family destiny, and this ironically creates the evil life cycle of a family.

The assumption can be made, at this point, that O’Neill was inspired by the genetic determinism that is derived from the psychic determinism of Freud. The evil cycle of the Mannons can be explained, as was pointed out earlier, to some extent within the theories of psychoanalysis and deep psychology, but with recourse to the theory of genetic reaction the details of the events the author intended can be further elucidated and clarified. In other words, the members of the Mannon family are not only directed by their genetic destiny and psychological factors but also their behaviors are controlled by their own personalities. Their characteristics are in fact determined by their immunity and the attributes of their immunity.¹³⁾

The immunity that the characters have against the destiny of the family has made each of them, especially Lavinia, unique in their individual personality and behavior. Consequently, the psychoanalytical element is just one part of the play. As is evident in the various other parts of the play, the attributes of life, each influenced by its own genetic characteristics and immune system or self-protection mechanism, play a key role in the story.

The main character, Lavinia, is not able to attain a state of perfect self-realization and, as a result, she falls into a state of self-

confinement and self-autism. O'Neill used negativism to end the play in a way that reflects the main character's Puritan ego and the Nietzschean philosophy of self-contradiction by the authoritarian will, as is quite evident from the complexity of the play's storyline. This reflects the genius in O'Neill's talent as a playwright.

Notes

- 1) Eugene O'Neill, *Working Notes and Extracts from A Fragmentary Work Diary*, (European Theories of the Drama, ed. by B. H. Clark, New York : Crown Publishers, 1954, pp. 530-536) Working Diary of O'Neill was actually written during his production process of *Mourning Becomes Electra*.
- 2) Doris Alexander, *Psychological Fate in Mourning Becomes Electra*, PMLA (Vol. LXVIII, No. 5, Dec, 1953), p. 924.
- 3) C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung. Vol. XI, Psychology and Religion* ed. Herbert Read et al. (New York: Princeton University Press, 1958), p. 345.
- 4) Letter to Martha Carolyn Sparrow (Dated Oct 13, 1929).
- 5) Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 755-756.
- 6) Kuniomi Yamauchi, 『ユージン・オニール研究』 (Study on Eugene O'Neill) (Yamaguchi Shoten, 1964), p. 182.
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- 9) C. G. Jung, *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung. Vol. XIII, Alchemical Studies*, ed. Herbert Read et al., pp. 21-28.
- 10) George Picht, *Nietzsche* (Germany: Klett-Cotta, 1988), p. 256.
- 11) Yokichi Yajima, 『ニーチェの哲学—ニヒリズムの論理』 (Nietzsche Philosophy-Nihilism) Fukumura Shuppan, 1986, p. 119.
- 12) Georg Picht, op.cit., p. 256.
- 13) Tomio Tada 「生命の意味論」 (Definition of Life) Shinchosha, 1997, pp. 24-25.

• All the quotes (lines) used in this thesis are cited from *Mourning Becomes Electra*, compiled in O'Neill: *Complete Plays 1920-1931* (The Library of America, 1988).