Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi
Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi
Cilt: 1 Sayı: 2 2012

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

Arsev Ayşen ARSLANOĞLU*

ABSTRACT

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

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

GEÇMİŞİN ZAMAN VE KENDİLİK ALGISI ÜZERİNDEKİ BİÇİMLENDİRİCİ ETKİSİ

ÖZET

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

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

*Lecturer, Ph. D., Dokuz Eylul University, Department of American Culture and Literature, İzmir/TURKEY
e-mail: arsevarslanoglu@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In his essay "The Past is Present, Isn't It?", Henry F. Smith questions whether it is past, which is timeless and imprisons present, or whether it is the other way around; that is, present and future determine and imprison past (xv). The problem which concerns the nature of memory and how one perceives and remembers past events is one of the basic questions in the field of psychoanalysis since Sigmund Freud. The fact that the moment one is aware of *being in the present* is already the moment one is *being in the past* raises questions on whether time is in a relation of dichotomy with timelessness and, if so, how one perceives time. Psychoanalysis, one of the focal points of which is the repetitive time and its perception by self, deals with the relation between temporality and psychological development and change—one of the basic factors underlying the neurotic and psychotic development.

The issue has been among the major points in the plays of the prominent American playwright, Eugene O'Neill. Among modern authors dealing with the relation between psychological development and the development of selfhood, he is no doubt one of the authors who pose the question in the most direct way. Towards the end of the second act of his play "Long Day's Journey into Night", the protagonist, James Tyrone, tells his morphine-addicted and depressed wife Mary to forget past. Mary's reaction, "Why? How can I? The past is present, isn't it? It is the future, too", (O'Neill, 1956, p. 87) seems to foreshadow the playwright's tragic vision. Later, in his career, O'Neill searches for additional elements to reflect this tragic vision with the effort on creating a classic tragedy in the Aristotelian sense which takes place in modern world. His trilogy "Mourning Becomes Electra" (1931), composed of "Homecoming", "The Hunted", and "The Haunted", is written with this concern and follows the structure of Aeschylus' tragedy "Oresteia". However, such an effort in modern times and in a land where, as William Dean Howells mentioned, there is "large, cheerful average of health and success and happy life" (Stegner, 1958, p.302) leads the playwright to investigate what he can replace the Greek concept of external fate with; as a result, he has focused on the modern portrayal of self in conflict with itself written a modern version of "Oresteia". In this study, the playwright's translation of the legend of the house of Atreus illustrating the Greek concept of external fate resulted from an inherited family curse into that of the Mannon house will be discussed in terms of object relations theory after analyzing the way O'Neill creates a classic tragedy in modern sense. In this way, it is aimed at discussing both the way classical tragedy can be interpreted in the modern terms and how O'Neill succeeds this point in his trilogy.

Expression of the Tragic View of Life in Modern Times

Eugene O'Neill's ambition to express the tragic view of life in "Mourning Becomes Electra" results in his search for a suitable setting and atmosphere which will provide him the essential matter to develop the plot. The setting should not only be a *physical* background but involve the necessary psychological atmosphere where human will clashes external fate. As the background which fulfills these conditions, O'Neill chooses New England and notes that it is "the best possibility for a 'Greek plot of crime and retribution, chain of faith" because of the 'Puritan conviction of man born to sin and punishment'" (quoted in Gatta Jr, 1979, p.227; P. O'Neill, 1963, p. 485). By choosing such a place, O'Neill benefits from how the characteristics of the Puritan

society, which imprisons the individual will within the restrictions of the society. In addition to the choice of setting, he searches for the possibility where his characters are depicted as individuals who struggle with the clash of inner conflicts and external realities. Seeing that there are no gods interfering in human affairs in modern world, he needs other means which will set the ground for such clashes. O'Neill determines these means as Puritan rules that shapes the lives of people to such a degree that it shapes their subconscious as well: ". . . if we have no Gods, [sic] or heroes to portray, we have the subconscious, the mother of all gods and heroes" (quoted in P. O'Neill, 1963, p. 489). The playwright reaches his aim by depicting characters in conflict both with each other and in themselves, resulting from the exposition of all deep, hidden secrets of family life throughout time in a strict Puritan town. Depending on the view that man is neither simply free not purely determined, independent of gods, he views fate as a factor generally shaped by the concrete, physical environment and the psychological factors effective in the formation of self. In his trilogy, O'Neill focuses on the clashes between family members. However, it is the Puritan society and its inhibilitions on the society that form the reason beneath such conflicts. Although the Puritan inhibitions in the characters and the oedipal relation between the parents and the children seem to be on the foreground in "Mourning Becomes Electra", the main problem is the pathological self formations of the characters due to the problematic object relations and the way such a pathological formation determines how their past imprisons their present and future. In the trilogy, O'Neill seems to place psychological fate in the Puritan environment. Besides, he constructs a family structure with a strong resemblance to that in the house of Atreus. In his "Working Notes", he expresses this resemblance as following:

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

In "Mourning Becomes Electra", Ezra Mannon, a colonel who has just returned from the American Civil War is in the place of Agamemnon; Christine Mannon, his wife, is Clytemnestra; their children, Lavinia and Orin, are Electra and Orestes, respectively. Captain Adam Brant, the lover of Christine, bears some resemblances to Aegistus but there are significant differences between two. While Aegisthus is Agamemnon's brother, Captain Adam Brant is the son of Ezra's brother who Abe Mannon, their father, put out of the house because of his affair with a nurse, Captain Brant's mother. Abe Mannon then demolishes the house and builds a new one with the hope that past will be forgotten and the Mannons will have a "pure" life again. Yet, the description of the house at the beginning of each act throughout the trilogy gives the impression that the weight and burden of past are on the new house now. Christine's words of hatred on the Mannon house are no doubt the clearest expression of both the Mannon house and the curse on it:

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

In the first play, "Homecoming", the reader is introduced into the strange impression of Christine and Lavinia through the conversation between Seth Beckwith, their gardener, and the townspeople; this conversation

can be considered as an indication that the strange, dead, cursed house has already occupied the lives of the Mannons. O'Neill's description of Christine's face as one who gives the strange impression of "being not living flesh but a wonderfully life-like mask, in which only the deep-set eyes, of a dark-violet blue, are alive" (O'Neill, 1959, p.230) shows how similar the Mannons and the house are in terms of being *non-living*. Such impression leads townspeople to think there is a secret the Mannons and the house want to keep. Though they are not entirely wrong, it should be noted that there are certain differences between Christine's and Lavinia's perception of the house and its unknown or unthought secret. While Christine defines the Mannon house as a sepulcher, a place which kills her, Lavinia call it home and feels that it is the only place where she is at ease. Starting from their entirely different perceptions and reactions, O'Neill starts giving the signs of strong hatred between the mother and the daughter. Later, Lavinia's response to Peter's marriage proposal strengthens this impression. She rejects the proposal for two reasons: her hatred of love and her opinion that her father, Ezra, needs her more than anyone else in the world. Both reasons hint the complex oedipal conflicts of Lavinia and raise the question whether she is an innocent victim of love and hatred in the Mannon house or she is an *evil* person jealous of her mother and willing to take her place.

This question can be answered from two perspectives: On the one hand, she has internalized the Puritan heritage the Puritan heritage of the Mannon house and transferred the destructive effects and condemnation of Puritanism on love and marital adjustments to her mother in order to prevent her happiness; on the other hand, she is herself a victim of Puritan poisoning of love. In the last play, "The Haunted", her efforts to leave the Mannon identity behind and to become alive and happy are prevented by her brother, Orin, who represents the Puritan conscience. While her being a victim or not is debatable, one can say Orin is surely the victim of the Oedipus complex when the whole trilogy is considered because Christine focused all her attention and love on him and he unconsciously accepted the role of being both a son and a husband for his mother. In the case of Lavinia, it is not possible to talk about such a clear obligation. Her oedipal conflict arises from his hatred towards her mother or vice versa, but not Ezra's demand from her to become his wife. However, it should be noted that Ezra's condensation of his love, which Christine rejects, on Lavinia may have strengthened her feeling of hatred and rivalry. Still, it will be too reductive to label Lavinia as a strict Puritan maiden full of hatred and revenge. It is seen especially in the last play that she becomes the victim of all she represents as well of the oedipal conflict which she cannot overcome. At this stage, it will be meaningful to question what makes the oedipal process so traumatic and how oedipal conflicts of both Orin and Lavinia inflict them with the curse of the Mannon house.

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

In her essay, "Psychological Fate in Mourning Becomes Electra" (1953), Doris M. Alexander argues that O'Neill uses a non-Freudian version of the Oedipus complex as the force determining much of the family love and hate in the Mannons and adds that "[a]ll of the main characters in the play love the parent of the opposite sex, hate the parent of the same sex, or in the case of parents, love the child of the opposite sex, hate the child of the same sex" (p.927). In their fate, the history of jealousy, hatred, and murder starts with the grandfather, Abe Mannon. As Joseph P. O'Neill points out all the Mannons, including Abe Mannon, are "*able* to

meet and conquer the hard realities of life except life itself" (1963, p.489). In this respect, it can be argued that their search for pure and innocent love, prevented by pathological self formation structures, is what brings the curse inevitable for all the family members no matter how hard they try to escape from. The continuous need for love and desire and the dissatisfaction due to their not being met not only bring the hatred among the characters but the hatred against life as well.

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

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

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

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

When the first play, "Homecoming", is taken into attention in this respect, it becomes possible to evaluate the unhappy marriage of Ezra Mannon and Christine Mannon in terms of their unsuccessful oedipal process, especially the femininity-phase. Since the feelings of love and hatred enter into the relation between men and women as a determining factor, it can be claimed that what makes their marriage unhappy is the formative object relations besides the Puritan inhibitions and condemnation on love. Klein mentions that a satisfactory and stable relation in a couple implies "a deep attachment, a capacity for mutual sacrifice, a sharing in grief as well as in pleasure, in interests as well as in sexual enjoyment" (1937, p.313). So, it is striking that the Puritan inhibitions on Ezra and Christine remain secondary when their relation is analyzed from a Kleinian perspective.

Upon his return from the war, Ezra seems ready to restore what he has missed all his life. Despite the disagreement of Christine, he sees his life before the war as a failure in which he counts death over life and he wishes to leave the Mannon way of thinking and of being a person *not loved by any one* behind; yet, his efforts to start over his life end in disappointment. He hopes to set both Christine and himself free after explaining how sad he is because of Christine's fondness on Orin and how this condition has led him to focus all his love on Lavinia and hatred on Orin. However, this does not help attaining Christine's love and a happy marriage.

Towards the end of the last act of "Homecoming", his words can be seen as carrying a quality of a confession: "This house is not my house! This is not my room nor my bed. They are empty—waiting for someone to move in! And you are not my wife! You are waiting for something!" (O'Neill, 1959, 274). He feels himself defeated once more as he senses there is someone other than Orin.

What Christine waits for is Ezra's death and she reaches her desire after she has confessed her relation with Captain Brant and murdered her husband. However, it should be noted that this death is the *actual* one and Ezra's death has occurred before in the metaphorical sense. From a theoretical perspective, his chance to restore his *unsuccessful* relation with mother by obtaining a satisfactory one with his wife is missed as he cannot replace Christine's love for that of his mother which he has never felt sufficient. Therefore, he never feels as a grown-up and equal to his original rival, the father, due to being unable to possess his wife's love and appreciation. Finally, his death completes his symbolic death in terms of his not having the chance to become a happy individual by losing the love he needs and desires in the rivalry with Adam Brant.

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

The death of Ezra Mannon carries different meanings for each member of the family. While Christine and Orin feel themselves set free and become alive, Lavinia feels herself abandoned by her only love object, Ezra. Her way of taking his death seems as if she lost everything except for her feeling of revenge from her mother. When her condition is analyzed from the perspective of the theory of conflict, it is seen that her aggression leads her to think the mother, which she unconsciously imagines to be a murderess as harsh as her own destructive instinct, a *real* murderess. Because of Christine's infidelity to her husband, Lavinia's sole love object, Lavinia justifies her hatred against the mother and gets rid of the fear that her aggression will annihilate the maternal giver at the center of deep sensual care; she no longer thinks in a conscious way whether Christine deserves such annihilation or not. The rules of the Puritan society as well as the requirements of being a Mannon justifies her feelings of revenge and hatred in her mind; yet, her need for mourning is not met by either revenge or hatred.

What she mourns after her father's death is not only the loss of her love object but that of the possibility of reconciliation with the maternal giver, Christine, despite the negative mother-daughter relation among them. This can be considered as the major factor that increases her destructive impulses towards the mother and her jealousy because of the strong, close bond between Christine and Orin. Though she devalues her mother because of the reasons already mentioned, the loss of love she sees as stolen from her imprisons her in the oedipal curse. It is almost impossible to free herself from this curse as she does not have the capacity to make a replacement for her love towards her father and brother under this condition. Since she is in a strong need for love and care from Christine, the first object for her, which she has not been able to obtain under any condition, she cannot gain a true inner comfort and she finds herself imprisoned in the oedipal curse: "The unconscious mind of children very often corresponds to the mother's unconscious mind, and whether or not they make much of this store of love prepared for them, they often gain great support and comfort through the knowledge that this love exists" (Klein, 1937, p.320).

In the healthy development of personality, some love for parents is preserved while love for other objects is added in time. Such a diffusion of love lessens the burden of the oedipal conflict for children. Due to

the unsuccessful development of this process, both Lavinia and Orin lack such a capacity. As opposed to Lavinia feeling herself lost and drown in the feeling of revenge, Orin feels a hidden happiness and satisfaction after his father's death. In addition to this opposition, the relation between Lavinia and Orin does not satisfy either of them. In Kleinian view, the healthy relations between brothers and sisters help them detach from parents and form a new type of relation that will provide them the means to overcome their emotional conflicts in an easier way. In the case of Lavinia and Orin, it is realized that the relation between them is determined by the Oedipus complex so has become increasingly pathological.

Lavinia's relation to her mother is determined just at the beginning her life, indeed. When she learns she was born of Christine's disgust for her father, Ezra, she believes "[i]t is only right [she] should hate her" (O'Neill, 1959, 249). From this moment onwards, she does all she can in order to take revenge from her mother for love she has stolen from her. Interestingly, Christine accuses her daughter of stealing the love she deserves from her as well. In their dialogue where Christine confesses she has fallen in love with Adam Brant, and it is the lack of love that leads her into adultery, it is observed that both mother and daughter suffer from the same conflict:

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

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

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

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

Lavinia thinks that a new life will start after she takes revenge from her mother by the help of Orin and she will become both the mother and lover of Orin. However, the murder of Adam Brant by Orin leads Christine into committing suicide and this becomes "the expressions of the chief doom of the Mannons, their fated

frustration in love" as Doris M. Alexander notes 1953, 933). After Orin kills Brant he realizes the physical resemblance among him, his father, and Ezra and attracts Lavinia's attention to this point: "Do you remember me telling you how the faces of the men I killed came back and changed to Father's face and finally became my own. (*He smiles grimly*) He looks like me, too! Maybe I've committed suicide!" (O'Neill, 1959, 322). This time Lavinia seems to lose Orin forever; it is no longer Christine whom she has to fight against but the metaphorically dead Orin and the haunting past full of death, hatred and guilt.

The Past Haunts the Present and Becomes the Future

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

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

The liveliness of Lavinia in opposition to the lifelessness of Orin and Lavinia's consideration of her mother's suicide as an act of justice in opposition to Orin's sense of guilt are the dominant dichotomies determining the structure of "The Haunted". While Lavinia tries to leave her Mannon identity behind and she thinks she has achieved this until the end of the play, Orin imprisons himself into the darkness in the daylight.

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

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

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

At a first glance, these words seem to be expressed with the concerned of protecting Peter and Hazel. This protection, which is Orin's revenge from Lavinia at the same time, can be related to Orin's feeling of unmourned sense of guilt. The obstacles to love come from "unmourned guilt, spoiled and devalued internal objects with envy, and disowned aggressive objects that constantly reinvaded one's internal world when guilt

could not be tolerated and mourned" (Kavalier-Adler, 1993, p. 190). In the Kleinian theory, love, guilt and aggression are primarily connected with the original maternal giver. In the case of Orin, Lavinia becomes the target of both love and aggression. Though he feels the need for love, he has the tendency to destruct Lavinia just like an infant in the paranoid-schizoid position. While he mentions that Lavinia is all he has in the world at the moment, he expresses his way to punish his sister in a very harsh way: He will become the prison Lavinia is chained to. His starting to write "a true history of all the family crimes" and his definition of Lavinia as the most interesting criminal among them because "so many strange hidden things out of the Mannon past combine in [her]" (O'Neill, 1959, p.354) turns his punishment into torture for her and strengthens her will to throw out past. While Klein argues that the "paranoid-schizoid" and "depressive" positions are alternating, Orin's paranoid-schizoid mentality is very strong as he sees his mother's suicide not as an act of justice but as a consequence of Lavinia's jealousy. The only alternation into depressive position in Orin's case does not occur with the instinct to restore love but with the will to annihilate himself and indirectly Lavinia, which results in his committing suicide.

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

It can be argued that both Orin's and Lavinia's defense mechanisms are indeed related to their unmourned grief their most important, perhaps their only, love objects—Christine for Orin and Ezra for Lavinia. Therefore, they are stuck either in the paranoid-schizoid position and the following depression position or in the manic defense mainly composed of denial. Even after the death of the parents, the children are still bound by the parent figures internalized in a strong way. Since they cannot get rid of these internalized images, it becomes impossible to free themselves from past. Besides, Lavinia's recovery from the manic denial process and Orin's recovery from the paranoid-schizoid process fail and result in Lavinia's fall into depression and Orin's suicide. Despite being a failure, Orin's act of committing suicide is indeed the most self-destructive way he uses in order to take revenge from his sister. On Lavinia's opposition against going to the police and confessing the murder, he clears expresses his anger: "You'll find Lavinia Mannon harder to break than me! You'll have to haunt and hound her for a lifetime!" (O'Neill, 1959, p.365). That is the exact moment Lavinia wishes for his death keeping the hope that she can start a new life without the shadow of the dead Mannons. Although she claims that "she will live in spite of the Mannons" and "she is no more a Mannon", she realizes and accepts her fate when she calls Peter as Adam just at the moment she is trying to convince him that their love will drive the dead away no matter what happens. From this tongue-slip on, it is seen that Lavinia passes from the manic denial phase to the paranoid-schizoid position once more. She understands that she is Christine Mannon's daughter after all and has the same object of desires of her; thus, she feels the obligation to punish herself since she has turned into

Christine and she is the last Mannon carrying the family curse. As she thinks it is the harshest punishment to chain herself to the Mannons, she imprisons herself in the Mannons house to loneliness and all dead Mannons: "Living alone her with the dead is a worse act of justice than death or prison!" (O'Neill, 1959, p.376).

CONCLUSION

Except Lavinia, all characters face physical death mostly because of their inability to cope with their present haunted by the previous generations. While gods are "ready recipients of what Kleinians call projective identification in classical tragedy (Alford, 1993, p.7), each generation since Abe Mannon becomes the recipient of the next one in O'Neill's trilogy. Due to the strong oedipal conflicts between the parents and the children, each side seems to be fated to end in the destructive paranoid-schizoid position. The destructive instincts are so strong in each character that it becomes impossible for them to reach a unity of self at ease with itself. Although Lavinia fights against her unconscious sense of guilt to the last moment by insisting that Adam's death and Christine's suicide are *justice*, her wall of defense mechanisms collapse after Orin's suicide.

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

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, D. M. (1953). Psychological Fate in Mourning Becomes Electra. *PMLA.* 68(5). 923-934

Alfrod, C. F. (1993). Greek Tragedy, Confusion, and Melanie Klein: or, Is There an Oresteia Complex? American Imago. 50(1). 1-27.

Clark, B. H. (Ed.). (1947). European Theories of the Drama: With a Supplement on the American Drama. New York: Crown Publishers.

Gatta Jr., J. (1979). American Subject: Moral History as Tragedy in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill. 6(2). 227-239.

Jacobs, Amber. (2007). The Potential Theory: Melanie Klein, Luce Irigaray, and the Mother-Daughter Relationship. Hypatia. 22(3). 175-193.

Kavaler-Adler, S. (1993). The Conflict and Process Theory of Melanie Klein. American Journal of Psychoanalysis. 53(3). 187-204.

Kenny, Robert Walde (2006). The Phenomenology of the disaster. Philosophy and Rhetoric. 39(2). 97-124.

Kernberg, Otto. (2004). *Object-Relations Theory and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Klein, M. (1928). Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict. New York: The Free Press. 186-198.

---. (1937). Love, Guilt and Reparation. *Love, Guilt and Reparation*. New York: The Free Press. 306-343.

Manheim, Michael. (2000). O'Neill Faces His Ghosts. Resources for American Literary Study. 26(1). 90-95.

Moorton Jr., Richard F. (1989). The Author as Oedipus in Mourning Becomes Electra and Long Day's Journey into Night. Papers on Language and Literature. 25(3).304-325.

O'Neill, E. (1959). *Three Plays: Desire Under the Elms; Strange Interlude; Mourning Becomes Electra*. USA: Vintage Books. (The trilogy "Mourning Becomes Electra" is dated 1931)

O'Neill, S.J, J. (1963). The Tragic Theory of Eugene O'Neill. Texas Studies in Literature and Language. 4(4). 481-496.

Perlow, Meir. (1995). *Understanding Mental Objects*. New York: Routledge.

Smith, Henry F. (2009). The Past is Present, isn't it?. Leticia Glocer Fiorini and Jorge, Canestri (Eds). The Experience of Time: Psychoanalytic Perspectives. (xv-xxii). London: Karnac Books.