The Treatment of Myth in Modern Drama (1923-1950):

Towards a Typology of Methods

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Between the years 1923 and 1950, a great number of plays employed myth as subject matter or theme. The thesis examines this phenomenon in relation: a) to the modernist movement and its fascination with myth and mythological motifs, b) in relation to the efforts of modernist artists to find means appropriate to non-naturalistic modes of expression.

Criticism up to now has surveyed myth-plays focusing on the thematic and ideological treatment of myths (psychoanalytic, religious, political, etc). This thesis proposes a new approach to this issue: it concentrates on techniques of incorporating myth in the structure of a play and on how myth functions within and through it. It identifies three prevailing techniques as methods. These methods form exclusive categories within the period under discussion. Therefore, plays are grouped according to method in order to explore a series of different dramaturgical strategies.

Each of the three methods itself reflects a self-conscious attitude towards myth. Therefore, the thesis does not limit itself merely to investigating methods of incorporating myths into dramatic structures. It also examines the ideological sub-stratum of those attitudes as they determine the discourses developed.

Table of Contents

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To Theodoros

1. Introduction

In 1986, an issue of *Modern Drama* published a checklist of twentieth-century plays with Greek myths as subject matter or theme. The list was far from being conclusive, the editor warned; still, it reached a total of over seven hundred and forty plays, more than half of them written in the period between the two wars.[1] The reappearance of myths in the first part of the twentieth century occurred not only in drama but in all forms of artistic creation; and although drama is the genre that had always been closely associated with Greek mythology, the new techniques of myth-handling first emerged in fiction and in poetry.

It is difficult to grasp the extent of this enormous fascination, the results of which oscillate from unimaginative adaptations of the Greek classics, to 'fashionable gimmick'[2], to genuine innovation. James Joyce vividly described the atmosphere of the early Twenties in Paris: '*Odyssey* very much in the air here. Anatole France is writing *Le Cyclope*, G. Faure, the musician, an opera *Penelope*, Giraudoux has written *Elpénor*... Guillaume Apollinaire *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*... Madame Circe advances regally toward her completion.'[3] Thomas Mann reflecting on the phenomenon observed: 'As for that "return" of the European spirit to the highest, to the mythical realities... it is, from a cultural point of view, a truly good thing...'[4] A number of scholars have argued that the recourse to myth is one of the distinctive features of the modernist movement[5] while others maintain that, despite the prolific use, there are no genuinely original attitudes to myth in those years.[6]

One is in danger of stating the obvious when calling to mind the fact that the era of Modernism is not the only one that dealt extensively with myths. From the Renaissance onwards, myths abound in every form of artistic expression, constantly serving as a source of inspiration. The French and German neo-classical drama, with Racine, Corneille, Goethe and Kleist, the Parnassian, the Romantic and the Symbolist movements appropriated plots, locale, iconography and all sorts of material from Greek mythology. Post-modernism as well has displayed a genuine concern for myths as the work of Heiner Müller, Howard Barker, Timberlake Wertenbaker and others testifies. In this respect, it might seem an exaggeration to connect myth so exclusively with Modernism. Behind such claims, however, the implied question of why myths appear over and over again and how they relate to each historical period retains its

topicality. Karl Marx posed this very question over a hundred years ago[7] and the question of accounting for the fascination and authority primitive myths exercise on Western thought and creativity still remains. The question forms part of the discourse developed in the Marxist theory of culture, in the theories of Freud and Jung, Northorp Frye, Lévi-Strauss, A. J. Greimas and Roland Barthes, as well as of thinkers and scholars who have compiled a voluminous literature on the subject: Why the recurrence of myths and why, in particular, should myths become so vital for twentieth-century thought and art?

Towards the last decades of the nineteenth century the predominant modes of Realism and subsequently of Naturalism drew their material from the experiences of everyday life and myths ceased to be the privileged theme of writers, poets and dramatists. Between 1840-1895, the new sciences of Comparative and Anthropological Mythology systematically aligned myth with rationality. They attempted to explain 'the barbaric and absurd stories concerning the beginnings of things, the origin of mankind'.[8] Myths were seen as 'fantasies' which were 'foolish or disgustingly immoral'[9] as products of barbarians that 'do not yet speak the language of reason'.[10] They were 'an unconscious product of language of which man is always the dupe and never the originator'.[11] Thus, 'mythology this scourge of Antiquity, is, as a matter of fact, a disease of language'.[12] The positivistic and scientifically rationalistic spirit based on empirical observation prevailed and seemed to be at odds with the dynamic reappearance of myth/s that had already occurred by the turn of the new century.

One could wonder why writers renowned for their modernity and their rejection of the past turned so persistently to myth. Why would a century orientated towards analytic modes of thought, self-conscious intellectualism and aestheticism, multiplied ideologies and sophisticated discourse 'return' to myth? Modernism is not only the era of highly intellectualised discourse and astounding scientific achievement; it is also one of violent political, social and cultural upheavals, revolutions and counter-revolutions, metaphysical absence, the unlocking of the human psyche and conscious antithesis to some, at least, aspects of the positivistic spirit of the second half of the nineteenth century. As 'the world was falling apart, the centre cannot hold'[13] the deep rift created in the established continuities of Western culture was expressed in a double-fold movement: scientific and technological achievement that raced ahead of man's ability to cope with their consequences and

recourse to the roots of human imagination, thought and creativity – with myths as their ultimate expression. Modernism is not the only era that dealt prolifically with myth; yet, it *is* one inextricably aligned with myth. It was the unsettling zeitgeist of the early twentieth century that accounted not only for some new *usages* of mythology but also for making myth a dynamic component of scientific disciplines, of politics and art – finally an integral part of how the modern mind perceived the world.

The turn of the twentieth century saw the publication of two seminal works: James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.[14] Frazer focused on the kinship and universality of certain myths. His followers, the Cambridge School of Anthropology, traced common elements found in various mythologies as well as common ritualistic patterns that underlie Greek tragedy and comedy and survive in modern cultures. Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1901[15] was a historical landmark. Inaugurating a tradition that aligned myth with the workings of the human unconscious, Freud saw the exemplary manifestations of instinctual drives repressed in the unconscious and the germs of dream material in Greek myths. For Freud, myths are the products of infantile psychological stages in the life of man. Carl Jung's theory differentiated itself from Freud's, shifting emphasis from the private domain of the unconscious to that of the 'collective unconscious', which is universal and identical to all mankind, irrespective to individual cultures. Jung made the fundamental distinction between myth and some primordial, isolated images – figures actually (the daemon, the animus and anima, the shadow, the wise man, etc.) found in myths. Jung called these images archetypes.[16] Described as psychological fixations rather than repressions, the archetypes take us back to our sacred origins. These primordial images constantly recur in the course of history and appear whenever creative fantasy is freely expressed. As images springing from the 'colletive unconscious', they are timeless and a-historical, adjustable to present language through art. The artist then is the mediator between reality and the beginnings of life, which are both mysterious and sacred.

Jung was the first to postulate a relation between myth and literature and the one who attempted to impose a kind of hermeneutics on myth and literary studies. His followers, Ernst Cassirer and Susanne Langer focused on the origins of myths. Cassirer demonstrated that beneath myth and language there is an unconscious 'grammar' of experience whose categories are not those of rational thought and which

constitute the basis of world culture; the so-called myth-critics, such as Maud Bodkin, Richard Chase, Joseph Campbell, and Northrop Frye applied the Jungian theory of the archetype in literary criticism. Frye's approach to literary texts exercised considerable influence on literary criticism in the Fifties.[17] He saw literature as a 'displaced mythology' and the archetypes as recurrent mythic motifs or formulas which create basic albeit loose plot patterns in literature. Frye argued that myth is 'an abstract or purely literary world of fictional and thematic design, unaffected by canons of plausible adaptation to familiar experience.'[18]

With 'The Structural Study of Myth' (originally published in French in 1958), Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-94) gave a new twist to the science of mythology and excercised a deep influence on the development of structural poetics. Based on Saussure's linguistic model, he treated myths as systems of signs. Myth, Lévi-Strauss argues, is a language of superior reason: 'they [myths] exhibit more complex features beside those which are found in any kind of linguistic expression.' Myths are stories that exist from the beginnings of time; they are of a specific, discernible structure, which is described as a binary code. Myths combine the two fundamental dimensions of language: synchrony and diachrony. As language, myths are consisted of 'constituent units' (mythemes), which, like the sound units of language (phonemes), acquire meaning only when they are conbined 'in bundles of relations and it is only as bundles that... can be put to use and produce a meaning.'[19] In his renown analysis of the Oedipus myth, Lévi-Strauss shows that the basic structure which underlies every myth is one of a four-term homology, correlating one pair of opposed mythemes with another. The semantic units (mythemes) do not themselves possess an a-priori meaning; the meaning each time the semantic units acquire is built onto each other and can be re-arranged so that new paradigms emerge. The syntagmatic order is something given by the surface structure of a (any) myth; in fact, it is a means of establishing the paradigmatic order. Lévi-Strauss argues that the plot of a myth can be only understood as a paradigm within a series of similar mythical sequences.

A myth is always a transformation of other myths since myths are never improvised ex nihilo: they are based on what storytellers have already heard from others. These transformations are not random deviations from one narrative to another but follow specific transformational processes. Therefore, Lévi-Strauss argues, each myth should not be analysed separately but only as part of a group of related myths. Myth consists of all its various versions. The rules governing the

relations among the semantic units and among the various groups of myths are inherent in the human mind itself. Myth reflects the intellectual processes through which the human mind attempts to interpret the world. Myths survive through repetition. They deteriorate in transition and become 'impoverished and confused': they appear as a mere plot and gradually fade away. The 'dénouement' or 'fall' of mythical thought in the contemporary world is a manifestation of human entropy, physical *and* intellectual.[20]

A. J. Greimas' theory of 'elementary semantic structure' bears strong resemblances to Lévi-Strauss' theory of semantic units (the mythemes). Greimas' elementary units are structures in which two contraries are correlated with their contradictories.[22] Greimas deviates from Lévi-Strauss in that he questions the priority of the paradigmatic order over the syntagmatic and puts equal emphasis on both, whether in relation to meaning or temporal organization. In contrast to Lévi-Strauss, Greimas sees the relation to time of both the syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures as being the same but 'inverse'.[21] Thus, the elementary structure is expressed on both axes of a narrative: 'in the syntagmatic structure as an opposition between an initial state and a final state; in the paragigmatic structure as a thematic situation or problem which is inverted or resolved at the end of the narrative.'[22] Greimas speaks of 'surface narrative structures' (syntagmatic) and introduces the term 'deep narrative structures' (paradigmatic). Deep narrative structures are not in themselves narrative. Greimas writes:

> The distinction made by Lévi-Strauss, since his first study dedicated to myth, between an apparent signification of the myth, revealed in the textual narrative, and its deep meaning, paradigmatic and achronic, implies the same assumptions... We therefore decided to give to the structure evolved by Lévi-Strauss the status of deep narrative structure, capable in the process of syntagmatisation, of generating a surface narrative structure... one can say that the application of several simple logical operations on a model of the Lévistraussian type allows one to construct a deep narrative syntax situated at an abstract level which regulates the behaviour of the elementary units. This logical syntax controls in its turn a surface narrative syntax which we characterise as anthropological...[23]

The classicist Jean-Pierre Vernant in his interpretations of Greek myths follows the structuralist model of surface and deep narrative structures and introduces a third stage in his analysis: the ideological or cultural analysis which permits the placing of myths within their proper social context. Vernant's is a three-stage approach based on the syntagmatic, paradigmatic *and* ideological analysis of myth/s.[24]

Despite their different approaches, thinkers like Mircea Eliade, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes agree that myth is irrevocably cut off from the realities of contemporary societies.[25] Roland Barthes (1915-80), in particular, shows no interest in primitive myths. Having lost its ideological and cultural significance, myth disappears. Barthes discusses the concept of myth and its exploitation in the context of contemporary mass culture. In *Mythologies*, (1957) Barthes explores the constituents and codes of the sign-systems in a number of 'bourgeois myths'. He claims that myth has become social language, a discourse abiding by the stereotypes of contemporary rituals such as politics, advertising, women's fashion and sports. In contrast to primitive myth, contemporary myth is not expressed in extended, fixed narratives but in 'discourses': it is *phraseology* of stereotypes. In 'Myth Today' (*Mythologies*), Barthes focuses on the de-politicisation of myth and its subsequent appropriation by the cultural, political and social establishment which, in turn, re-politicises myth and uses it as a tool for its own political and ideological purposes. Thus the disjointed phraseology of stereotypes becomes a new *language* of ideological and cultural expediency. In the absence of myth proper, Barthes insists on the significance of the mythopoetic imagination as a primary source of power for myth, mythicity and literature.[26]

Since Barthes' *Mythologies*, Marxist and cultural studies have aligned myth with ideology to a degree that the two terms are almost 'interchangeable.'[27] According to a recent definition, myth is 'ideology in narrative form.'[28] In this line of thought, myth is not necessarily seen as a narrative that exists from the oldest of times but rather as a product of our own modern societies – a narrative that organises the values of its epoch. Such approaches have had a great impact on the study of myths. Even classicists (Jean-Pierre Vernant and Marcel Detienne are two notable cases) emphasise the relation of myth to ideology.

Whether psychoanalytic, structuralist or poststructuralist, all aspects of modern theory on myth are relevant to literary studies and all theories of modern poetics have been applied to mythological narratives. Most of the theories on myth that appeared in the twentieth century survive today and have been fruitfully enriched by the insights of recent theory. As Eric Csapo notes in his recent *Theories of Mythology*, the science of mythology appears to have established a 'dialogue' between older and more recent theory that 'has made possible the current fashion for theoretical eclecticism.'[29]

The modernist artist seems to be constantly aware of the fact that myth is the rationalisation of a primordial mode of sensing the things and the cosmos; as such, its use could be but a complex and self-conscious enterprise, well justified within and relevant to the context of the present culture. As modern scientific disciplines 'use' myth as a tool, so writers are 'using myths, rarely creating them.'[30] Myths are approached in a characteristically modernist disposition – now seriously then subversively if not, irreverently. They are doubted or parodied, even aggressively attacked; they become pretexts for anti-mythic deflation or for rejecting the sordid present. They offer the benefit of an authoritative and universally well-known story capable of accommodating themes that are both diachronic and trivial. Their broad design and malleable, elemental story neither censor nor publicise. Myths are treated as a means of revealing and concealing, as a religious or political parable, as a camouflage for political and anti-establishment attacks.

The awareness of the new, destabilising realities was simultaneously manifested in the pursuit of a new myth, a social code or an ideology that could serve as a common background, a plausible base for creative writing. The German novelist Herman Bloch astutely noted that the impressive recourse to myth was 'a return to myth in its ancient forms and so far it is not a new myth, not *the* new myth.'[31] It has been argued that 'the creation of "new myth" is frustrated... by the return to traditional myth-material.'[32] John White remarks that myths or mythological motifs in literature do not necessarily 'create or resuscitate myth.'[33] Such statements are indicative of arguments surrounding the use of myths in literature but, first and foremost, of the implicit need for the creation of a 'new myth' in the era. For quite a long time, Freudianism, Marxism and the proletariat served as the new myths, the master narratives of this part of the century, inspiring artists in their approaches to

mythological material or leading them to various forms of engagement, as is the case with Yeats, Hesse, Eliot and Brecht.

The concept of myth is extended beyond that of the primitive narrative and encompasses old and new myths. The work of Faulkner, or Kafka has been called 'mythical' in the sense that it constructs the idiosyncratic landscapes of an almost private mythology without resorting to mythological material for theme or subject matter. One can hardly fail to notice, however, that by using myths or mythological motifs, artists such as Joyce in *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*, Eliot in *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets,* or O'Neill in *The Iceman Cometh* seem to enter a kind of 'mythic logic' offering what Eric Gould (when referring to Joyce, and Eliot's poetry) calls 'homologies for mythic thought.'[34] This is, indeed, a very interesting way of describing the processes of a number of modernist writers who managed to coexist with and master an authoritative material such as myth/s, by achieving a substantial and intrinsic feedback between myth/s and modern artefact; they re-invent myth and mythicity, not by merely using myth, but by producing works capable of 'operating as myth themselves'.[35]

The recourse to myth/s should also be associated with the efforts of the modernist artist to find new expressive means that would delve beneath the surface of familiar reality and 'break away from familiar functions of language and conventions of form.'[36] Myths themselves are non-realistic material. Their suggestive, evocative, and imagistic quality lured writers into experiments with spatiotemporal unity and linear development of narrative. In fact, the wide variety of ways in which myth is employed in fiction is suggestive of the interrelations between myth and broader experimentations. Under the seminal impact of Nietzsche, Fraser, Freud, and Jung, the modernist mind turned to myths not simply to explore them in the light of the new gospels but also to employ them as readily available references and symbols that would be appropriate to non-realistic, non-representational modes of expression.

The new modes of myth-handling appeared first in the novel. James Joyce's work is the milestone anyone would point to. In *Ulysses,* Joyce employed Homer's *Odyssey* as an underlying pattern of systematic and detailed analogy to the contemporary narrative.[37] Locating the action in modern Dublin, Joyce keeps the myth of Odysseus in view without actually employing it in his novel. Through its subtle exchange of myth and contemporaneity, *Ulysses* offered a model for others. Eliot followed shortly with *The Waste Land,*[38] implicating a number of primitive

myths in direct juxtaposition and confrontation with each other. Both works are indicative of techniques that focus on inscribing myth within the structures of a modern literary piece rather than on the thematic treatment or re-working of mythological material, as was the case in previous practices. The idea of employing myths as an underlying pattern or as a scaffold for arranging the material of a modern narrative or as part of the rhetoric of fiction is a modernist innovation that stems from Joyce's masterpiece. However, Eliot himself points to W. B. Yeats who, expressing his extraordinary visions in his poetry and dramas, 'adumbrated' such techniques.[39] It has been claimed that in *Death in Venice*, (1913) Thomas Mann was the first to draw upon the Nietzschean concept of the Apollonian-Dionysian myth in a similar fashion, long before *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*.[40] One also has to take into account, Jean Giraudoux's novella *Elpénor*.[41] Published in Paris in 1919, it differs considerably from both Joyce's and Eliot's models and greatly impressed French writers at the time. Still, *Ulysses* is not only one of the very first works that employed such techniques; its allusions to the Homeric epic are detailed, multiple, and run throughout the novel. Neither of the above-cited writers used similar techniques in the detailed and systematic way Joyce and, subsequently, Eliot have, while the major impact of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* legitimately places Joyce and Eliot as the unwavering point of reference for the new techniques.

As to the handling of myths in the drama of the era, which is the focus of this research, it should be emphasised that drama adopted only a few of the new techniques with myth/s that appeared in fiction. As the medium that addresses a collective, drama is always slower in assimilating bold experimentation. The avant-gardism of Jarry, Appolinaire and Vitrac, the Dadaists and the Surrealists startled Paris but their influence was limited. Although, Brecht and Artaud were shaping their theory and practice during those years, their contribution was widely acknowledged and their influence spread only towards the late Forties. The well-made play, boulevard, and farce reigned throughout Europe in the early part of the twentieth century while public taste was dominated by the 'canons of the past'.[42] In 1916, Ezra Pound, reviewing Joyce's *Exiles*, wondered whether drama was capable of articulating the sophisticated discourses already expressed in the novel of the era. Pound argued: 'Is the drama of today or the stage of today, a form or medium by which the best contemporary authors can express themselves in any satisfactory manner?' Pound claimed that Joyce's play needed an intelligent audience that was

nowhere to be found. 'It is a "dangerous" play' Pound decided 'precisely because the author is portraying an intellectual-emotional struggle, because he is dealing with actual thought, actual questioning, not with clichés of thought and emotion.' Concluding the review, Pound wondered: 'All this comes to saying: can the drama hold its own against the novel? Can contemporary drama be permanent? ... Must our most intelligent writers do this sort of work only in the novel, *solely in the novel*, or is it going to be, in our time, possible for them to do it in drama? ... It [drama] is a very complex art; therefore, let us try to think of its possibilities of greatness first hand...'[43]

There was a general awareness that the novel was the genre that best delineated the sensibilities and zest of the era through the revolutionary disruptions of plot and time sequences, stream-of-consciousness, fragmentation, and discontinuity. Drama followed, in an effort to adjust itself to the new realities by re-constructing some of the achievements of the novel in dramatic terms. Although novelistic techniques and other literary devices were tried by a number of French playwrights or the early Eliot and O'Neill mostly, inter-war drama was attached to the Aristotelian notion that plot is the essence of drama. Nevertheless, the general radicalism that swept through Europe was manifested in experimentations with form and moderate efforts towards looser, more flexible plot patterns that culminated in a more self-conscious and meta-theatrical drama. Disengagement from plot and character motivation are features of the post-war drama, while challenging theatre with literature is a distinctive trait of post-modernism, of artists such as Heiner Müller and Howard Barker. The modernist mind engendered issues that formed part of subsequent discourses and displayed practices or intentions towards the deconstruction or reconstruction of ancient myths. In particular, techniques of myth-handling initiated by Joyce and, most notably by Eliot in *The Waste Land*, are assimilated, filtered and have found a startling expression in post-modernist drama, especially in the texts of Müller. The inter-war era is the matrix of subsequent playwriting and much performance vocabulary.

The anti-realistic, allusive nature of myth as well as the authority it releases, urged playwrights to introduce modes of subverting realism and overcoming the restrictions imposed by the 'closed', conventional forms of naturalism. Technical resources and theatricalist effects were amply exploited to supplement the text. Pertinent to the issue of myth in this period was the concept of tragedy. Myth is

inextricably interwoven with tragedy, with patterns of tragic action and thought. For quite a few artists, this was a serious motive for dealing with myths, particularly in the face of an increasing interest in defining the essence of the tragic in modern terms. For playwrights such as O'Neill or Giraudoux, the recourse to myth was almost synonymous to recreating tragedy, while the question of what a 'modern' tragedy could be absorbed writers such as Albert Camus.[44]

Within such a cultural milieu, drama set out to re-work myths with an enormous vitality and diligence. It employed the wisdom of long-used clichés, the cunning of theatrical and theatricalist effects, levity and sobriety to play the perennial game of the 'past' and the 'present'. The fusion of contemporaneity and antiquity creates presuppositions of a multi-layered composition initiating a complex and idiosyncratic communication between the stage and the audience. Myths, more than any other material in drama, are involved in a long history of transmission and reception, and an un-prejudiced or 'innocent' gaze should be excluded from both playwrights and spectators. The spectator knows the story and carries his/her understanding of and insight into the myth into the auditorium. What does this understanding and knowledge amount to for the majority of the audience? Is it a mixture of basic classical erudition, pictures of Greek deities and heroes out of our elementary school books, a sense of a familiar territory, yet far from being intimate, hardly part of our own immediate preoccupations? Does the spectator come to the theatre to see how these ancient stories are treated nowadays, as many scholars assure us? Or, is it the residua of feelings, images, and cognition (deriving from the spectators' previous contact with myths and Greek tragedy) that create a more dynamic and critical predisposition towards the modern handling of an ancient myth? Could it be a mechanism that would 'test' – as Grotowski would put it – the re-construction of an ancient myth against the spectator's own background of feeling and thought rather than judging the new play on its own merits? Discussing this issue with fellow students, friends, and theatregoers, I have been astonished to discover that most of them have strong feelings and preconceptions – or even misconceptions – as far as myth is concerned. Some value the experience of seeing the myth re-worked or adapted into the modern context. Most admit that they prefer to see a modern play dealing with modern experience or the original tragedy itself rather than a modern play based on an old myth.

16

Criticism has expressed different views in trying to interpret the nature and role of myths in literature. Frank Kermode maintains that myth 'short-circuits the intellect and liberates the imagination which the scientism of the modern world suppresses' adding that 'the cult of it is an aspect of a great longing for primitive mentality... a complex modern primitivism.'[45] By contrast, orthodox Marxists of the communist era, saw the use of myths as escapism, a pretext to avoid 'social reality and the problems of depicting it.'[46] Of course, such comments are hardly in tune with Brecht's work, which revels in the appropriation of Shakespearean and other plots, literary myths and heroes, not to mention his adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Others noted that myths became a sort of fashion that concealed bad writing and inability to invent a new plot.[47] Myths are frequently used to create 'an object of senseless veneration to claim ... a depth of meaning it [the artefact] does not possess.'[48] One can hardly disagree with George Steiner's claim that 'the use of the classic fable toward a modern ideology requires an acute awareness of the great changes in meaning and intonation. It is this awareness, which is so often lacking in the modern play.'[49]

Raymond Williams deals with the use of myth in drama. Williams focuses on the immanent obstacles of having to deal with a powerful and well-known story. 'There is often,' he observes, 'a critical difficulty in that we...cannot criticise it [the play] through myth; each play's action stands in its own right. But then, at the same time, the action has to justify itself in its own right. Where it fails to do so, no defence is available by pointing to the myth.'[50] Williams' comments, however, seem to refer to the ideal situation rather than the actual one. No one would argue that the subject matter or theme is responsible for a play's inadequacies or failure; yet, myths are – and probably should be – seen as an almost separate category of dramatic material, apparently by Williams himself since he dedicates a special chapter on 'Plays and Myths' in one of his books on modern drama.[51] H. G. McIntyre draws attention to the fact that mythological drama works on two levels:

> the myth-in-the-making – that is, the familiar story as it is retold...
> while there is ever-present the idea of the finished story as a completed
> whole, that entity which we call "the Antigone myth" or "the Medea
> story" and so forth. As we watch the play unfold we witness the
> gradual convergence of these two levels as each action or event is

woven into the completed pattern.... It re-creates in the theatre that constant oscillation from the particular to general, from fragment to completed pattern which characterizes life itself.[52]

Again, the question would be whether or how this 'convergence' or 'oscillation' is achieved, if, indeed, this is the objective pursued by the playwright.

An authoritative and universally well-known story, heavily charged by ages of previous usage, is likely to raise complex problems for both audiences and playwrights. How would such a story, especially if structured by any one of the Greek tragedians, not derail its own new version? A close reading of myth-plays – especially those of Cocteau (*La Machine Infernale*), Giraudoux (*Electre*) or Anouilh's *Antigone* – reveals the writers' efforts to safeguard the utmost originality in the handling of the story in order to avert identification with and reminiscence of former versions, to ensure an action that would stand in its own right, to subvert the audiences' pre-conceived ideas of myth(s), and to enforce a new meaning. By alternating tactics of deliberate deviation from and convergence with myth, by carefully pre-arranged plot-patterning, and by developing discursive practices carried out by means of highly regulated dramatic and literary devices, playwrights strive to control their mythological material and, simultaneously, guide the spectator's attention to new focuses of emphasis. Eliot (*The Family Reunion*) and O'Neill (*Mourning Becomes Electra*) introduce techniques of parallelism and allusion to avoid the encasement of the modern plot within the mythological plot. In either case, it is the particularity of the situation presented when having to cope with an authoritative and universally known story that initiates subtle strategies of treatment and builds up idiosyncratic tensions between stage and audience. Techniques and strategies do, indeed, play a very crucial role in this case.

Criticism up to the Eighties – when the examination of myth-plays seemed to be a popular subject – extensively surveyed such plays and saw the use of myths in drama as a kind of mythopoesis. It mostly concentrated on the various approaches to myths (psychoanalytic, religious, political, etc.) making use of the relevant theory and putting an overstressed emphasis on tracing similarities or differences between ancient and modern versions.[53] Scholars focused on thematic analysis and touched very superficially upon problems of technique. Interestingly, there is no bibliography

tracing techniques of myth-handling in drama nor is there one on how techniques that originated in the novel or in poetry are transferred to the drama of the era.

In contrast to such criticism, this thesis examines 'methods' of myth-handling that emerged during the inter-war period. The term 'method' is borrowed from T. S. Eliot, who, describing the function of myth in *Ulysses*, in his celebrated review '*Ulysses* Order and Myth' published in *The Dial* in 1923, spoke of a 'mythical method'. He argued that Joyce conceived a new narrative method: the 'mythical method' employs myth as an underlying structure that effectively contributes in imposing 'order' on the chaotic 'panorama of futility' that modern life is. Dispensing with the term 'mythical', I would like for the moment to concentrate on 'method'. By 'method' I mean the way a myth – Greek in this context – is technically embodied in the structure of a modern play and how it functions within and through it. 'Method' is preferred over 'technique' because the former clearly suggests patterns of handling and exposition that could serve as a model. A method usually includes a number of techniques; it aims at specific targets and establishes serious propositions about how myths can be handled in the modern era.

Concentrating on methods of myth-handling and not on myth-plays per se involves:

1. The grouping of plays according to method in order to examine a series of different dramaturgical strategies

2. Showing how the application of one method can differ from one playwright to another

3. Investigating structural and other problems that arise when a playwright sets out: to tell a modern story that is cast in the mould of an ancient Greek myth; to re-tell an ancient myth, i.e., to dramatise a myth-plot; or, use the very text of a Greek tragedy as such and make crucial interventions within the original text that reallocate the foci of meaning and alter its signification.

4. Comparing one method to the other two to illuminate the specific characteristics of each one of them and its differences from the other two.

This thesis identifies and examines three methods that made a distinct contribution to the problem of handling myths in the period under discussion.

19

1. The first method stems from the model of Joyce's *Ulysses* and Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Eventually, Eliot tried to apply the 'mythical method' in his poetic dramas. The transfer of a novelistic method from the one medium to the other and the difficulties deriving thereof will be discussed in the relevant chapters. The section on the 'Mythical Method' is separated into three chapters. The first is a description of what the 'mythical method' consists of. The second deals with the work of T. S. Eliot and the third the work of Eugene O'Neill.

2. The second method is based on the traditional model of dramatising a myth-plot. Cocteau, Giraudoux, Anouilh, and Sartre are examined in one chapter since all returned to the tradition of dramatising myth/s that originates in Greek classical drama. The old practice is imbued with a startling mixture of traditional and modernist dramatic and literary devices, sheer theatricality and aggressive attitudes towards myth.

3. The third method is represented by Bertolt Brecht's adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Using Hölderlin's translation of the eponymous tragedy, Brecht embarked on creating a new model as the Model-Book of *Antigone* explicitly indicates. By cutting and adding, by transferring the action into a Second World War milieu, and by shifting the emphasis onto the choral parts, which he extensively re-writes, Brecht modulates patterns of historicisation and Marxist dialectics, with a view to discarding both myth and tragedy.

The choice of playwrights is necessarily selective. Apart from those mentioned and on whom the thesis concentrates, there will be references to others whenever this becomes necessary for the development of the argument. 1950 (and not 1945) has been chosen as a limit because it is after the emergence of The Theatre of the Absurd, in the late Forties, that major alterations and shifts occur in drama as a result of which myths are again abandoned to re-emerge in new ways in the Eighties and even more significantly in the Nineties. The re-emergence of myths by the end of the twentieth-century and the development of the three methods in the post-modern era are issues briefly discussed in the Conclusion of the thesis.

It can be argued that such a grouping as the one proposed would leave out a number of individual techniques since inter-war drama employs myths in a wide variety of ways. To this, it will be counter-argued that *because* of this variety, it would be unnecessarily pedantic and mainly unfocused to examine each play separately according to its technique and that such an approach would present a less thorough and systematised account than the categorisation here proposed. All the more, because I maintain that individual techniques fall into the three basic categories of methods already delineated. Not all techniques are methods and not all plays with references to myths are necessarily myth-plays. Plays where the relation between content and source is purely allusive are excluded from the analysis since the scale of such plays is immense and the criteria for judging whether a myth – and which myth – is involved are extremely loose. In addition, devices of vague allusion, extraneous iconography and simile are old enough and have not changed considerably in the years between the wars.

It should be emphasised that the thesis discriminates between an entire narrative, i.e., a story (myth), and a recurrent isolated unit, whether an archetype, an image or a motif. In all the plays examined here – and irrespective of the method they employ – the presence of a myth, as an integral and coherent story (myth of Oedipus, Medea, Antigone, etc.) is absolutely central. A myth may be in the background and work as a system of analogy and correspondence to the present; these correspondences or analogies may be disguised or intentionally misleading; but as long as they manifest themselves throughout the play or at crucial stages of the action so that the thread of the story, however loose, is intelligible to the spectator, then I consider that the myth is there treated as a story.

In fact, the question of whether a myth is kept on the surface – in which case we have a more or less direct dramatisation – or is pushed to the background working in a variety of ways is of paramount importance. In the first case, as it will be shown, the playwright is interfering with the constituent parts of the myth, which means that he intends to alter the course of the prescribed events and their signification; in the second, the myth is employed as a underlying structural principle – a deep narrative structure – or as an indirect authorial comment that enhances the resonance and depth of the play and, therefore, the relation between play and myth is of a totally different nature. By focusing on such issues, it will be shown that a method itself reflects a very self-conscious and concrete attitude of the playwright towards myth. An

21

'attitude towards myth' implies a point of view, ideology and discourse. This, in turn, means that the thesis does not limit itself to investigating methods of incorporating myths into dramatic structures. It also examines the conceptual and ideological substratum of those attitudes, which, actually, dictate the discourse developed thereof.

The concern of this thesis then is neither with myth per se nor with the thematic analysis of modern myth-versions. The large number of plays and playwrights researched and their different approaches to myth raised the issue of how theories on myth should be involved. Researching how myths function in the total structure of a dramatic composition, the thesis is mostly concerned with the role of myth in literature and, particularly, in drama, not with theories on myth as such, although the survey of a theoretical background that included Frazer, Freud, Jung, Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacan and Jean-Pierre Vernant[53] was necessary homework that had to be done. I deliberately avoid committing myself to a consistent application of any one of these theories because that would distort the significance of a wide range of artistic works, each of which construes the notion of myth in a unique sense. Nevertheless, theory is implicit in my approach to the various methods while particular emphasis is placed on the cultural, political and ideological milieu that produced the discourses developed by some of the playwrights examined here.

Any attempt to write on myth, in whatever way, requires a definition of 'myth' – a difficult enterprise due to the wide use of the word in daily life and the variety of scientific approaches.

'Myth' is here understood as a primitive story. It is a coherent narrative with a beginning, a middle and an end; the relation to the supernatural, the values and the patterns of conduct myth exemplifies are shared by the entire social collective. Myth is a reconstruction of experience, of how the human mind perceives its relation to the world, to the supernatural and to other human beings. Myth consists of all its various versions.

Myths prescribe a sequence of basic events that can neither be obliterated nor can they change. The Greek tragedians dramatised a great number of myths. Because of the enormous impact of these plays, their structured plots have been concretised in our minds and we tend to identify them with the 'myth' in question. We forget that each myth appears in numerous variations and versions. We quite erroneously refer to

Sophocles' or Euripides' *Electra* as 'the myth' ignoring the fact that all three tragedians devised their own versions. Myths, as such, already appear therein as meta-myths. In practice, the identification of such structured versions with 'myth' seems to impose strictures on later playwrights and the extent of their divergence from the versions of the classics is usually guarded and cautious. On the contrary, myths which have not been dramatised by the Greeks and which exist in a number of loose plot patterns are usually treated in the modern with more freedom and inventiveness. One can only compare Cocteau's treatment of the Orpheus myth in *Orphée* with that of the Oedipus myth in *La Machine Infernale*; the same can be said of Anouilh's *Eurydice* in comparison to *Antigone*.

Here of course, the choice of the method becomes particularly important. If one dramatises a myth, i.e., chooses to create a new version of it – as the French examined here do – how do they handle the 'given' plot? If the myth is employed as an underlying pattern and never intrudes into the modern plot, can we really speak of changes to and intervention with myth? If not, why did both Eliot and O'Neill, who treated myth/s as an underlying structure, come to think that they were inhibited by the 'myth'? Does the use of mythological material prevent a playwright from creating his own mythicity? These are crucial issues, pertinent to the problems and the difficulties of handling mythological material in the modernist era and will be dealt with in relation to each playwright.

2. Joyce, Eliot and the Development of
the 'Mythical Method'

James Joyce's handling of Homer's *The Odyssey* in *Ulysses* – what T. S. Eliot famously labelled 'the mythical method' – is a genuine product of modernist sensibilities and modes of thinking. Taking into consideration that the other two methods had been used in the past, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the 'mythical method' – and its attendant techniques – is *the* modernist 'myth-method'. It is a 'method' of employing myths that others should pursue in the future, said Eliot[1] – an injunction amply realised in the forthcoming years, first and, as influentially, by Eliot himself in *The Waste Land*.

The subsequent use of the 'mythical method' in drama will be the subject of this section. This first chapter deals with the origins, the basic characteristics and the various techniques the so-called 'mythical method' involves. The following two chapters on T. S. Eliot and Eugene O' Neill examine their individual attitudes to myth and the ways each of them applied the method. Although O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* chronologically precedes the myth-plays of Eliot, I shall start with the latter; one of the great exponents of the modernist movement himself, Eliot formulated his approach to myth in *The Waste Land* and conceived the term 'mythical method' under the compelling influence of Joyce's novel.

'Method' is indeed a very strong word, suggesting new possibilities of presenting a contemporary theme or subject matter, via myth/s as well as certain principles that can replace a (any) narrative/dramatic method. There is no comprehensive study as to how such techniques function in the plays of particular playwrights of the inter-war period and how these have developed to date. Trying to see how a method, in this case the so-called 'mythical method', can or cannot work in drama and why requires a good understanding of what the original (narrative) method consists of. Therefore, I shall go back to Joyce's *Ulysses* in an effort to identify some of the techniques and devices he engineers in employing Homer's epic.

In 1918, *Ulysses* began to appear serially in *The Little Review* and *The Egoist*. When published by *Shakespeare and Co.* in 1922, it had already established itself as an avant-garde work of great significance. Ezra Pound's review 'James Joyce'[2] and T.

S. Eliot's '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth' in particular, reflect the shock and amazement at the congenial co-existence of avant-gardism and primordial myth. For quite a long time, 'an established myth' of the modernist era was that *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* were two seminal works produced almost simultaneously. A. Walton Litz argues that: 'In our desire to make those anni mirabiles of the early 1920's even more miraculous we suppress the obvious fact that *The Waste Land* and its attendant masterpieces, such as Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberly*, were written with Joyce's great novel clearly in view.'[3]

Between 1918-1921, *Ulysses*' serial publication in *The Little Review* and *The Egoist* exercised a profound influence on Pound and Eliot, who were publishing their early essays and poems at the time. This influence was especially evident in Pound, who supported the idea of realism and the 'luminous detail' through which he would explain the 'universal in the particular.'[4] That the two pioneers of *Ulysses* criticism were eminent poets and critics explains the immense importance of their essays on Joyce's novel and their influence on subsequent criticism. The history of *Ulysses* criticism can be viewed as an extended conversation 'often amiable, occasionally irritable between the spiritual descendants of Pound and Eliot'.[5] Pound's essay 'James Joyce' and Eliot's '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth' focus on the two essential poles in *Ulysses* which also constitute fundamental aspects of the whole of Joyce's work – what Joyce himself had once called 'verismo' and 'idealismo'.[6]

Starting from 1918, when most of the *Ulysses* chapters were still due for publication, Pound contributed a number of reviews on Joyce's novel. In '*Ulysses*' (1922), Pound was the first to offer a set of terms concerning the Homeric counterpart, which is described as a 'frame' or 'scaffold'. Pound writes:

> In this super novel our author has also poached on the epic, and has,
> for the first time since 1321, resurrected the infernal furies; his furies
> are not stage figures; he has, by simple reversal, caught back the
> furies, his flagellant Castle ladies. Telemachus, Circe and the rest of
> the Odyssean company, the noisy cave of Aeolus gradually place
> themselves in the mind of the reader, rapidly or less rapidly according
> as he is familiar or unfamiliar with Homer. These correspondences are
> part of Joyce's mediaevalism and are chiefly his own affair, a scaffold,
> a means of construction, justified by the result and justifiable by it

only. The result is a triumph of form, in balance, in main schema, with continuous inweaving and arabesque.[7]

Focusing on the huge canvas of realistic detail, Pound saw the symbolic and mythological frames as technical devices loosely related to the main narrative. In his later essay 'James Joyce and Pécuchet', (1922) Pound recapitulated his former notion: that the Homeric counterpart is a 'means of regulating the form', a necessary device to control the realistic narrative:

> Joyce uses a scaffold taken from Homer, and the remains of a mediaeval allegorical culture; it matters little, it is a question of cooking, which does not restrict the action nor inconvenience it, nor harm the realism nor the contemporaneity of the action.[8]

Ulysses was the realistic novel 'par excellence' as Pound writes, the one that responded to his own prescriptions of realism. Pound failed to appreciate the intelligence of the device; or as Litz puts it, his view was 'somehow limited.'[9] Joyce *did* intend to write a contemporary novel and the issue under discussion was exactly the mode of involving myth in ways which were both telling and unobtrusive to the action.

In '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth', Eliot argues that *Ulysses* was a book from which no one could escape and that the most one could offer at those early days following its publication was to elucidate its 'infinite aspects.'[10] Eliot anticipates the voluminous industry of critical literature the novel of 'enigmas and puzzles'[11] provoked, pointing to the revolutionising of stylistic, linguistic and narrative norms and insisting on the inauguration of new modes of myth treatment. In contrast to Pound, Eliot puts emphasis on the parallel levels of the 'now' and the 'then' which permit the past to acquire presentness and the present to be seen within the broader context of tradition. Eliot's reading of *Ulysses* emphasises mythical and archetypal dimensions. All subsequent criticism moves somewhere between these two approaches that vividly reflect what Litz has described as 'the delicate exchange between myth and reality' and Arnold Goldman as the 'the fact/myth ambiguity' in *Ulysses*.[12]

A quick review of the various critical approaches reveals that the reading of *Ulysses* in the light of myth has remained a central as well as a problematic topic. Archetypalists offered a great variety of interpretations. Bloom was identified with Christ and Dedalus with Lucifer while *Ulysses* was interpreted as a story of Atonement and Second Coming.[13] Dedalus was seen as the Paschal Lamb 'who recapitulates Christ's temptation in the desert and finally suffers a symbolic death at the hands of the soldiers.'[14] The Circe episode was seen as a re-enactment of the Mass of Easter in the process of which Bloom 'passes rapidly through the conditions of Moses and Elijah to that of Christ.'[15] Other scholars saw *Ulysses* as a book 'saturated with a nostalgia for the myth of repetition and in the last analysis for the abolition of time.'[16]

When Eliot argues that Joyce's use of *The Odyssey* had 'the importance of a scientific discovery compared to that of Einstein's'[17] he is pointing to new techniques that radically deviated from the traditional models of adapting or re-telling an ancient story. Therefore, the search for identifications with and extraneous similarities between modern artefact and ancient myth/s or mythological heroes can hardly contribute to an understanding of *Ulysses*. It is not that Bloom and Dedalus cannot be identified with all these personages or that Molly cannot be seen as Penelope, as Gea-Tellus, the earth-symbol or a 'coarse-grained bitch'.[18] Joyce summons numerous myth parallels and other symbols to supplement his main parallelism with Homer's epic; not all of them are of equal importance nor are they instrumental to the final signification his modern Everyman was meant to convey. Joyce once explained the 'many sided nature of his hero;'[19] Richard Ellmann remarks that 'not only the Homeric and post-Homeric legends are used but also a variety of other identifications' adding that *Ulysses* owes a lot to Dante as well.[20]

In the decades to follow, readings based on theories of archetypal patterns were dismissed as 'flimsy' and accused of having 'made his [Joyce's] work a repository à la Jung of the world's archetypal wisdom'.[21] Emphasis was shifted on the irreverent and comic use of myth – 'myth put under criticism by a world of anti-myth'.[22] The significance of the Homeric parallel was undermined or even ignored and, more often than not, disengaged from the proper narrative.[23] Litz notes that each new study on *Ulysses* raises expectations 'for some ideal "balanced" reading which will do justice to both extremes of Joyce's art, but that ideal criticism will never come.'[24] It is a comment whose fairness is ratified by the uniqueness and complexity

of the novel. The modernist relativism, the scepticism towards absolutes, the jokes, the endless puns and the associative techniques through which Joyce conveys an impressionistically depicted flood of trivialities and everyday experiences express a fundamentally ironic attitude to the world. Thematic texture, formal and stylistic experimentation are thus interrelated in order to convey a state of affairs that seems contingent. The multi-faceted view of incidents and characters, the extended philosophical, scientific, literary and historical discourses that run throughout the novel and its apparent intertextuality make *Ulysses* elusive as well as susceptible to all sorts of analysis and interpretation. Therein derives the novel's startling impact and the impossibility of being imitated. The paradox is this: Joyce's myth-handling was of great significance in reinforcing the interest in using myths. Although novelists like John Updike, Alberto Moravia, Anthony Burgess, Michel Butor and others[25] have attempted techniques that clearly originate from Joyce, it hardly can be said that their work resembles what Joyce did in *Ulysses*. What exactly is Joyce doing with the Homeric epic? What, really, is the position, the function, the significance and the aesthetic role of the Odyssean parallel? The question as to which degree *Ulysses* relates to *The Odyssey* or, even, whether it relates to it at all is one that constantly nourishes argument. *Ulysses* is not a modern version of Homer's epic nor a re-enactment of it, at least, not in the sense known up to Joyce's time. What then is the nature of alignment between the ancient and the modern work? It will be useful to recapitulate the basic co-ordinates on which Joyce works and on which there is more or less general agreement.

Ulysses is separated into eighteen episodes – *The Odyssey* into twenty-four rhapsodies, each corresponding to a letter of the Greek alphabet. The eighteen episodes correspond to the eighteen hours of a summer day in Dublin – the 16th of June 1904 – that begins at 8 a.m. and ends around 3 a.m. the next morning. There is a suggestion that Joyce's episodes also correspond to the eighteen letters of the Irish alphabet.[26] The first three episodes present Stephen Dedalus' (Telemachus) wanderings on the morning of the said day. From the fourth to the fifteenth episodes, we follow Leopold Bloom (Odysseus) – an Irish Jew – who meets Dedalus-Telemachus and together they move about the city, where they meet people and visit different places. The last episodes mostly centre on Molly (Penelope) and the main narrative is conveyed through her. The basic unities of Joyce's book thus correspond

to the three unities of Homer: *Telemachiad, Adventures, Return*. The broad design of Homer is retained prefiguring lines in the plot development of *Ulysses*.

This broad design is not in itself a substantial enough factor to show the extent to which *Ulysses'* plot depends on that of Homer's, nor to account for the manner in which Joyce uses it. The charts Joyce drew during the composition of the novel juxtapose the narrative sequences in *The Odyssey* with those in *Ulysses*. The order of Homer's narrative is followed quite accurately. It is modified and re-adjusted whenever this is demanded by the logic of Bloom and Dedalus' perambulations. That the hero moves about his home-city within twenty-four hours – and not through unknown seas and places throughout ten years – as well as the circumstances of modern life understandably demanded adjustments of plot. Among the Homeric episodes, Joyce selects those that are pertinent to the needs of his novel. Thoroughly fictive incidents are added while some of Homer's are omitted. At certain instances, Joyce records characteristic details in the ancient epic and uses more narrators than Homer. A close reading of *Ulysses* reveals analogies of situation and less of character in *The Odyssey*.[27] *Ulysses* is in no way subservient to the ancient epic. The ancient story is roughly there, providing 'a situation' that enables the author to manage the huge flux of modern city life.[28]

Joyce's book is firmly grounded in contemporaneity with no direct allusions to antiquity. There is a steady paralleling between mythological backdrop and factual reality. Stuart Gilbert has clearly demonstrated that the correspondences between the ancient epic and the novel are many, extended and quite systematic.[29] The plot of *The Odyssey* then serves as an underlying pattern. What Pound and Eliot, in their empirical jargon, named as 'scaffold' or 'framework' can be roughly translated into what we would call a deep narrative structure. As such it is not by itself narrative, it is 'paradigmatic and achronic, capable in the syntagmatisation, of generating a surface structure'.[30] *The Odyssey* serves as a structural principle; it prefigures lines in the evolution of the novel's themes and motifs while it offers a framework on which Joyce organises the material of his fiction.

Once the mythological structure is set in place, Joyce erects upon it a scheme of parallels/ allusions/ analogies which are impressive in inventiveness and variety. The transplanting of the prototypical situations into contemporaneity occurs through transformations that are conveyed – on the narrative level – with minute detail and is founded with immense exactitude into the concrete world of everyday life. The

paralleling – when appearing – is extremely elaborate, veiling the ancient correspondent, sometimes, to the point of no recognition.

In the note-sheets of *Ulysses*, each episode is named after its Homeric counterpart; each character is identified with his/her mythological name. In the final text, Joyce took out the titles of the episodes and mythological names, and included only a part of the Homeric correspondences found in the note-sheets. During the last three years of *Ulysses'* composition, Joyce made extensive revisions. Going back to the first episodes as published in *The Egoist* and *The Little Review* (1918-20) we realise that a number of the correspondences outlined by Joyce himself are absent in the final text.[31]

The final text shows Joyce to have moved from more obvious and traceable paralleling concerning specific events and situations to a more advanced stage of transformation and permutation. Analogies/allusions/parallels to Homer are thus assimilated and transplanted into a contemporaneity that seem considerably removed from the early scheme. It appears to have been a reductive process – reductive in the sense that in the long time-span of writing and re-writing the episodes, the more extraneous and overt characteristics of these correspondences are left behind and Joyce passes into an organic integration – a tautology of mythological/real. Joyce does go to *The Odyssey* for both structural aid and material for thematic variations. The Homeric epic is used on both the horizontal and the vertical level. The paralleling on the horizontal (structural) level is discernible but what happens on the vertical level through metamorphoses and permutations is much more complex. The fact that Joyce employs other, secondary, mythological parallels and various supplementing levels of symbolisms (colours, arts, organs of the human body, etc.) to fill in his schema should not divert attention from the main parallelism, to which, after all, the title points and of which Joyce himself had frequently spoken.[32]

Till the end of his life, Joyce was adamant about the importance of the Homeric counterpart. He once said that he wanted 'to render the myth sub specie temporis nostris'[33] and repeatedly emphasised that *The Odyssey* was to be regarded as a structural parallel, in fact, a 'ground plan'.[34] He recommended Charles Lamb's book for children *The Adventures of Ulysses* – his first contact with the heroic deeds of the Greek hero when he was a boy, a book that had greatly fascinated him – as a guide to the novel.[35] He felt indebted to the French critic Valéry Larbaud because he was the only one who had recognised the relation of *Ulysses* to *The Odyssey* and had

insisted on it.[36] He thought that Pound minimised the significance of the Odyssean parallel for his own reasons, which to Joyce were not 'legitimate.' He responded enthusiastically to Eliot's 'Ulysses, Order and Myth' when published in The Dial; he even indicated to Eliot that he should add 'some short phrase, such as once Eliot had devised in (their) conversation, "two-plane."[37] Asked, why he had entitled the novel Ulysses, he replied: 'It is my system of working.'[38]

Because of his public comments and because, in the final text, Joyce excluded a portion of the correspondences/parallels found in the note-sheets, a long debate has started as to whether The Odyssey serves as the author's private guide for work of little or no interest to the reader. Harry Levin argues that the Homeric framework is more important to Joyce than to the readers.[39] S. L. Goldberg claims that the Homeric counterpart is not the sole structural principle in Ulysses; nevertheless, it does exercise a sort of co-ordinating influence on the overall synthesis of the novel. Consequently, S. L. Goldberg concludes, Ulysses is not modelled on the Odyssey 'or some other myth.' [40] David Wykes holds that 'Ulysses is not controlled by the Odyssey' and that one should 'draw a careful distinction between the correspondences which are critically useful to the reader and those which were chiefly of use to Joyce.'[41] Commenting on the cuts Joyce made for the final text, Litz argues that they are 'significant, since they illustrate how much more important the mythological counterpart was for Joyce than it is for the reader.'[42] Barbara Hardy argues that Ulysses implicitly offers a commentary on its 'chief source and model' and that 'Joyce's novel contains a reading of Homer as well as using Homeric episodes for structure and thematic permutation.' Insisting on the relation between the modern and the ancient work, she notes that critics have subordinated Homer to Joyce, making the Odyssey an instrument for the understanding of Ulysses 'but the process can be reversed.'[43] Hardy's last comment is significant because it points to the dynamic and intrinsic dialogue Joyce and other modernist novelists initiate between myth and modern artefact.

One tends to agree with those who claim that a device/technique which significantly assists a writer 'will be of no interest at all to the reader.'[44] To ignore the latent – and, sometimes, not so very latent as many suggest – presence of myth/s is like trying to disrupt the deliberate aim of the writer to point in such a direction, thus losing a considerable part of the final impression the text is meant to convey. Whoever approaches Ulysses (or any other text employing similar techniques of

myth-treatment) must ultimately realise that such techniques are, by their very nature, concealed/esoteric, and very consciously so. No easy identifications and analogies are to be expected; in fact, the whole idea is based on the play of concrete and abstract, myth and fact, comic and serious.

It is, perhaps, useful to see how other novelists, influenced by Joyce, employ myth/s in analogical or referential systems. John J. White has extensively examined such techniques in the twentieth-century novel. Pointing to Joyce's novel as the most obvious example of mythological correspondences, White draws attention to the fact that, unlike Joyce, few novelists present the kind of elaborate and well-worked-out pattern of parallels/allusions/correspondences found in *Ulysses*. Like Joyce, most modern novelists 'use' myths; that is, they do not return to the classical myths for their stories or plots as is the rare case of Thomas Mann's *Joseph Tetralogy* or Jean Giono's *Naissance de l' Odysée*.[45] Parallelisms/allusions to myth/s or mythological motifs were a feature of modernity in the inter-war era. White claims that the parallels 'achieve their main dramatic effect because of the *specific order* in which they are presented to the reader.'[46] They usually appear fairly early in the narrative to signal the relation with the mythological backdrop, followed later by a series of less explicit references. In other cases, a mythological title is summoned and the reader arrives at an advanced stage of the novel without encountering any correspondences. These may suddenly break in at a crucial point of the plot development or even towards the end. The writer plays with the reader's patience but also provokes his/her close attention to the text by delaying analogies and parallels already indicated by the title. Parallels may also run throughout a novel, manifesting themselves more overtly at certain instances and at others deliberately withdrawing. They thus contribute in suggesting thoughts and comments, while when absent, they leave the ground free for the modern plot to function exclusively.[47]

It has been noted that such techniques coincide with the decline in the use of direct authorial comment.[48] Since the author abstains from a first person narrative or direct commentary on characters and incidents, the mythological counterpart can provide a solid background, a measure for comparison, which, by itself, offers commentary; it is an indirect authorial comment as part of the rhetoric of fiction. From the above discussion, one can hardly fail to notice that myths are, consciously and intentionally, used as part of a game writers play with their readers. Therefore, one cannot disagree with the counter-argument that 'there is more to the device than

authorial comment.'[49] Indeed, in many cases, the strategies of patterning, of concealing or revealing are so systematically laid out that they greatly contribute to the construction of multi-layered narratives in exchange of present and past. It is here that modern usages of mythology differ from those of previous times. It is a twentieth-century trend to use mythology in well-organised motifs/patterns whereas in the Parnassian, Romantic or Symbolist movements, mythology serves as a source for theme, a revival of the past or as an extraneous iconography of the present.

It is almost impossible to appreciate *Ulysses* – or other novels of the era using similar techniques – through approaches that see the use of myth in literature as a kind of mythopoesis. Failing to observe the structural and other, deeply self-conscious devices engaged in the treatment of mythological material has often resulted in such anachronistic approaches. Putting, for example, an overstressed emphasis on the relation of Homer to *Ulysses* or on the opposite view, that *The Odyssey* has nothing to do with Joyce's novel are equally misleading. They ignore the very essence of such techniques which, in fact, are based on the notion that a myth does not become part of the plot nor is the modern work a re-enactment of it, much less that the characters are direct products of prototypical heroes/heroines. In the twentieth century, mythological backdrops/parallels are set or evoked to enhance resonance and depth, to play with discontinuities rather than continuities that are articulated with sophistication and an ironic, playful disposition. Shrewd games of hide and seek are involved in order to juxtapose, associate but mostly dissociate perennial patterns of relations with modern ethics and trivialities. For modern novelists myth/s is/are an expressive means, a kind of metaphor that functions as a commentary by means of analogy or contrast on the part of the modern plot. Therefore, one should be quite cautious when deciding that in these cases myth/s is/are of no interest to the readers. In reality, the active participation of the reader is of great importance. S/he has to pay attention to the myth and to the modern story simultaneously – to guess in what ways the modern story would or would not follow the myth cited; whether the analogy or the games played with the myth cited are justified and well-established within the modern plot. Such techniques demand creative thinking and leave ample space for the reader as well to play the game of hypothesis and guessing. Myth becomes a tool of creation for both writers and readers.

Therefore, two things should be emphasised here: what justifies a mythological backdrop is the degree to which the author manages to establish it and make it a telling device, while whether the author chooses to refer more overtly or more obliquely to an underlying myth is of secondary importance. A well organised pattern of hints, however spare or suggestive in the narrative, and the dovetailing of myth/s and modern situations/characters at crucial stages in the narrative can lead a reader to the realisation that a mythological beyond exists and that he/she is invited to think about. The model initiated by Joyce and examined here in its various manifestations then is not based on isolated allusions to myth, however frequently these might occur. It is an analogical system of reference, of *parallelism* and of *noticeable patterning*[50] indicating to readers that the modern story is seen in the context of comparison and/or juxtaposition with the paradigmatic patterns of mythological narratives.

Returning to Joyce, one has to observe carefully the balances achieved between his abstract and concrete elements and the measures he takes to direct the readers' attention to his mythological parallel, both on the horizontal and the vertical level. The device of the mythological title is of importance because it directs attention towards a specific area in the context of which the modern artefact might be placed. Significantly, Joyce chose the most well known hero of Greek mythology and Homer's epic. The Homeric narrative sequences are to a great extent followed and the unities are retained. A huge and complex narrative is erected upon this frame. A great percentage of the correspondences are veiled and the game of obvious/concealed, fact and myth, seems to have been a central concern during the composition of the novel. Joyce actually kept a core, an essence of the prototypical situations. By transmuting into contemporaneity, he shapes a narrative so complete and self-sufficient that it can stand absolutely by itself with no reference to aid from *The Odyssey*. Ezra Pound claimed that despite the attention paid to the interweaving of parallels between *The Odyssey* and *Ulysses*, the structure of the latter is completely its own. With the benefit of hindsight, this seems a rather odd comment because it practically undermines the entire rationale of Joyce's method. The whole idea is that the work might exist solely on its own merit with no necessary sustenance from myth, which is what actually happens in *Ulysses*. Yet, both myth and epic are there. Modern narrative and myth coexist without the one interfering with the other. They move in parallels but each remains integral and powerful, complete in itself inviting comparison, juxtaposition,

thought and hypothesis. Joyce's ingenuity is manifested in the method of bringing together the two, yet, leaving them well apart. Their relation is one of *parallels* that never meet and the gap between them generates multiple possibilities of speculation and irony. He constructs a novel vibrating with life, indicating no nostalgia for or submission to the glorious past. But he very shrewdly acknowledges the authority it embodies and the validity of implicating this authority into the flux of a modern artefact. And, he informs his readers – now overtly and then obliquely – about it.

Joyce's method does not intervene with the constituent units of the myth/s as does the traditional method of dramatising myth-plots that will be discussed in one of the next chapters. As already emphasised, in reality *Ulysses* is not a re-handling nor a re-working of Homer's epic in the usual sense we ascribe to these terms. By constantly fluctuating between the realistic and detailed narrative to the abstract, diachronic and static mythological deep structure Joyce's model, through multi-layered parallelisms, targets the implication of a primordial myth/s (an epic in this case) into the artefact, thus offering potentialities of placing modern life into a broader perspective that encompasses both present and primordial past.

What Eliot called the 'mythical method' is one open to treatment in various ways. It can be used as a structural principle or adapted on the level of a thematic parallel or, the most usual, employed in a combination of the two (thematic and structural). It involves a number of techniques. Insistence on the structural (horizontal) parallelism is indeed a modernist feature and calls for a systematic analogical or referential system of correspondences. The thematic permutations/re-workings/metamorphoses are by themselves a freer form of reference and have been used before the modernist era, although not as systematically. They are frequently in danger of abstaining from the prototype and developing quite arbitrarily – an issue that should be dealt with in connection with Eliot's myth-plays. The ingenuity of Joyce is that he combines both the structural and thematic co-ordinates. Therefore, the model is to be considered as a combination of both horizontal and vertical parallelism.

A 'method' as Joyce's that presents difficulties of perception/understanding to readers would normally present even more to audiences. And, though I am here focusing on dramatic techniques, the triangle text-performance-audience must be taken into account because of the particular nature of the material we are dealing with

and the peculiarities of the method itself. Within the time-span of a performance, the spectator does not have the luxury of brooding over a page. The action unfolds rapidly. The confrontation of the spectator with the events enacted on the stage is too acute – even violent – to the eye, to the ear, to the sensibility. There is a perception of immediacy and, sometimes, of bewilderment, of involvement even if the latter is not of a totally sentimental nature. Capacity of perception, education, social class and ideological pre-conceptions are there to respond to the performance, which is the mediator between the text and the audience and where the latter only indirectly relates to the former. It is a relation controlled by the performance as a whole but mostly by the physical presence and the competence of the actors/actresses who are the carriers of the written word. The audience is a collective and so a much more complicated issue than a reader; and drama is a different genre from the novel. Text and performance are two different domains in the sense that the performance would normally impose its own logic on the written word. This does not mean that the text loses its significance but, rather, that directors and actors can weave a discourse of their own upon it by shifting or altering the focuses of emphasis/meaning. But the possibilities of interpreting the text (and, therefore, of staging it) are not unlimited since the text imposes a number of constraints on the director and vice versa. Consequently, the performance cannot make a total abstraction of what the text says.[51] On the other hand; intertextuality does not work continuously in theatrical performance. Performance, in a way, excludes spectators from references that link or refer the play to other written texts. The spectator would most probably connect what s/he sees on the stage with current or past social and political issues rather than with other texts, unless the texts in question are very well known or the references in the play are too overt.

Underlying mythological patterns handled as described above and perceived with difficulty in reading are in danger of becoming less traceable within the context of a performance, especially if the myth in question is one of the least known. A playwright has to take adequate measures through the use of dramatic and theatrical devices in order to permit the parallel to become recognisable, if only in a suggestive and oblique manner. If the mythological counterpart evaporates in the linguistic treatment and thematic development, it will lose its referential or analogical character. There must be a channel of communication which connects the mythological analogy, the playwright's system of working with it, the play and the receiver (audience). The

hide-and-seek game as part of the dramatic/theatrical strategy is effective as long as it can reach the audience's mind. This, in turn, means that a myth which serves only as a source of inspiration or a ready-made guide for creative writing and does not manage to become a code of articulation – however oblique – bridging creative process and creative product cannot operate functionally, either with respect to the dramatic structure of the play, and/or the imagery and/or the thematic texture. And, in fact, O'Neill and Eliot, in the *Family Reunion* at least, seem to realise that: through visual and theatrical devices they effectively impose the idea of a mythological paralleling that even in reading suggests the dynamics of its performability.

In drama as in fiction, titles are excellent devices, eloquently announcing 'model and variation'[52] initiating a *dialogue* between myth and modern artefact. They establish in advance the relation of the two, opening new perspectives of discourse for the spectator. August Strindberg is a good example. While writing the play known today as *The Father* he had the intention of giving it the title *Agamemnon*.[53] Apparently, he started composing having in mind the said dramatis persona. In the process, he took the title out deciding that the play be seen totally in its modern context. Strindberg refused to pre-dispose spectators/readers toward a set of heroes (Agamemnon, Clytemnaestra) and a pattern of relations as ancient as humankind. He probably felt that the ramifications of the creative process had led him to a result that did not justify such a direct allusion although there is much awareness of intertextuality in the play to refer us to Aeschylus' tragedy. The allusions are there for those who can or are willing to see them. Had Strindberg decided to keep the initial title, he would, perhaps, have written a different play. Had he published the play as it is known to us now, retaining the title *Agamemnon*, there would have been no end in pursuing lines of precise parallelism and analogy. *The Pelican* is another of Strindberg's plays that is supposedly based on the theme of *Oresteia*. Although during the last years of his life Strindberg was always writing with the work of the ancient Greek dramatists in mind, he never gave an indication that he wished to base this play on this particular prototype. Both examples are useful for another reason. They better clarify my insistence on dealing with myths (stories) and not with isolated units, whether images, vague references or allusions to myth/s. Such elements can be found in practically any piece of literature and certainly in many of Strindberg's plays. But a myth as a myth (a coherent narrative) or a well established mythological

motif presuppose the presence of a basic corpus of events throughout the play thus introducing interesting and complicated problems of dramaturgical method.

It should be noted once more that Joyce's and Eliot's 'methods' of myth-handling were startlingly new. The constantly changing relation between myth and modern story within the development of a single narrative and the ostensibly arbitrary ways in which myth sometimes intrudes within the modern artefact deviate from previous narrative or dramatic models. Such innovations were not easily accepted. The use of similar methods in such a diverse medium as drama presupposes a looser plot and certainly the ability to impose a suggestive vocabulary, quite hard to master in drama. Inter-war drama seems to move away from the elaborate and tightly-wound plots of the well-made, slice-of-life play. Still, we do not see the kind of revolutionary disruptions of plot and action sequences which are observable in the novel of the same era. In general, plot is pre-dominant while the unities of time and place are rarely called into question. Disruptions of plot and discontinuities of action, pastiches and references, intertextuality in general, all already dominant in the novel of this period, appear in drama decades later. What today has come to be an almost common practice through Genet, Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, Heiner Müller, Howard Barker and many others was then a serious barrier that had yet to be overcome. It is no surprise then that the Joyce/Eliot model is rather sparingly met in inter-war drama and that the greater number of myth-plays employs the traditional technique of dramatising myth-plots, as is the case with Anouilh, Cocteau, Giraudoux, Sartre, Montherlant, Claudel, to mention a few. For the same reason, plays belonging to the category of Joyce and Eliot's method develop their underlying myth in a linear fashion. In contrast to novels, where we often meet underlying myth-fragments or extended mythological motifs that appear at significant stages of the developing action and then disappear, in drama we have the whole of a myth – i.e., the story – that unfolds in parallel with the modern plot. T. S. Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes* and O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* where mythological motifs are inscribed within the flux of a (modern) plot are exceptions and will be dealt with in the relevant chapters.

Apart from plays like Eliot's *The Family Reunion* and *The Cocktail Party* and O' Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, adventurous applications of the mythical method are hard to find. In Eliot's *The Family Reunion* and less so in *The Cocktail Party*, there is an effort to refer a modern plot to its mythical origins. O' Neill makes his own, imaginative use of the Joycean model in his trilogy. Plays like Maxwell

Anderson's *The Wingless Victory* or Lenormand's *Asie*[54] draw intelligent and precise parallels between modern situations and myth. Yet, the plays lack the sort of self-conscious and sophisticated devices that characterise the plays of T. S. Eliot or O'Neill while Anderson's plays are quite old-fashioned, to say the least. The story, as prescribed, unfolds in a linear fashion and reaches its fated end without reversals and unexpected shifts in the development of the plot.

3. T. S. Eliot's Development of the 'Mythical Method'

In Eliot's lifelong relation with myth and ritualistic patterns underlying Greek tragedy, we can trace some of the characteristic features of the era: discourse, experimentation and ideological expediencies. In *The Waste Land* the appropriation of the so-called 'mythical method' is exemplified in highly personal and imaginative ways. Subsequently, Eliot sets forth to employ Greek myths in his drama and their use has been measured and judged along the lines of his description of the 'mythical method'. A close scrutiny of his late references to myth/s reveals attitudes of a considerably different nature. From *The Family Reunion* onwards, the *Ulysses* review proves to be quite a misleading guide. Eliot uses drama as a medium for propagating his religious ideas, and his changing approach to myth is heavily charged and pre-conditioned by such ideological prerogatives. This chapter examines his ideological voyage that reflects – and is reflected in – his attitude towards myth/s; his contradictions and ramifications as well as his artistic impasses that are reflected as well – it is maintained – in the gradual abandonment of myth/s as a means of expression and a co-ordinating principle of structural and conceptual significance.

Eliot had employed mythological material in his poetry, even before *The Waste Land* and was one of the first to introduce a discourse concerning the use of myth in a modern artefact. Although *Ulysses'* serial publication was a revelation for Eliot, he was also quite dubious as to whether Joyce could finally achieve a balance between myth and contemporary experience.[1] He was probably unsatisfied with Pound's insistence on the realistic detail. Pound's description of the mythological 'frame' or 'scaffold' as a mere technical device is, indeed, too incomplete to account for the functions of myth in *Ulysses*. Eliot's first public reference to *Ulysses* appeared in *The Dial* in September 1921. In a 'London Letter' written shortly before he began the composition of *The Waste Land*, he makes a comparison between a performance of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* and *Ulysses*:

> The effect was like *Ulysses* with illustrations by the best contemporary
> illustrator... The spirit of the music was modern, and the spirit of the
> ballet primitive ceremony. The Vegetation Rite upon which the ballet

is founded remained, in spite of the music, a pageant of primitive culture. It was interesting to any one who had read *The Golden Bough* and similar works, but hardly more than interesting. In art there should be interpretation and metamorphosis... In everything in *Le Sacre du Printemps*, except in music, one missed the sense of the present. Whether Stravinsky's music be permanent or ephemeral I do not know; but it did seem to transform the rhythm of the steppes into the scream of the motor horn, the cattle of machinery, the grind of wheels, the beating of iron and steel, the roar of the underground railway, and the other barbaric cries of modern life; and to transform these despairing noises into music.[2]

Interestingly, Eliot focuses exclusively on the exchange between the primitive and the modern. He found that the ritualistic choreography, the costumes and the sets failed to convey 'the sense of the present'. Stravinsky's music succeeded better in combining primitive and modern experience. The imbalance between music/performance gave the impression of something ostentatious and superficial, since it lacked 'the interpretations and metamorphoses' Eliot thought necessary. As Eliot observed, 'Even *The Golden Bough* can be read in two ways: as a collection of entertaining myths, or as a revelation of that vanished mind of which our mind is a continuation.'[3] Eliot seemed to require a more substantial dialogue between the primitive and the modern. His reactions to Stravinsky's ballet and his efforts to conceive the significance of Joyce's use of the Homeric parallel can be better understood in relation to his early essays. In his influential 'Tradition and Individual Talent' (1919), Eliot attempts to re-define the term 'tradition' by placing a particular emphasis on the continuity of Western culture. He writes:

Tradition involves in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write with not merely his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole literature of Europe from Homer, and within the whole literature of his own

41

country, has the simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. [4]

The whole of past literature forms 'an ideal order' which is one and living. A writer of significance ought to be conscious of this order. Every time a work of significance appears this 'order' is modified and re-adjusted. The concept that tradition has an existence which is somehow 'given' was quite a pioneering, if not iconoclastic, idea in 1919; the individual artist was thought to impose his/her talent on tradition rather than being defined by it. It follows that since the individual mind is less important than the mind of tradition, a true artist should aim at expressing broader experiences and feelings than those which are intimate or unique to him/her.[5] Those artists who are conscious of tradition will gradually acquire a 'historical sense' that will prevent them from the 'superfluous kind of writing [to] which the word "traditional" – is most applied... that which attempts to do what has already been done perfectly.'[6] In addition, the sense of the historical past can emancipate the artist from the obsession to practise originality for its own sake.

Within the span of the years Eliot was writing, the illusion of a common European identity was destroyed and the search for a myth or an ideology was relentlessly pursued. The dismantling of established philosophic and scientific beliefs and truths in the aftermath of the Great War, led artists as diverse as Bertolt Brecht, Herman Hesse, W. B. Yeats, and Eliot himself, to various forms of engagement or militant practices. Eliot was deeply interested in this phenomenon and in *After Strange Gods*, sub-titled 'A Primer of Modern Heresy,' (1934) he attributes the phenomenon to the 'crippling effect upon men of letters, of not having been born and brought up in the environment of a living tradition', i.e., the Graeco-Roman and the Christian.[7] 'Heresy', says Eliot, characterises authors who reject tradition or possess no sense of it. It is manifested in their constant search for the necessary background and imagery, normally supplied by a common tradition. He refers to Yeats who, in search for a tradition, found it in the conception of an autonomous Ireland, in the pursuit of myths and in 'the religious sources of poetry'. The result, Eliot claims, is 'a somewhat artificially induced poeticality' and 'uncertainty' (*ASG44, 46*). By contrast, Eliot points out that writers of previous centuries like Jane Austen, Thackeray or Dickens display 'standards' of criticising their world that 'if not very lofty ones, were at least not of their own making.' (*ASG53*)

In both 'Tradition and Individual Talent' and *After Strange Gods* Eliot suggests that a balance between knowledge/control of tradition and freedom of inspiration should be retained. If one loses his/her bonds with tradition, the result is chaos; on the other hand, the deterioration of inspiration ends in artistic and intellectual sterility that neutralises the creativity of the artist. Regardless to how innovative or experimental a work is a common cultural background makes a writer able to communicate with his/her readers/audiences. Eliot identifies tradition with growth and change. A revolt against tradition may initially appear as a complete rift with past techniques and practices. Seen, though, within the whole of history and tradition, this revolt is a necessary step forward that would inject tradition with a new vigour.

In September 1923 and while in the process of composing *The Waste Land* Eliot pronounced his final verdict on *Ulysses* in '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth'. As Joyce himself had done, Eliot singles out Valery Larbaud as the one who had 'appreciate(d) the significance of the method employed; the parallel to *Odyssey* and the use of appropriate styles and symbols to each division.' There are no references to Pound. Speaking of the Odyssean parallel Eliot remarks:

> Yet one might expect this (i.e. the parallel) to be the first peculiarity to
> attract attention; but it is treated as an amusing dodge or scaffolding
> erected by the author for the purpose of disposing his realistic tale, of
> no interest in the completed structure. (*UOM175*)

We have to observe how tentatively Eliot handles the word 'scaffolding'. It is put as a second alternative to the 'amusing dodge' and it is something of no 'interest to the completed structure'. Significantly, this is the only time the word 'structure' appears in the whole text. It is certainly not accidental since Eliot wishes to underline that the myth never becomes the intrigue (plot) of the novel nor is it identified with the story. He knows that the novel's structure is to be found in the interrelation of the episodes, on the level of the realistic narrative, in the progression of its theme/s. But, he does feel that the Odyssean counterpart is a sort of a co-ordinate, of a regulating structure since, as he points out, this scaffold serves the 'purpose of disposing the realistic tale'. It is here that Eliot borders Pound's criticism; it is also obvious that the remark is very general, as if he would have preferred not to use the word 'scaffold'

but does, for want of a better one. If we consider that within the three and a half pages of the review, it is the sole comment on this issue and that it occurs fairly near the beginning of it, we are rather driven to the conclusion that this 'scaffold', though an element to be taken into account, does not constitute a (the) substantial characteristic of what he names the 'mythical method'. In the last paragraphs, Eliot attempts a more thorough description of what the 'mythical method' consists.

> Mr. Joyce's parallel use of *The Odyssey* has a great importance... No one else has built a novel upon such a foundation before... In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. It is a method already adumbrated by Mr. Yeats, and of the need for which I believe Mr. Yeats to have been the first contemporary to be conscious of... Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is seriously, I believe, a step forward making the modern world possible for art, toward (that) order and form... And only those who have won their own discipline in secret and without aid, in a world which offers very little assistance to that end, can be of any use in furthering this advance. (*UOM177-8*)

The 'mythical method' then, is defined as a narrative method or, rather, a method that has specific characteristics that might substitute a (any) narrative method. It comprises a continuous drawing of parallels between contemporaneity and antiquity. Why is this important? Reference to an ancient myth is 'a way of controlling and ordering, of giving shape and significance' to the chaotic modern world. The review ends up by once again emphasising that 'the mythical method' is a step forward to order and form. The key words are 'controlling', 'ordering', 'giving shape'. There is no indication as to how he understands these notions. Myth gives order /shape/control over/to what? To the plot? It certainly pre-figures lines in the

plot evolution. To the actual narrative? He seems to have excluded that, since it is just a scaffold, which assists in disposing the realistic tale and not itself the proper structure of the novel. To characters? To imagery? One senses that, for Eliot, the 'manipulation of the parallel' mostly consisted of thematic re-workings of prototypical situations into permutated modern equivalents. Apparently he gives priority to this over the structural element.

In *After Strange Gods*, Eliot emphasises that the 'struggle of our time (is) to concentrate not to dissipate; to renew our association with traditional wisdom; to re-establish a vital connection between the individual and the race.' (*ASG48*) Speaking of the element of extreme individuality, moral destitution and sexual morbidity dominant in modern fiction, Eliot criticises Katharine Mansfield and especially D. H. Lawrence who is 'an almost perfect example of the heretic' (*ASG36-38*). Both are blamed because they are not conscious of the moral decay their own work displays (*ASG58-61*). What differentiates Joyce from the others is that he is conscious of such elements and knows how to use them since 'a trained mind like that of Mr Joyce is always aware what master it is serving' (*ASG59*). This is unmistakably the mark of Joyce's Catholic upbringing and his growing up in a living tradition.

It follows that such elements of moral decadence and anarchy are somehow balanced by Joyce through the implication of an authoritative order represented by the world of a well-known myth and other, various and extended references to history, art and culture. For someone who was so deeply preoccupied with the significance of the past and the importance of tradition in forming the modern consciousness such a method was of great validity. In the startling years that followed the Great War, Eliot conceived Joyce's technique with the Homeric Epic as enabling a world of chaos to be referred to the origins of history and culture. Equally revealing must have been the realisation that the 'mythical method' could be part of his theory on 'the objective correlative' as described in the essay 'Hamlet and his Problems'. Eliot writes:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an
> "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a
> chain of events which shall be the formula of the particular emotion;
> such that when the external facts which must terminate in sensory
> experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.[8]

The 'formula', then, of expressing emotion could be a mythical/mythological persona or story, a mediaeval legend or a historical character as *The Waste Land* and other of the poems characteristically testify. According to Eliot, Joyce's huge and plotless narrative as well as the heterogeneity of styles and material could be mastered and seen in a larger perspective through the employment of the Odyssean counterpart. In a novel as notorious for its modernity as *Ulysses*, a novel that had challenged all the up-to-then techniques of myth-treatment, innovation and experimentation could co-exist ideally alongside patterns of tradition.

In '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth' Eliot emphasises the significance of the myth involved by Joyce and gives priority to metamorphosis/permutations over the structural element. Eliot realised that Joyce's method was opening new perspectives to those who would deal with myths in the future. And indeed, this was what happened when a number of techniques, which can be placed under the rubric of the 'mythical method,' appeared in the period between the two wars. Denis Donoghue has regretted Eliot's insistence on the futility and anarchy of contemporary life as well as his subsequent emphasis on 'order' and 'control' because it conveys an imprecise and unhelpful picture of Joyce's novel.[9] While composing *The Waste Land* Eliot had difficulties in compressing patterns of antiquity and of various myths with contemporaneity in the relatively concise form of the poem. '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth' certainly reflects these preoccupations. Patrick Parrinder notes that Eliot's 'reading' of *Ulysses* is not at all 'impartial' because it 'implicitly links *Ulysses* to *The Waste Land*' which was then at the final stage of its composition.[10]

The poem itself as constructed and organised shows Eliot to have gained inspiration and creative ease rather than guidance from Joyce's model. Having introduced the term and having described how he conceived the 'mythical method', Eliot in *The Waste Land*, presents his own application of it. The central theme of the spiritual barrenness of modern culture is developed through associations and juxtapositions: of once powerful cities to modern Metropolises in decay, of mythical personae to insignificant characters and modern boredom, of barren landscapes and sexual impotence to images of rebirth. Eliot draws upon a variety of material chosen from the cycle of the seasons, religious rituals and stories from Greek, Egyptian and Indian mythology: The myths of Sibyl and Adonis, of the Fisher King, the vegetation rites of Osiris and Attis, the mediaeval legend of the Holy Grail, alternate with

46

images from contemporary life, quotations from other writers and lines in various languages. Voices speak their own experiences, intersecting and merging one into the other. The paralleling of the 'now' and the 'then' is continuous and the rapid alternation of concrete images, of quotations and voices establish a powerful dramatic tension. One has to observe the character and the essence of this paralleling. In fact, the technique is not one of an underlying myth-pattern that diffuses its meaning to the surface of the poem. There is a direct confrontation of the various myths and of the segments of factual reality. The 'then' and the 'now' co-exist simultaneously in immediate thematic links – a quasi-cinematographic technique – that juxtaposes different fragments seemingly contradictory or incompatible.

There is not an actual story or myth to unify the poem. Discontinuities rather than continuities are traced on the surface level of the poem. Fragments of various myths (frequently represented by the different speaking voices), of memory and reflections of thought are not coherently related but meet in the persona of Tiresias. Another element to be observed and emphasised is the quality as well as the quantity of the metamorphoses. Parallels and juxtapositions, immediate, violent and simultaneous on the one hand while on the other we have a series of metamorphoses and a merging of the one persona into the other. In the notes to the poem Eliot explained that 'the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples' and, also, that 'all women are one woman and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem.'[11] The whole poem then is referred to one persona, to that of Tiresias.

Responding to the cultural changes and the innovative, non representational tendencies of his times, Eliot in *The Waste Land* created a text where fragmentation and intertextuality are predominant while the recurrence of various myths and mostly Tiresias' persona form an 'encompassing structure' that can unify the diverse material.[12] It was a model that influenced others and, most significantly, was used as a basis for dramatic structure by playwrights of the post-modernist era – Howard Barker's *The Bite of the Night* and Heiner Müller's texts come to mind almost automatically.[13] That contemporary artists have used myths in ways similar to those of *The Waste Land* (or even using it as a model, as is Müller's case) is suggestive of Eliot's radicalism in the early Twenties when he decided to turn to drama.

Another element characterising Eliot's critical writings in the Twenties is his genuine interest in drama that resulted in the bold experiment of *Sweeney Agonistes*.[14] Many have tried to explain Eliot's metamorphosis into a playwright and his exclusive preoccupation with drama during the last decades of his life. It has been interpreted as the logical development of a poet whose poetry is full of 'dramatic elements,'[15] in fact, poetry of 'an essentially dramatic nature'.[16] Carol H. Smith finds such explanations oversimplified, noting that the answer be sought in the development and interrelationship of Eliot's ideas concerning religion and art.[17] Two revealing books by Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (1977) and *Eliot's New Life* (1988) point in the same direction, offering carefully selected data on the crucial issue of his conversion to Catholicism in 1927.[18] When we come to the myth-plays, all written after 1939, Eliot has abandoned the experimentations initiated with *Sweeney Agonistes,* the deterioration of myth is evident and the West-End quasi-realistic formulas prevail. It is, therefore, imperative to start with his essays on drama and trace his evolution from *Sweeney Agonistes* through *The Family Reunion* to his mature plays in order to understand the shifts of emphasis in general and the change of attitude to myth in particular that occur after 1927.

In 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama' (1920) in his various writings on the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists included in *The Sacred Wood* as well as in 'The Beating of a Drum' (1923), Eliot explores the potentialities of creating a conversational verse drama in modern terms and examines problems of versification and form.[19] Such ideas were much discussed in the early Twenties and dramatists of his generation shared similar concerns. Yeats' endeavours towards a verse drama that would include dance, live music and special theatrical effects offered fresh areas for experimentation. Pound's and Yeats' interest in the Japanese Noh introduced elements of theatrical practices based on stylisation and abstract movement. Eliot had been acquainted with Yeats' experiments since 1916 after attending a performance of *At The Hawk's Well* at Lady Cunard's.[20] He was impressed by the play's modernity as a whole, by the usage of Irish mythology, the choral interludes and the live musicians. Eventually, Eliot came to think that the *plays for dancers* were decorative pieces, suitable for an elitist audience. Nevertheless, the *plays for dancers* were always at the back of his mind.

In the early Twenties, Eliot was fascinated with jazz, the circus, the music hall and the revue as a potential basis for a new drama and was acquainted with Cocteau's

theories on the future role of 'le cirque, le music hall, le cinémographe'.[21] The live performances of the music hall artists – Marie Lloyd, Little Tich, George Robey, and Nellie Wallace – exemplified, according to Eliot, 'fragments of a possible English myth. They effect the Comic Purgation.'[22] The 'pure and undefiled detachment' of the performances'[23] of such artists, their improvisational style and their ability to communicate with the audience genuinely attracted him.

Ritualistic interpretations of such forms were explored in France and England. Eliot in '*Ulysses*, Order and Myth' mentions Sir James Frazer and *The Golden Bough*, while in the footnotes to *The Waste Land* he refers to Jessie Weston's book *From Ritual to Romance*.[24] As an admirer of J. G. Frazer and Jessie Weston, Eliot had noted the work of the Cambridge School of Classical Anthropology that followed Frazer's theories. He found a channel of expression in the continuities traced between primitive and modern religions: in the idea that religions always expressed fundamental and diachronic experiences of the human race, and in the assumption that all religions – including Christianity – were versions of primitive celebrations dedicated to the productivity of the earth and the circle of the seasons. Members of the Cambridge Group such as Gilbert Murray, Francis M. Cornford and Jane Ellen Harrison centred on the origins of Greek drama and drew attention to the fact that Greek drama had retained certain liturgical forms which originated in ancient fertility rituals.

Murray's treatise *Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy* (1912) and Cornford's *The Origins of Attic Comedy* (1914) were seminal influences on Eliot. Murray claims that all the plots of tragedies have 'fixed forms' which mirror the sequences of the ritualistic procedure.[25] In *The Origins of Attic Comedy*, Cornford maintains that in both tragedy and comedy we trace the same outlines of plot, which are remnants of the primitive rituals of fertility. Each genre adopted different elements. Comedy retained the stock masks, which, through the years, developed into the various comic types we meet in Aristophanes. Tragedy moved in another direction and took over 'the abstract conception or movement of its plot and the philosophy of Hubris'.[26] Eliot was particularly interested in the common origins and the similar patterns that underlie both tragedy and comedy, as he considered the comic capable of generating tragic impact as much as the tragic itself.

In 'The Beating of a Drum' (1923) Eliot summons Murray and Cornford to justify his assumptions that 'the comic element or the antecedent of the comic is

perhaps present, together with the tragic, in all savage or primitive art'[27] and that the separation of the comic and the tragic is the result of the development of the genres; such categorisations need to be revised. Eliot also speaks of the importance of rhythm and ritual in performance and suggests that the solution can be found in the direction scholars had already specified. He even advises writers to study the work of Murray and Cornford rather than the writings of literary men. Such theories offered opportunities to combine myth, primitive ritual and conventions of Greek tragedy and comedy with modern techniques and ideas.

1924 was a crucial year: this was the year that Eliot embarked on the experiment of *Sweeney Agonistes* (his first and unfinished attempt at drama) and the year that led to his conversion in 1927. It is necessary to remember that Eliot's only critical writings on drama at that time were those mentioned above. We are speaking of the years prior to Eliot's conversion and we are far from the ideas expressed later in his essays, especially in 'Poetry and Drama' (1951).[28]

When Eliot started *Sweeney* he had already expressed his dissatisfaction with realism and the theatre of his time. He believed that myths provided inexhaustible, broadly well-known material that could make a play accessible to audiences who regarded theatre as entertainment. Aspiring to a verse drama capable of using devices of abstraction and various levels of meaning, he now wanted to create a new form of drama.[29] He believed that a considerable number of theatregoers were interested in poetic plays, but contemporary life was so confused and fragmented that it discouraged such efforts. He was attempting to re-define what drama was and what would be a new, substantial base on which to built a new dramatic art that would 'aim at the same intensity at which poetry and other forms of art aim'.[30] The problem was 'to take a form of entertainment and subject it to a process which would leave it a form of art. Perhaps the music hall comedian is the best material.'[31] He confessed that he wanted to move away from the manner of *The Waste Land*, which largely depended on orchestrated quotations and literary echoes as well as on its deliberate 'difficulty'.[32]

He started writing a *Sweeney* scenario in October 1924. 'Fragments of a Prologue' appeared in the *New Criterion* in October 1926 and 'Fragments of an Agon' in January 1927 under the general title *Wanna Go Home Baby?* The two fragments were published in book form in 1932 and Eliot changed the title to the more respectable, *Sweeney Agonistes*: 'Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama'.

The title is also homage to Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, a reminder of the hero's dilemma and – according to Carol Smith – to the Greek dramatic structure Milton employed.[33] In the *Criterion* prints and in the published book, Eliot placed two epigraphs that point to the themes of the fragments:

I. Orestes: You don't see them, you don't – but I see them:

they are hunting me down, I must move on. – *Choephoroi*.

II. 'Hence the soul cannot be possessed of the divine union, until it has

divested itself of the love of created things' – *St. John of the Cross*.

The first quotation is Orestes' exit lines from *The Choephoroi* and speaks of the horror he experiences as he becomes aware of the Furies, who have begun to hunt him after the murders of Clytemnaestra and Aegisthus. The second is a passage from *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and describes the path leading to union with God. In the cited passage, St. John of the Cross offers advice to a novice who is preparing himself for the first stage of the mystic path – the night of the senses. If he manages to survive the perilous night, he will be purified of all desires and carnal temptations and become worthy of the second path that leads to salvation.

Eliot was fascinated by the Orestes theme, which years later became central in *The Family Reunion*.[34] Regarding the epigraph from the *Choephoroi*, it has been assumed that Sweeney is a modern Orestes; that its plot is closely related to that of *The Family Reunion* and that Sweeney prefigures Harry.[35] If Sweeney is a modern Orestes then he is an Orestes that springs directly out of Eliot's prior 'personal mythology'.[36] The 'Fragments' are a nightmare dream of a girl who was murdered in a bath of Lysol and of her dissolution in the bath. Sweeney wants 'to do a girl in' – an obsession that haunts him. 'Any man has to, needs to, wants to/ Once in a lifetime, do a girl in' are lines persistently repeated. Sweeney has unresolved feelings of hate and desire about women. He is terrified as well as conscious of his anguish but cannot find the right words to communicate this agony: 'I gotta use words when I talk to you/ But if you understand or if you don't/ That's nothing to me and nothing to you' (*SA123-4*). His spiritual awareness is contrasted to the complete unawareness of the two lower-class prostitutes, Doris and Dusty. The text conveys an agonising movement towards the victim, Doris, who is finally done in her bath.

If in *Sweeney Agonistes*, Eliot took the basic situation of Orestes at the crucial moment of confronting the Furies, it can be equally said that what pursues the hero's soul are the sensual desires from which he has to 'divest' himself. Eliot does not use the title device to indicate a particular myth he has in mind. In fact, he never did, which means that he deliberately abstained from specifying a mythological plot or hero. But a similar role is ascribed to the two epigraphs that accompany *Sweeney*, which point in precise directions: alienation, horror, purgation. We do not know whether Eliot conceived the fragments first and chose the epigraphs afterwards indicating desirable models that could endow the text with further connotations; or, if he started with the epigraphs in mind and proceeded to the composition of *Sweeney*. The ancient Greek and the Christian quotations are thematically linked and, should probably be seen as two different sides of the same condition. *Sweeney* echoes both the basic Oresteian plight and, quite grotesquely, St. John's apothegm.

Eliot had always been fascinated with murder, blood and violence as possible outlets to spiritual awareness and symbolic catharsis. The murder in the Lysol bath (Lysol is a caustic cleansing agent) has been interpreted as the violent eradication of human desire ending the previous life of 'birth and copulation and death'.[37] If we leave aside religious interpretations and see Sweeney as a modern equivalent of the Greek hero or simply as the underground hero he appears to be, then we have a case of unjustified murder. Eliot establishes thoroughly modern equivalents to the Oresteian tragedy, grounded in the absurdity and alienation of contemporary life. The suppressed violence and half articulated horror explode in the murder of Dusty; the final song is a nightmarish evocation of the Furies or the purgatorial agents, depending on the kind of interpretation one wishes to pursue. Whatever relevance one finds between Sweeney and Orestes, it will be one of discontinuities rather than continuities; the handling is far from the systematic patterning we see in *The Waste Land* and to a lesser extent in *The Family Reunion* and we have no clues as to which direction Eliot would have turned, had he finished it. *Sweeney* is one of the rare cases in the drama of the era where we have the emergence of a mythological motif – that of the Oresteian alienation and prosecution – not of a myth-plot that parallels the modern story. Orestes predicament, his prosecution and eventual purgation is conveyed as if through a broken, distorting glass; the effigy of the ancient hero is struggling to reach the clarity of its prototype: 'I gotta use words when I speak to you.'

52

The subtitle 'an Aristophanic melodrama' suggests that Eliot wanted to combine satire with ritualistic patterns of death and rebirth according to Cornford's theories on comedy. In a truly modernist fashion, *Sweeney Agonistes* possesses horror and laughter; a macabre humour and an agonising search. Violence is integrated into the action, within the theatrical process itself through the changing rhythms and the incantatory repetition of words and phrases. The light song of Gilbert and Sullivan (Cornford refers to Gilbert as 'the Victorian Aristophanes')[38] sung by the 'full chorus' at the end of the Fragments becomes quite menacing and conveys Sweeney's inner experience which he himself cannot properly articulate:

> You dreamt you waked up at seven o' clock and it's
>
> foggy and it's damp and it's dawn and it's dark
>
> And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock
>
> for you know the hangman's waiting for you.
>
> And perhaps you're alive
>
> And perhaps you're dead
>
> Hoo ha ha
>
> Hoo ha ha
>
> Hoo
>
> Hoo
>
> Hoo (*SA126*)

Smith points out that the chorus is patterned on Cornford's analysis of the Aristophanic chorus. During the agon in all of Aristophanes' comedies, Cornford claims, the opponents try to extract the sympathy of the chorus. The chorus hesitates and oscillates between the two, until in the end, it is won over by the hero who is more virtuous.[39] *Sweeney's* chorus performs a similar function; in the beginning of the agon, it adopts the copulation theme, while in the final song, it voices the prosecution of the Furies or, as interpreted by Carol Smith, the purgatorial theme.[40] The subtitle 'Aristophanic' then, implying both social satire and ritualistic procedures as prescribed by Cornford, suggests comedy, while the term 'melodramatic' ought to be interpreted in its Victorian sense since it combines music and drama, satire, plot, flat characters, etc. Eliot wants to show 'the potential of tragedy' since:

in the end, horror and laughter may be one – only when horror and laughter have become as horrible and laughable as they can be... then only do you perceive the aim of the comic and the tragic dramatists is the same: they are equally serious, there is potential comedy in Sophocles and potential tragedy in Aristophanes, and otherwise they would not be such good tragedians or comedians as they are. [41]

In an unpublished version of the end, Eliot introduces an eccentric, old gentleman to the sound of the Angelus. He resembles Father Christmas, with an empty bottle of champagne in one hand, an alarm clock in the other and a carnation in his buttonhole. Such combinations of the bizarre and the sordid, the laughable and the menacing, the profane and the pious abound in *Sweeney* and create a kind of gaiety that goes beyond any conventional notion of the 'comic' or the 'tragic'.[42]

In many respects, *Sweeney* evokes *The Waste Land*: the syncopated jazz rhythms, the chorus, the drum beat and the telephone ringing. In addition, these elements effectively convey the sense of suppressed violence, sexual excitement and spiritual panic. Eliot draws from the music hall as well as the Grand Guignol and selects elements from Pound's Noh and Yeats' theatre. Sounds, music and movement supplement the written text.

In the sample fragments and the scenario Eliot sent to his fellow writer and friend Arnold Bennett in 1924, he speaks of a play of modern life in a rhythmic prose 'perhaps with certain things in it accentuated by drum beats.'[43] In a letter to Hallie Flanagan who wanted to do *Sweeney* at Vassar in 1933, Eliot gave the following advice:

> The action should be stylised as in Noh drama, – see Ezra Pound's book and Yeats' preface and notes to *The Hawk's Well*. Characters ought to wear masks; the ones wearing old masks ought to give the impression of being young persons (as actors) and vice versa; Diction should not have too much expression. The characters should be in a shabby flat... facing the audience... See also F. M. Cornford: *Origins of Attic Comedy,* which is important to read before you do the play... A drum to accentuate the beats, especially the chorus, which ought to have a noise like a street drill.[44]

The idea of the street drill and the drum beat probably voices Eliot's impressions from Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps,* Yeats' *Plays for Dancers* and O'Neill's *Emperor Jones,* a work Eliot knew well.[45] Otherwise, his directorial advice to Flanagan could well have been written by Bertolt Brecht himself.

The experiment of *Sweeney Agonistes* is unique in the theatrical canon of the era. There is hardly another avant-garde piece of this period to compete with *Sweeney's* originality.[46] That it was much ahead of its time is reflected in that it was invariably considered as a 'poem'. Eliot himself contributed to this confusion by including *Sweeney* in his *Collected Poems.* 'It is a rather sterile appendix to *The Waste Land*' Helen Gardner argues.[47] *Sweeney's* explosive power was only recognised decades later. Muriel Bradbrook in 1965 thought *Sweeney* 'perhaps his [Eliot's] most modern play' while Katharine Worth identified the play's originality – 'a Yeatsian concept of total theatre, full of primitive power'.[48] More recent critics such as Robin Grove argue that in its 'disembodied fashion' *Sweeney* is 'the most dramatic of all of Eliot's plays: farcical, gruesome, and rendingly sad... It is of its twenties time, right down to the black entertainers you meet in early Waugh novels, or could see on stage, in Josephine Baker numbers.'[49] Eliot himself believed the *Fragments* to be his most original composition.[50]

The Group Theatre performed *Sweeney Agonistes* in 1935 and Eliot is reported to have been 'puzzled' by it.[51] We cannot say why Eliot was dissatisfied. The performance was done at a stage where he had already changed course and the possibilities of the revue and music hall techniques were abandoned. A revival in 1965, staged at *The Globe Theatre* in the memorial programme called 'Homage to T. S Eliot', with jazz accompaniment by John Dankworth, Cleo Laine as Doris and Nicol Williamson as Sweeney, astonished audiences and reviewers for its power and vitality. The director Peter Wood created an atmosphere of unpredictability perfectly matching Eliot's text and the unpublished Father Christmas ending concluded the performance, which was a revelation. According to reviewers, it was 'in the same class as *The Berliner Ensemble* classics of Brecht and Weill' and 'it uncannily foreshadowed the British avant-garde drama of the fifties.'[52]

Sweeney Agonistes suggests a thoroughly modern approach and an innovative theatrical instinct. The idea of the fragmented, loose plot pattern, of fragmented speech and action (which echo the structural design of *The Waste Land*) as well as the

music, the staging and acting directions as described by Eliot in the Flanagan letter speak of a kind of theatre that was to take shape in the post-war years and even later, in the post-modernist era. In appreciating *Sweeney's* radically experimental character, Hugh Kenner duly notes that 'it remained unfinished probably because there was nowhere for it to go.'[53] It is a comment that bespeaks Eliot's ideological *and* artistic impasses at the time. And it seems that they were many. Eliot tried to incorporate his ideas on ritual, the music hall and acting in *Sweeney*. He knew that no company in London could manage the acting style and the physicality demanded of the performers. He knew that no company could achieve a satisfactory performance as a whole for such a bold piece of theatre. But he also had problems with the composition of *Sweeney*, which finally remained unfinished. He complained to Virginia Woolf that he could not work easily because

> there was no literary context for such writing from which to draw energy and inspiration... There was no safety net beneath *Sweeney Agonistes*: no one had done anything quite like it before, and he did not seem able to trust himself sufficiently with only the non-literary material derived from the ballet or the music hall. And so the project slowly disintegrated in front of him.[54]

Alongside such impasses, Eliot was facing a personal and ideological crisis. In all the essays of the Twenties, we observe an increasing horror at the fragmentation, impotence and disorder of the social and intellectual world – observations he had poignantly expressed in the earlier poems and in *The Waste Land*. Simultaneously, we detect an urge to construct a world of order and balance while an increasing metaphysical and religious awareness runs throughout his essays. Already in 'Ulysses, Order and Myth' and in the description of the 'mythical method', his intellectual movement towards conceptual unity and coherent meaning through the 'controlling', 'ordering' and 'shaping' functions of myth/s was manifested. Fragmentation and anarchy need to be mastered by the presence of a mythological counterpart that embodies an authorial, regulating principle. In thus expressing a literary judgement he also pinned down an ideological axiom that eventually found its expression through the doctrines of the English Catholic Church.

Eliot's conversion in 1927 had an enormous impact on his personality and work. Lyndal Gordon emphasises that 'many fail to understand that Eliot did not turn from atheism to belief. He was already a believer... He moved from spiritual self-reliance to the support of a church.'[55] His conversion marks a self-conscious decision to abide fully with the doctrines of the Anglo-Catholic Church. The essays of the Thirties show his concern in matters of religion, doctrinal orthodoxy and social order; there are references to issues of morality, Good and Evil. Mostly, these essays offer abundant evidence of his militant Christianity. They become polemical in an effort to promote his idea of a Christian society and of a drama that could demonstrate the moral superiority of the Christian point of view. His concern is for the 'letter' and not the 'spirit' of the church since as he insists 'the spirit killeth but the letter giveth life'. He makes it clear that literary matters are not his primary concern, while attacks on liberalism, humanism and leftist politics are frequent.[56]

If *The Four Quartets* and other poems written after the conversion are permeated with the spirituality of a religious experience expressed in verse of high artistic standards, then drama is the medium Eliot chooses to propagate his faith. He explicitly proclaims so and this acknowledgment ought to be taken into account as a major and formative co-ordinate of his drama. The Eliot of the plays is not a religious writer in the manner of Paul Claudel; that Eliot belongs to *The Waste Land, Sweeney Agonistes* and *The Four Quartets*. The Eliot of the plays is a doctrinal writer with didactic intentions. His utter absorption with drama and his tireless efforts to convey a vision of Christian love and of a Christian Everyman as well as to communicate with vast audiences are to be seen as an extension of his new vocation. In this context we have to place the problematic position of myth/s; the functions of 'ordering', 'controlling' and 'shaping' the panorama of modern chaos he had so enthusiastically embraced are substituted by the canons of the Church and 'the idea of a Christian society'. As paradoxical as it may sound for an artist of Eliot's insight into the sensibilities and the intellectual preoccupations of the modernist era, his new stance accounted for a gradual departure from forms and structures that could have led to exciting theatrical results, to which *Sweeney Agonistes* testifies. After 1927, he eventually abandoned experimentations, means of mythical reference and imaging as well as vital theatrical forms that had so effectively enriched his texts.

In the essays, lectures and interviews of the Forties and the Fifties, not even once is the 'mythical method' mentioned and Eliot's position becomes quite ambiguous. Myth/s, Eliot now claims, is/are a 'point of departure', 'a springboard. Of course,' he goes on, 'it had always been like that.'[57] The statement contradicts his own myth-handling in *The Waste Land* and other of the early poems, even *The Family Reunion.* (1939) In *The Cocktail Party* (1949) the myth of Alcestis is submerged, almost untraceable. The same can be said of *The Confidential Clerk* (1953) and *The Elder Statesman* (1959), where the myths of Ion and Oedipus at Colonus are respectively used.[58] Yet, Eliot, in one way or another, always refers to myth/s.

Confusion and misunderstanding surround the function of myth/s in these plays. Eliot himself is partly responsible for this confusion. There is a difficulty with Eliot, whose comments on his own plays in the essays create a context of intention which for quite a long time critics accepted as the authoritative interpretation. No comprehensive studies on Eliot's use of myths in the plays exist; this might explain the mechanical repetition of various critical clichés. For example, Angela Belli in *Ancient Greek Myths and Modern Drama* and Hugh Dickinson in *Myth on the Modern Stage* dedicate chapters to Eliot's plays. Belli examines the treatment of myths thematically and makes no distinction between the various techniques of myth handling, while Dickinson, who vaguely touches upon such issues, decides that Eliot never employed the famous 'mythical method' in the plays.[59] Carol Smith focuses on Eliot's drama in general, offering useful comments on his dramaturgy and ritualistic elements but she invariably relates the treatment of myth to the 'mythical method'.[60] Approaches of this kind vividly bring forth the vagueness of criteria, which are often applied to myth-plays. Belli, for example, in her preface, presupposes that all the plays of the era with myths as subject matter or theme invariably 'utilize the "mythical method" as Eliot terms it.'[61] Dickinson, despite his perceptive comments, compares Cocteau's plays with Eliot's while Francis Fergusson argues that Cocteau's strategy 'to bring the myth (*La Machine Infernale*) into relation with contemporary life is similar to that which Joyce uses in *Ulysses*.'[62] More recent criticism has offered insight into the origins of Eliot's dramatis personae, his women characters through modern feminist theories, his failures as a playwright.[63] Eliot's experiments in drama and, therefore, his employment of myths, is a neglected topic. Virginia Phelan is an exception with her comparative study of *The Cocktail Party* and Euripides' *Alcestis*.[64]

By 1939, when *The Family Reunion* was staged, Eliot had already written two plays. *The Rock* (1934), a pageant play, and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) were commissioned for religious events and addressed to audiences of believers.[65] Their subject matter could be 'admitted to be suitable for verse'[66] and, therefore, solved none of the problems he wanted to tackle: to bring poetry into the world in which the audience lives and not 'to transport the audience into some imaginary world totally unlike its own, where poetry is tolerated,' while his aim now was to achieve 'a form of verse in which everything can be said that was to be said'.[67] Of course, *Murder in the Cathedral* is a remarkable piece of verse drama. Some of his previous experimentations with music hall and shock techniques are integrated within the solemnity of its liturgical form, especially in the knights' apologies. The chorus of the Canterbury women speaks in a heightened poetic language, effectively reproducing the functions of choruses in Greek tragedy. For *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot went back to the roots of English prosody and devised 'a line of varying strength but fixed number of stresses, normally three, with a caesura coming after the first or the second stress.'[68]

Eliot had now firmly decided to create plays in verse that approximate conversational speech, of contemporary themes and settings. The four plays in modern setting – *The Family Reunion* (1939), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953), and *The Elder Statesman* (1959) – draw their themes from Greek myths. Keeping some of the ritualistic elements Cornford prescribes, Eliot turns to the forms of the drawing-room play, comedy and farce by adopting the then popular formula of Coward, Wilde and Rattigan. He now wanted a theatre that could be socially useful and entertaining. The analysis will focus on *The Family Reunion*, where myth is still substantially present, and on *The Cocktail Party*, where we observe the process of the myth's deterioration. References are made to the other two plays whenever it is necessary to illustrate the argument.

In many respects, *The Family Reunion* is Eliot's most interesting and challenging play. Its theme is based on the myth of Orestes and the plot is constructed on Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Eliot's play opened at the *Westminster Theatre* in March 1939. Martin Browne – Eliot's long-life collaborator who directed all of his plays – notes that the managers had done an unusually fine series of plays and 'notable' among them was MacOwan's production of O' Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* in 1937. The trilogy, also based on the 'Orestes myth', was compressed into a single

evening and was a success. Browne adds: 'It was therefore appropriate that another and very different adaptation of the Aeschylean material should be staged at the Westminster.'[69] The *Family Reunion* appeared six months after Yeats' *Purgatory*, also based on the *Oresteia* [70]

The action takes place at Wishwood, the house of the Monchensey family, in the North of England. Amy (Clytaemnestra) has invited the whole family to celebrate the return of her first son, Harry (Orestes). She hopes to see Harry settled at Wishwood and married to his cousin Mary (Electra). Uncles and aunts have come to Wishwood on the occasion of the heir's return. After eight years of voluntary exile Harry returns in a state of psychic anguish. The powers he had felt persecuting him throughout his wanderings take shape and appear at the windows of Wishwood. Seeing the Eumenides, Harry expresses his horror through *The Choephoroi* epigraph of *Sweeney Agonistes*:

> Can't you see them? *You* don't see them, but I see them
> And they see me. (*FR23*)

Harry has had an unhappy marriage of which Amy disapproved. His wife disappeared over the side of a liner on a voyage across the Atlantic and Harry cannot decide whether he pushed her overboard or it was simply an accident. He returns to Wishwood in the hope of escaping his personal horrors that are personified in the Eumenides. Through the attraction he feels for Mary he tries to revive childhood memories but his efforts are frustrated; the Eumenides reappear.

In a conversation with his aunt Agatha – Amy's sister and the counterpart of Cassandra – Harry discovers his family history. His father (Agamemnon) and Agatha had had a brief liaison of intense love and passion. As a result his father planned to murder Amy but Agatha prevented him for the sake of the child (Harry) Amy was then carrying:

> You were something that should have been *mine*, as I felt then.
> ....
> I felt that you were in a way mine!
> And that in any way I should have no other child. (*FR97*)

Agatha is the initiator who leads the novice of Saint John to his final destination. The whole play can be read as a typical voyage of initiation as described by Vladimir Propp in his treatise *La Morphologie du Conte*, where he investigates the structures of popular narratives and fairy tales.[71] According to Propp, the hero, after long wanderings and trials, arrives 'home' and is assisted by the initiator to reach his final destination. The initiator remains behind since his duty has been accomplished; he is the agent who leads the chosen to the acceptance of his vocation. Harry passes from the state of being under the initiator's guardianship to the state of being under divine guidance. He leaves Wishwood to follow the Eumenides, and, as indirectly suggested, start a new life as a missionary.

Amy is by far the most authentic character at the expense of both Harry's neuroses and Agatha's rigid perceptiveness. Her passion and ruthlessness, her struggle to survive a traumatic marriage, as revealed in the scene with Agatha, are of the most startling elements in the play:

Amy : (to Agatha) Thirty years ago

You took my husband from me. Now you take my son

....

You know that you took everything

Except the walls, the furniture, the acres;

Leaving nothing – (*FR108-9*)

Amy has the force of a pagan persona; she becomes almost a Fury for herself and her son. Her obsession is to arrest time by keeping Wishwood as it was when Harry left. She is a true rebel and in not accepting the order of God, she commits Hubris. Harry's departure brings about her death. Her death – announced by her cry 'the clock has stopped in the dark' – amounts to a refusal to go on living a life outside the boundaries she herself has set. Her blindness, the obsession to dominate the life of others, is a flaw that needs to be punished. The play ends with Agatha and Mary performing a symbolic ritual around the table with the candles lit on Amy's birthday cake.

It has been generally assumed that Eliot draws the third part of Aeschylus' trilogy from *The Eumenides*. D. E. Jones remarks, however, that the action of *The Family Reunion* corresponds more to that of *The Choephoroi*, when Orestes returns to

the homeland to avenge Agamemnon's murder.[72] In fact, Eliot combines elements from both tragedies but the situation in the play is nearer to that of *The Choephoroi*. In the *Oresteia* and particularly in the *Eumenides*, Aeschylus dramatises a major change in the history of mankind when the law of blood vengeance gave way to the law of justice and, therefore, the transformation of primitive powers of wrath to benign ones is imperative. One must certainly wonder why from such a rich texture Eliot did not choose conflicts between good and evil, justice and injustice that could have well served his religious intentions. One can argue that such themes exist in *The Family Reunion*, even that they are central. But, they are subordinated to a story of Atonement in Calvinistic terms, of sin and expiation where conflicts are subdued.

The curse on the House of the Atreus becomes the original sin, which passes from parents to children. As in all of Eliot's plays, so in the *Family Reunion*, there are no societal or political concerns – something to be noted if we take into account that it was performed months before the outbreak of World War II. Particular emphasis is placed on the Eumenides. It is indicative that throughout the published text, the Furies are called the 'Eumenides' (the benevolent ones.) It is thus implied that they are, right from the start, powers of divine grace. They are perceived as Furies only as long as Harry is incapable of acknowledging their true, divine nature. Thus the Christian dimension is introduced in the most absolute way: God is merciful so people should change in order to accept the meaning of the divine.

Eliot's fascination with blood and murder that bring release from the tyranny of the senses is displaced to the neuroses and the fantasies of the hero. As it has been noted, in his tormented state of being pursued by the Furies, in his subtle, ironic wit and his attachment to his mother, Harry reminds us of not only Orestes but Hamlet as well.[73] Harry wished his wife's death. According to Christian doctrine, the intention of an act is as sinful as the deed itself. His anguish brings to mind Sweeney's; but unlike the half articulate hero, Harry expresses himself in highly articulate speech, full of poetic imagery (reminiscent of the author's poetry) that hardly contributes to the creation of a fully-fledged character. Although Eliot wants to bring his 'elected' hero nearer the audience, he rarely manages to convey Harry's experience of communion. Feelings of alienation and anguish are poignantly articulated and prevail over those of communion and reconciliation.

Eliot probably wanted to create a hierarchy of different planes of consciousness in the play but failed to strike the right balance between his 'elected'

hero and the rest of the characters: the aunts and the uncles are grotesquely comic characters expressing the banality and emptiness of their lives while the self-conscious, highly intelligent characters (Mary, Agatha, Harry) sometimes enter a dreamlike state and utter thoughts of universal significance that make the rest of the family seem even more trivial and ignorant.

The aunts and the uncles form a chorus but also act as individuals. They temporarily withdraw from the action in order to speak their private thoughts, expressing bewilderment and fear at an impending catastrophe, the nature of which they cannot anticipate. This device was most likely borrowed from Eugene O' Neill, who, in *Strange Interlude*, (1928) isolated each character on the stage in an attempt to employ stream-of-consciousness techniques in drama when they spoke their thoughts.[74] In employing a chorus Eliot evokes a major constituent of Greek tragedy; yet, the chorus in *The Family Reunion* neither interprets the action nor does it have an advisory role to fulfil. Nevertheless, it adds to the play's ominous atmosphere, especially when each character leaves its individual identity to become a member of the chorus.

The Family Reunion is a play not easily categorised. Its characters are wounded individuals in search of human communication, of tenderness, of identity. Alienation and spiritual bewilderment are precariously balanced by the search for communication and spiritual relief. The play was not a success in the West End. As one of the reasons for the play's failure, Browne mentions the political tension of the times – Hitler had just annexed Bohemia and Moravia.[75] Reviews were mixed if not negative, expressing incomprehension. Critics were puzzled, not knowing what kind of play it was. Archie de Bear, in the *Daily Sketch*, was one of the few exceptions. Noting that Eliot 'has made a new and important and profoundly interesting contribution to English drama' he remarks that it was a better play than O' Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* and that it 'strikes an entirely new note in the theatre of today.' Ivor Brown in *The Observer* predicts that Eliot 'might write an excellent light comedy'.[76]

More recent critics find fault with the end of the play, where Harry indirectly suggests his becoming a missionary.[77] The ambiguities sustained till the end are not erased by the obliqueness (and the ambiguity for that matter) of Harry's last lines. In other words, the Christian message is too vaguely articulated to resolve the tension created throughout the play. Michael Redgrave, who played Harry, and director

Browne had insisted on a clearer expression of the hero's intentions, but Eliot refused.[78] The double function of the chorus' members has also been criticised. As argued, the effect of the chorus becomes utterly neutralised when each member starts functioning as an individual.[79]

Eliot himself severely criticises the play. In *Poetry and Drama*, he says that the double function of the characters as individuals and chorus is 'a very difficult transition to accomplish'. (*PD142*) He blames the appearance of the Eumenides and considers it as a serious weakness. 'They must in the future be omitted from the cast, and be understood to be visible only to certain characters and not to the audience...They never succeeded in being either Goddesses or modern spooks.' He further points out that there is 'a failure of adjustment between the Greek and the modern situation'. (*PD143*) Now his sympathies are with the mother and not with Harry who is 'an insufferable prig' according to Eliot. (*PD144*)

Katharine Worth wonders whether Eliot's 'depreciating' comments sprung from inadequate productions and refers to a performance directed by Michael Elliott in 1966. Elliott disregarded the playwright's advice against making the Furies visible. With the aid of light effects, he contrived 'spectacular incarnations of them as towering black shapes, alarmingly materialising between the audience... and the characters' on the stage. By having Harry enter through the audience 'pausing *with* them [audience] for a long look at the family exposed to view', Elliott succeeded in making the audience watchers of the disturbing figures and participants in the hero's experience. [80]

Despite its flaws, one has a lot to say about *The Family Reunion* concerning the supposed ineffectiveness of the Furies, the originality of its form and its ambiguous ending, which Eliot refused to change. The missionary theme introduced towards the end disrupts the delicate balances, the experience of guilt and alienation the play conveys: a clearer expression of Harry's intentions would have probably been completely out of character. The balances and ambiguities are in tune with the whole treatment of the story; such balances should be pursued and retained in performance as they underline the play's modernity and openness. The transitions of the chorus from the collective to the personal, though difficult to handle in performance, are quite functional for *the kind* of play *The Family Reunion* is. Ronald Peacock has interestingly observed that the sections where the members of the chorus

speak as individuals but simultaneously voice their inner thoughts constitute 'a new form of the aside, a formalized extension of it'.[81]

Although with *The Family Reunion* Eliot changes course and retreats to the drawing-room piece thus sublimating myth, experiments like those of the chorus are indicative of his aim to incorporate various elements and devices within the intimate form of the drawing-room piece. The transitions of the chorus are part of the writer's technique – reminders of the myth beneath and indications of a world beyond the realistic action. They abruptly freeze the action, creating a stasis of impending doom thrusting speech out of the realistic domain and altering the stage iconicity to unexpected significations, captivating the interest and the eye of the spectator. Interestingly, the devices that have been most often criticised are those that greatly assist the audience in recognising the existence of a mythological backdrop behind the modern story. The claustrophobic Wishwood interiors, the Furies, the soliloquies, the characters that align themselves in order to speak their inner discomfort, as well as the grotesque and expressionistic elements all refer the spectator to the underlying myth – all the more because the repetition of such devices forms a noticeable pattern which refers to both the myth beneath and the conventions of Greek dramaturgy, albeit differently used. We are watching a drama of contemporary life when suddenly the windows are thrust open and we witness a different view; then the windows close again and ordinariness is resumed. Reviewers of the Thirties were puzzled because Eliot here seems to be at the outset of a new theatrical form that points in the direction later taken by Beckett (*Play*) and Pinter (*The Birthday Party*).[82]

In an interview of 1959, Eliot expanded on the flaws of the play, claiming that it was 'rather too close' to *The Eumenides*: 'I tried to follow my original too literally and in that way led to confusion by mixing pre-Christian and post-Christian attitudes about matters of conscience and sin and guilt.'[83] Eliot implies that part of the play's inadequacy lies in the incompatibility of Greek and Christian views. In other words, myth prevents the Christian message from coming through as clearly as it should. The comment shows how persistently Eliot pursued an austere Christian line and relevant message. The basic conflicts inscribed within the myth are not relevant to Christian attitudes and, therefore, should be further reallocated and transvalorised. With *The Family Reunion*, we witness the beginning of this process. In *The Family Reunion* the myth is still traceable through correspondences and parallelism, yet we simultaneously observe that it hardly serves as the encompassing and co-ordinating

structure prescribed by the mythical method. That is, the myth is there but its function as a principle of authorial reference or analogy is lost. This is a process of concealment that reaches its peak in the next plays.

From *The Family Reunion* onwards, Eliot works almost exclusively with thematic allusions, which alongside the drastic transvalorisations gradually make the myths handled invisible. Having ascribed the failure of *The Family Reunion* to the wrong end, Eliot decides to 'minimise' choruses in the next plays because they heighten the impression of a play being written in 'an unnatural, poetic language'. (*PD144*) The form of a drama in verse that would approximate contemporary speech with devices like those employed in *The Family Reunion* (lyrical duets, soliloquies and choral parts) is abandoned because – it is implied – they are unfamiliar to audiences. *The Cocktail Party*, *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Elder Statesman* are comedies using the popular formulas of farce and a good portion of black humour.

When Eliot started composing *The Cocktail Party* (1949), he was firm on two things: There would be no poetic devices such as quasi-soliloquies, lyrical duets, choruses and ritualistic elements. Eliot seems to be engaged in the task of dismantling his own edifice of what a modern verse drama should be. *The Cocktail Party* has no poetic devices with the exception of the Libation scene at the end of Act II. Since he considered the adjustment between the Greek story and the modern plot 'as a major drawback' of *The Family Reunion*, he chose to conceal the origins of his plot based on the myth of Alcestis:

> I was still inclined to go to a Greek dramatist for my theme, but I was determined to do so merely as a point of departure, and to conceal the origins so well that nobody would identify them until I pointed them out myself... no one of my acquaintance (and no dramatic critics) recognized the source of my story in the *Alcestis* of Euripides. In fact I have had to go into detailed explanation to convince them – I mean those who were familiar with the plot of that play – of the genuineness of the inspiration. (*PD144*)

The Cocktail Party was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival in August 1949. Subsequently, it transferred to Broadway at *Henry Miller's* in the beginning of

1950 and in London at the *New Theatre*, in May 1950. Without ghosts and choruses, *The Cocktail Party*, in contrast to *The Family Reunion*, was a huge success at the West End and on Broadway. The intimate Coward-Rattigan formula, its solid structure, its farcical elements and black humour made it an accessible play. It was a success at the West End.

That Eliot adopted more conventional and 'closed' formulas was thought an unfortunate compromise to the West End audiences. C. H. Smith claims that Eliot used conventional forms in order to subvert them from within.[84] Referring to *The Cocktail Party* and discussing the treatment of such formulas, Katharine Worth points out that 'in selecting a form giving splendid opportunities for exploring conditions of alienation but none at all for solution in terms of "ordinary social morality" Eliot followed his theatrical instinct, though only by making things difficult for himself as a moralist.'[85] That Eliot mixes matters of artistic choice with morals is evident. That he appropriated conventional forms in order to subvert them, as Smith claims, is at least, dubious. If we examine his development from *The Family Reunion* to the last play, we shall more than likely reach the opposite conclusion: that Eliot took up these forms with an intention of communicating his faith to vast audiences; that he started with a play like *The Family Reunion*, a drawing-room piece with interesting elements deriving from his previous experimentations; that the play failed in the West End; that Eliot proceeded by retreating all the more to conventions and disguising myth more and more. It is more accurate to say that Eliot started trying to use conventional forms but initially failed to master them; by gradually mastering them he distanced himself from experimental techniques. Although, as many have noted, Eliot is always at the forefront of some experiment anticipating Beckett, Pinter, Albee and others,[86] his resort to such forms alongside his didactic intentions impoverished his scope and limited his possibilities of handling mythological material in ways his initial intentions and great talent could have accommodated.

The source for *The Cocktail Party* was Euripides' *Alcestis* (438 B.C.)[87] *Alcestis* is not a tragedy. In ancient Greece, a satyr was the necessary diversion after a group of three consecutive tragedies always performed on the same day. With *Alcestis*, Euripides challenged the tradition and presented a new genre to replace the satyr. *Alcestis* is a tragicomic fairy-tale with elements of satyr mostly found in the treatment of Hercules, a central figure in the play and a popular satyr character in ancient Greece. Euripides' play must have attracted Eliot for a number of reasons; the

death and rebirth motif that dominates the myth of Alcestis is a recurrent theme in Eliot's poetry and drama as well as pertinent to his religious concerns, while the theme of marriage recalled recent personal and painful experiences. 'The question arose to my mind,' Eliot writes, 'what would the life of Admetus and Alcestis be, after she'd come back from the dead. I mean if there'd been a break like that, it couldn't go on just as before.'[88]

Phelan draws attention to the fact that Eliot must have been encouraged by a new translation of Euripides' *Alcestis* by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald published in 1936. Eliot was also aware of an article published in *The Criterion* by Stanley Rice, *Alcestis and Savitri*, which related the Greek myth to the *Mahabarata*, as well as F. McEachran's essay, *A Pattern of Reality*.[89] *The Cocktail Party*, however, exposes a more personal debt to the novelist Charles Williams, Eliot's friend and a member of the Anglo-Catholic movement. The theme of two different ways of life and death is central to Williams' novel *Descent to Hell* (1937) and, especially, to *All Hallow's Eve* (1947), for which Eliot wrote the introduction.[90]

Euripides' *Alcestis* begins with a prologue recited by Apollo, who informs the audience that he is banished from Olympus and condemned to serve mortals. Thus he becomes herdsman to Admetus, the King of Pherae. Apollo is impressed by the King's righteousness; he, therefore, persuades the Fates (moirae) to prolong the King's life provided that someone else dies in his place. Alcestis, his wife, is the only one who volunteers to sacrifice her life. The play starts with Alcestis preparing for her death. Just before her burial, Hercules arrives at the palace. Although in mourning, Admetus carries out his duties of hospitality and conceals his wife's death. Hercules gets drunk and behaves so inappropriately that a servant feels obliged to reveal the truth to him. The hero decides to wrestle with Death in order to win back Alcestis' life. He succeeds, brings her to the palace and raises the veil covering her face. Alcestis remains silent for three days, the customary length of time for her to be 'unconsecrated' from the gods of the underworld.

The myth of Alcestis inspired Eliot to contrive two plots that unfold simultaneously. The first is that of Lavinia and Edward Chamberlyne, an upper class couple, facing a marital crisis. Lavinia abandons her husband and is eventually brought back by Sir Henry Harcourt Reilly (Hercules), a psychiatrist who helps the couple confront their problems and their own selves. They finally decide to make a new start out of their deteriorating relationship. The second plot concerns the story of

Celia Coplestone –an individual of exceptional awareness. Celia has an affair with Edward. Through his change of attitude after Lavinia's departure, Celia as well undergoes a deep personal crisis. She is left with feelings of 'illness', 'solitude', and 'a sense of sin'. As she says: 'If this is reality, it is very much like a dream.' Celia is a totally different person from the Chamberlynes; reconciliation with her prior life is not possible. Reilly helps her to realise her true vocation – that of sanctity. She leaves England to go to Africa and become a missionary.

In Act II, during the course of a cocktail party at the Chamberlyne's house, amid drinks and jokes about mutilated missionaries and cannibals, we learn of Celia's death: she has been crucified by the natives in Kinkanja.

Eliot re-allocates the constituent parts of the myth of Alcestis in a firmly Christian context. The exceptional individual, the elected, is not at the centre as in *The Family Reunion.* Each of the two stories poses a question and Eliot offers a different solution for each of them. There are two poles in the play: the social group and the saint. Each proceeds in life according to its own needs. Smith points out that in the history of Christian mysticism, there have been two paths leading to God – the Negative Way and the Affirmative Way. According to the Negative, God can be reached by detaching the soul from the love of all things (Dionysus Areopagite, St. John of the Cross). The Affirmative focuses on the belief that God is immanent and at the same time transcendent; everything is His imperfect image. So all created things can be accepted as images of God. The Way of Affirmation then implies suffering and pain as the price of loving created and, therefore, imperfect beings.[91] In *The Cocktail Party* Eliot tries to combine both by relating the elected to the community of ordinary men and women.

Eliot uses Euripides' plot quite freely: he divides roles, combines or differentiates their functions. The character of Alcestis is split in two: she is both Lavinia and Celia. Admetus is divided into Edward and Peter Quilpe. The role of the god Apollo is minimised while that of Hercules is truly revalorised and becomes of great importance. The psychiatrist Sir Henry Harcourt Reilly – god of the modern psyche – is Hercules since he arranges for the return from 'the dead' of Lavinia and for Celia's new life. But he is also Pheres. Peter Quilpe shares traits of Admetus/Edward. Characters like Julia and Alex perform the tasks of the two servants of *Alcestis* and also comment upon the actions of the others.[92] Critics have seen Julia and Alex as a kind of chorus; if we accept that this is the case, they

function as individuals and not collectively as in *The Family Reunion*. They are certainly the spiritual guardians of the rest of the characters.[93]

Using Gérard Genette's theory of hypotext, hypertext and transtextuality, Phelan has shown the analogies, the transpositions, transmotivations and transvalorisations Eliot attempts on Euripides' text.[94] Despite its remarkable system of references to the Euripidean version of the myth, *The Cocktail Party* offers no clues to lead us to its mythological background. The myth is hardly traceable, even for one who reads the text and knows the myth, which is one of the least well known (certainly, an intentional choice on the part of Eliot). Much more interesting is the case of *The Confidential Clerk*. Its plot follows the myth of Ion as treated by Euripides quite closely – in fact, it offers the mechanism of the play's plot. It is a very traditional, even unimaginative notion of using myth, one might argue. But the paradox is to be found elsewhere: since the plot follows the myth fairly closely, how does the myth evade the reader/spectator? This is not accidental; we do know that Eliot was never erratic with his mythological sources and that he selected material that could be imbued with a religious significance. With the failure of *The Family Reunion* in mind, Eliot minimised any ostensible paralleling or allusions to Euripides' *Alcestis* and *Ion* respectively. When we reach the last play, *The Elder Statesman,* Lord Claverstone's guilty conscience has very little to do with Oedipus' horrifying past. His death is a vague literary allusion to the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*. In such a context, the myth is rendered redundant, a 'matter of literary exegesis [rather] than of performance, for in the theatre nothing is so bootless as a footnote'[95]

Eliot was impressed by Joyce's method because it facilitated placing myths in focus while simultaneously the emphasis could be on the modern plot. The structural paralleling established the mythological reference and permitted a greater freedom with thematic variation, permutations and metamorphoses. In *The Cocktail Party* and the other plays, the advantages of implicating a steady mythological paralleling are discarded in favour of a more traditional and less systematic method of allusion. The systematic paralleling prescribed by the 'mythical method' helps in keeping myth/s in focus and the gap between myth and modern narrative, generates possibilities of multiple ironies and interpretations. There is an openness in such a method that Eliot ceased to pursue for understandable reasons: his aim was to guide and to propagate by relaying a model of conduct and a way of living. In *The Cocktail Party* we clearly

see this course of action. The changes initiated in the plot of the myth itself are radical; so is the re-allocation of its system of ethical values. Eliot intervenes within the very core of the myth, obliterating its basic conflicts and dismantling its conceptual integrity. This is a fundamentally different model from the one described as the 'mythical method,' which up to then he had followed in his poetry and moderately in *The Family Reunion*. Alcestis chooses to die as a proof of her love to her husband. Hers is an actual death; Lavinia leaves Edward and simply re-appears the next day, a situation hardly comparable to that of an actual death. The other Alcestis, Celia, is crucified; it is implied that she will survive in our memory as a secular saint who sacrificed her life to convert the natives. In Alcestis' death and return from the underworld, Eliot sees an opportunity to deal with the themes of martyrdom and ressurection manipulating his plot towards a Christian significance.

There is no doubt that Eliot was fascinated with mythological material as a means of expressing perennial values, synchronisms and dissonances between the past and the present. His doctrinal preoccupation eventually brought about revisions of his earlier ideas on myth/s. What we envisage is a conscious attempt to suppress personal feelings, his natural tendency to delineate conditions of alienation and despair as well as his previous artistic choices for the sake of his religious engagement. Although comparisons are not to be pursued, one is tempted to refer to Brecht, Eliot's extreme opposite in artistic and political choices. Eliot questions the ethics of myths and wonders whether they are suitable material for religious writers just as Brecht wonders whether a classical text has suitable elements that would permit its adaptation towards a Marxist orientation. But Eliot lacks the sheer pragmatism, the unreserved and utilitarian spirit with which Brecht confronts and invades classical texts to serve his political aims. Ambivalence and contradictions are characteristic of Eliot during his last years: insistence on using myth/s while, at the same time, directing his efforts towards the concealment of the origins of his plots and minimising allusions and parallels that would point to the mythological backdrop. The functions of myth as described in the 'mythical method' are abandoned since the values of the Church and a strong tendency towards didacticism directly contradict the openness and the analogical nature of the 'mythical method,' which leaves much initiative of interpretation to the spectator.

Eliot was not the first engaged writer to promote his own beliefs; the problem was that he deeply mistrusted audiences despite the fact that he had firmly decided to

write for the West End. He feared that an overt discourse on vocation and sanctity would make the plays unpopular. He, therefore, sought ways of expressing his religious/doctrinal message in terms acceptable to the audiences. Eliot chooses indirection and suggestion that, in turn, lead to new dilemmas and failures. Engaged in the task of establishing the comic mechanism that could make a play accessible, Eliot delays the revelation of his true theme, that of the holy vocation and, even when the revelation occurs, it is conveyed by a calculated obliqueness. *The Confidential Clerk* is perhaps the most characteristic example as many have noted.[96] The well-wound plot reaches its climactic moment through farcical discoveries and reversals. In the middle of such situations, Eggerson says to Colby: 'You'll be thinking of reading for orders.' What would normally have been a seminal moment in the character and the play's life comes at least as an anti-climax. The impression is one of a situation shrewdly manipulated towards an even albeit dramatically inadequate dénouement.

Alongside (or because of) the difficulties in compromising the power of situation with the religious message, Eliot abandons the theatrical devices used in *The Family Reunion* that could have supplemented his texts in general and offer clues as to their mythical background, in particular. His dilemmas are reflected in his interviews and speeches of the Fifties. In 1959, Eliot said: 'I am no longer interested in my own theories about poetic drama, especially those put forward before 1934.' In this same interview he insists – as he had done in 'Poetry and Drama' – that he sees myth 'as a point of departure, a springboard' but that he would not refer to the Greek originals as models and that the Greek tragedies offered him a 'situation' on which he could work.[97]

In the last plays, myths do, indeed, serve Eliot as 'springboards', as 'points of departure', as a ready-made guide that assists the playwright's own creative process of no interst to the spectator. Myths have ceased to be a tool of creation, a basic constituent in the overall structure of these plays. Still, Eliot's fascination with myths and archetypal motifs is genuine. He initially sees myths as primeval stories of religious significance that can be used as a means for recovering the numinous and the spiritual in modern societies. Subsequently, he attempts to combine pre-Christian and post-Christian traditions. From *The Family Reunion* onwards, there is an effort to prove that classical myth/s already contain elements that possess a Christian significance, hence the desirable continuity of culture is not disturbed. He, therefore,

consistently reflects on the idea of basing plays on myths and shrewdly manipulates them to serve his own purposes despite the fact that such attempts contradict his religious and doctrinal prejudices. His comments on the character of Sir Harcourt-Reilly in *The Cocktail Party* are revealing: '...those who were at first disturbed by the eccentric behaviour of my un-known guest.... have found some consolation in having their attention called to the behaviour of Hercules in Euripides' play.' (*PD144*) How spectators would have found such a 'consolation' through the ennobling connection between Reilly and Euripides' hero since the myth is untraceable and meant to be so, Eliot does not explain. Myth is finally neutralised; almost untraceable, it fails to function even as the Christian version as Eliot wished it to be towards the end of his life.

The paradox of these plays is the double sublimation of both myth and religious conversion. The result is obscurity, sentimentality, lack of nerve and a process of concealment rather than of a living experience. Paul Claudel is again brought to mind. With great intensity and passion, *Le Soulier Satin* and *Le Partage de Midie* reveal the deeper nature of the individual engaged in an inner rapport with the divine. In Eliot's world there is no passion, no love scenes or sensuality. It is a world austere in its principles and passionless in its expression of faith. In many respects, it is a ruthless world, too idiosyncratic and puritanical to relate to the world of myth or even to the world of passionate and genuine faith. Eliot is consumed in the contrivance of plots that would plausibly lead the elected to the acceptance of his holy vocation.[98] Therefore, his aim to present myth in a Christian context, in fact, as a sort of Christian parable, is frustrated. One has only to think of the potentialities of religious parables within the form and style of *Sweeney* where directness, physicality, ritualistic elements and songs offer possibilities of a new model. Characteristically, Eliot himself refused to speculate on what it might have been like if he had done so.[99]

From the above discussion, it becomes quite obvious why Eliot's 'myth-plays' should not be compared with those of the French playwrights, as some critics have suggested. Although the characteristics of the traditional method will be discussed in one of the next chapters, it will suffice here to say that in the French plays the myth works on the surface; its plot (story) is directly dramatised and the subversive approach to mythological personae and to the values they represent create a new, dynamic version of the myth in question. In the French plays, myth/s do not function

in parallelisms or analogical/referential systems, much less as 'springboards' or 'points of departure' as Eliot wants them to be in his last plays. Already in 1956, Giorgio Melchiori seems to be the only one who realised that Eliot's 'mythical method' is quite different and can only be compared by means of contrast with that of the French dramatists. Melchiori reaches a significant conclusion:

> They [the French] deliberately gave a new twist to the ancient myths: keeping even the mythological names, they wanted to emphasize the connection, they wanted their audiences to assume from the very start that their characters were literary creations acquiring little by little new individual personalities. Eliot instead tried to follow the reverse process by starting from characters who were supposed to belong to ordinary life in modern times and making the audience realize that their plight was the same as that of Greek heroes. The result is that while in the first case we have abstract types gradually humanized, in Eliot we have everyday characters de-humanized.[100]

D. E. Jones, discussing Melchiori's comments, points out that in Cocteau, Giraudoux, Anouilh and Sartre the process ends in an image of modern man while 'for Eliot it ends in an image of permanent human nature... His eclecticism leads towards universality and the fulfilment of the role of poetry in the theatre.'[101]

In reality, Melchiori's comments succinctly interpret Eliot's definition of 'the mythical method' as a process that starts from the concrete and known and points to the perennial and, therefore to the mythical. In *Ulysses*, Bloom, Stephen, Molly and Joyce through them create a new myth – the myth of a modern Odysseus, the myth of the modern hero and the modern mind. Eliot succeeds in creating the myth of the modern metropolis and of a collapsing, fragmented world in *The Waste Land*. What makes the parallelism with myths an eloquent, even, necessary device in works like *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* is their loose, basically plotless narrative, the heterogeneity of material and the multiple references to other texts. The authorial and powerful nature of such old and universally well-known stories offers the reader a steady point of reference and a key to meaning. When Eliot resorts to elaborate plots, there is nothing really to be co-ordinated with or shaped through myth since the plot is there to do the job. To handle mythological material as radically as he had done in

his poetry and *Sweeney,* Eliot would undoubtedly have needed different theatrical forms.

It is a basic argument of this thesis that myth in the inter-war years, through its anti-realistic nature offered possibilities of new modes of narrative/dramatic treatment. In the previous chapter, I repeatedly emphasised that the general term 'mythical method' involves a variety of techniques and devices. Whatever means a writer engages (parallelism to a myth/mythological motif/fragments of myth, allusions, thematic permutations, contrast or juxtaposition) their common denominator is that they are so organised as to construct analogical systems of reference and of a *noticeable patterning* that permits the reader/spectator to recognise the kind of relation to or the games played with the myth involved. Thus myth/s becomes a positive constituent in the overall synthesis of a play or narrative – a vital ingredient in the creation of a modern work of art. As already suggested, the 'mythical method' permits great freedom in the handling of mythological material. One of the most impressive elements in *Sweeney Agonistes* is the openness in the treatment of its themes as these are indicated by the two epigraphs. *Sweeney* can be interpreted in a Christian context or in the context of mythological reference or simply as a story of modern alienation. Openness is the hallmark of the 'mythical method'. When eventually doctrinal concerns, didacticism and the need to guide the audience towards a Christian interpretation prevail, the 'mythical method' totally collapses.

Eliot's contribution to modern drama is to be found in the forms and the ethos of *Sweeney Agonistes* and in the structural design and the fragmentation of *The Waste Land,* not in the so-called 'myth-plays'. The model of *The Waste Land* survives today as a potential basis for exploiting myths, aligning modernist and post-modern artists in their pursuit of significant forms for re-working mythological material. Forms like Heiner Müller's 'synthetic fragments' can be directly linked to *The Waste Land.* Müller himself explicitly refers to Eliot's poem as a model and a formative influence for his *Waterfront Wasteland, Medea Material, Landscape with Argonauts* and *Description of a Picture.*[102] Though many have referred to Eliot, as one of numerous influences, there seems to exist a more substantial appropriation of the Eliotian model by Müller, possibly neglected because of his Brechtian background and the dynamic entrance of history into his radical writings. As a unique example of a post-modern

75

writer incessantly inspired by Greek myths, which gradually become the hallmark of his texts, of his imagery, his conceptual and discursive practices, I shall return and examine in more detail Müller's 'synthetic fragments' and his creative appropriation of the model of *The Waste Land* in the Brecht chapter and in the conclusion of the thesis.

4. O'Neill and the Mythical Method

Among the numerous myth-plays written between the two World Wars, *Mourning Becomes Electra*[1] occupies a unique position in its use of *The Oresteia* and as a serious attempt towards the creation of a modern tragedy. In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, O'Neill achieved a synthesis of myth, historical past and present in a structurally and formally impressive work. This chapter focuses on several aspects of O'Neill: his efforts to achieve a form capable of accommodating his notion of tragedy, his exploitation of novelistic techniques, his methods of faking realism, his relation to the American and European literary/cultural traditions, as well as his reactions to Joyce's *Ulysses*, an issue – it is maintained here – that has not been adequately examined. Critical literature has thoroughly ignored the issue when considering the use of *The Oresteia* in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. O'Neill's highly personal application of the 'mythical method' derives directly from Joyce's novel, and not from Eliot's description of it. All existing data suggests that O'Neill ignored Eliot's analysis and apparently the term itself. Although the main focus of this chapter will be on *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the final section is dedicated to the last plays in order to show how O'Neill's idea of myth and modern tragedy develops and is notably exemplified in *The Iceman Cometh*.[2]

Despite its indisputable merit, O'Neill's trilogy remains a somewhat controversial work. The extensive use of Freudian elements was blamed for making the trilogy more 'clinical than tragical'.[3] Negative criticism was directed towards its melodramatic elements, the wordiness and over-explicitness of the text but – first and foremost – towards a serious failure of language.[4] George Steiner is famous for accusing O'Neill of 'an inner vandalism by sheer inadequacy of style. In the morass of his language the high griefs of the House of Atreus dwindle to a case of adultery and murder in some provincial rathole.'[5] Leaving aside Steiner's rather literary and elitist assumptions, most would accept that some of the above comments provide substantial grounds for discussion. However, accounts of numerous performances attest to the emotional power the trilogy evokes and the magical atmosphere it creates, thus balancing, if not overriding, other inadequacies.[6]

It should be emphasised that some of the earlier critical commentary on *Mourning Becomes Electra* – and on O'Neill in general – has been recently subjected

to revision. His work has ceased to be the object of psychological or formal analysis only; it is seen in relation to the cultural and social issues which formed the fortunes and values of that part of the previous century in the United States. The Eighties offered stimulating texts by Jean Chothia, John Chioles, Michael Manheim, Norman Berlin and C. W. E. Bigsby.[7] O'Neill's centenary in 1988 marked the beginning of an era where attention was drawn to aspects of his work neglected or ignored until then. The Hungarian critic Peter Egri pointed out new directions of critical focus. Egri researched the historical and social aspects of *Mourning Becomes Electra* and discussed the narrative and novelistic elements in O'Neill's work at length.[8] Kurt Eisen, Ernest G. Griffin, Stephen A. Black and Joel Pfister have greatly expanded the scope of O'Neillian criticism, while Anne Fleche has enriched our idea of O'Neill's use of realism.[9]

The extensive biographical data that came to light with the Gelb biography (1962) and most notably with the two-volume biography by Louis Sheaffer (in 1968 and 1973 respectively) was supplemented in the Eighties by research on and further publishing of extracts from O'Neill's notes and diaries.[10] He is revealed as a man with a sharp eye into the social, political and cultural realities of his time and well-informed of the developments and the avant-garde movements in European literary and theatrical matters. His work centres on crucial aspects of American history and culture albeit through an idealistic and seemingly ahistorical approach. O'Neill was a rebel, a relentless experimenter and his voluminous oeuvre was more often than not misunderstood by his contemporaries. His plays *Mourning Becomes Electra, The Iceman Cometh* and *Hughie* were well ahead of their time. Even today one feels that – in a sense – they are 'new' plays in need of further critical attention which will elucidate primary aspects of content, form and structure[11] and all the more so, because they are rarely performed partly because of their length and partly because of their textual and theatrical complexity that makes huge demands on producers, actors, directors and audiences. In the light of recent criticism, an attempt will be made here to reconsider the trilogy in its use of the *Oresteia*. Through this discussion, one hopes to show why *Mourning Becomes Electra* is a seminal work: how it introduces techniques of subverting realism and how these techniques are developed in his last plays, particularly in *The Iceman Cometh*, where O'Neill manages to merge myth and tragic experience within a form that challenges realism. It is a significant achievement despite the weaknesses and inadequacies that may – and do – exist in O'Neill's work.

O'Neill had no particular interest in recasting classical myths as such. Integrating mythological material was part of his persistent experimentation with concepts and formal issues relating to the question of modern tragedy – a process that reached its climax with *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931). Nevertheless, two of the prior plays have been associated with Greek mythology. *The Great God Brown* (1925) deals with the contradicting forces working within the individual.[12] This inner division is identified with the Nietzschean idea of the Dionysian dismemberment and is conveyed through the use of built masks. The split personality is initially manifested in the name of one of the main characters: Dion Antony. Dion expresses the Dionysian aspect of a personality: creativity, sexuality and boldness. Antony stands for Christian virtue. In the playwright's own words 'Antony was named after St. Antony, the masochistic life-denying spirit of Christianity and Dion is the creative pagan acceptance of life.'[13] Dion's self-doubt and sense of alienation are seen as a malaise that springs from the realities of modern life. Brown, the all American Boy and successful philistine, personifies the materialistic values of middle-class Americans. When Brown reaches a deadlock, he assumes the mask of the dead Dion and it is then that Dion's spiritual anxiety acquires the tone of a mocking irony.

There are loose associations with aspects of the mythology of Dionysus but the plot and the characters are original. Sheaffer credits Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as one of the writer's sources.[14] Above all *The Great God Brown* is a consciously Nietzschean play, an endeavour to put into practice Nietzschean ideas and aesthetics through the use of masks and expressionistic effects. It is also a play permeated with Freud, in whose work O'Neill was becoming increasingly interested in the early Twenties. In an effort to explain the use of masks which had mystified audiences and reviewers, O'Neill pointed to Freud and to the theme that was to become dominant in many of his plays: 'For what at bottom is the new psychological insight into human cause and effect but a study in masks, an exercise in unmasking?'[15] O'Neill himself never gave any indication that his intention was to rework the myth of Dionysus, although, the Niezschean idea of dismemberment, the hero's split personality, the use of masks and the names of the protagonist/s bear vague allusions to the Dionysian mythology. As many other writers of the era had done – Eliot most notably – O'Neill drew from many sources and relied on reference, allusion, myth and ritual to convey the state of the modern mind.

Desire Under the Elms (1924) – written a year before *The Great God Brown* – is frequently approached as a re-working of the myth of Hippolytus.[16] Some have pointed to affinities with Racine's treatment of the myth, while its 'symbolic incest theme' is thought to bear allusions to the myth of Oedipus.[17] One can legitimately wonder why the Medean myth would not be an equally pertinent source. The archetypal relations all these myths contain are definitely echoed in the play, not to add the numerous Biblical allusions that run throughout the text. Otherwise, there is not a consistent paralleling or other kind of systematic reference to myth/s in the play. As in the case of *The Great God Brown, Desire Under the Elms* can be placed within the broader context of what we call 'mythical'. By all accounts, O'Neill never connected *Desire* with Hippolytus or any other myth. The most he allowed himself to say was: 'I intend to use whatever I can make my own.'[18] Perhaps O'Neill was echoing the example of his great master, Strindberg, who refused to refer to *Agamemnon* as the literary prototype of *The Father*; or O'Neill was simply wise enough to dispense with Eliotian skeletons in the mythological cupboard.

Desire is important for the discourse developed in this thesis: it shows O'Neill capable of making the significant distinction between a vague allusion to an archetypal or mythological motif and a conscious use or parallelism or re-working of a myth in whatever manner (obvious or oblique). *Desire* is relevant here for another reason: we trace the origins of themes, motifs, and ideas that achieved a more thorough handling in the trilogy. The action is placed within the context of New England Puritanism, which was to become the historical background and thematic centre of *Mourning Becomes Electra*; the themes of repressed sexuality, of Eben's maternal yearning and the emergence of a powerful Oedipal complex all become the driving forces of the trilogy's action.

It is interesting to note that reviewers of the time accepted *Desire* as a tragedy or 'a poetic tragedy' as well as a turning point in the writer's development. Joseph Wood Krutch claimed that in *Desire* O'Neill succeeded in divorcing the action from the reality of the particular and was able to concentrate on the interpretation of the abstract or the idea. In that way O'Neill extracted the play from the trivia of detail to which moralistic criticism is inevitably attached and dealt 'with the eternal tragedy of man'. Krutch recognised in Ephrain Cabot the quality of the tragic hero since he 'belongs to something larger than [himself] which confers dignity and importance on [him].'[19] Edgar F. Racey, Jr claims that the play combines 'a traditional tragic theme

(the Oedipus legend) with a dramatic reconciliation in the interests of a higher virtue (Justice)' and interestingly aligns *Desire Under the Elms* with *Mourning Becomes Electra* noting that, in both, O'Neill adopted the structure of classical tragedies. He adds:

> The use of myth, as Eliot has pointed out, affords the artist both the necessary artistic control to explore his subject and the means of generalisation. In both plays we see O'Neill creating characters who, by their very natures, are endowed with the necessary motivation to enact the myth; both plays too, though different in many ways, contribute to a unified dramatic vision and testify to the fact that this is the way O'Neill found life.[20]

Queried in 1925 about the play, O'Neill called *Desire Under the Elms* 'a tragedy of the possessive – the pitiful longing of man to build his own heaven here on earth by glutting his sense of power with ownership of land, people, money.'[21] The sexualised notion of economic ownership and of self-ownership as expressed in the play is a recurring motif in this phase of O'Neill's work and reflects a cultural as well as a historical characteristic of the era in the United States.

Early in his career, O'Neill described the two objectives of his dramaturgical ambition. His first aim was:

> To see the transfiguring nobility of tragedy in as near the Greek sense as one can grasp it, in seemingly the most ignoble, debased lives.... I'm always trying to interpret Life in terms of lives, never just lives in terms of characters. I'm always acutely conscious of the Force behind (Fate, God, our biological past creating our present, whatever one calls it – Mystery certainly) and of the one eternal tragedy of Man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle, to make the Force express him instead of being...an infinitesimal incident in its expression. And my profound conviction is that this is the only object worth writing about and that it is possible – or can be – to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theatre which

may to some degree bring home to members of a modern audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figure on the stage.[22]

The Nietzschean echoes can hardly be missed, especially in that the passage implies a religious concept of the theatre. O'Neill's work is an endeavour in grasping the essence of the 'tragic' in a modern framework and Nietzsche was the first and most lasting influence in this respect, especially during the early stages of O'Neill's career. Although no other American artist was influenced as deeply, O'Neill was not isolated in his admiration of Nietzsche. The avant-garde, the radical and the leftist circles he frequented circa 1910 were under the spell of the philosopher's ideas. The theatre movement that sprung from *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) and Wagner's ideas for a theatre of Total Artwork (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) became instrumental in the evolution of the new American drama. The innovations of Appia, Craig and Reinhardt, who favoured a ritualistic and anti-realistic theatre, alongside the Expressionist movement had a great impact on critics and artists such as George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell, George Jean Nathan, H. L. Mencken, Kenneth Macgowan, Robert Edmond Jones, Herman Rosse, all friends and collaborators of O'Neill.[23]

O'Neill's revolt against religion and his contempt for the materialistic orientation of American society found a proper channel of expression in Nietzsche's attacks against the spiritual sterility of religious and social institutions. He agreed with Nietzsche who considered Greek tragedy as a unique fusion of art and religion. Nietzsche rejected Aristotle's assumption that tragedy is based on action and maintained that everything was directed towards 'pathos'. Nietzsche saw the tragic myth as an expression of man's metaphysical longing for self-transcendence through the 'Will to Power'. 'The tragic myth has to convince us that even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that the Will in the eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself... The joy aroused by the tragic myth has the same origin as the joyous dissonance in music.'[24] To be sustained life needs an illusion that could cover dissonance with the veil of beauty, a life-lie, the Nietzschean Apollonian dream. Suffering and pain are justified in art as aesthetic phenomena. Therefore, tragedy has nothing to do with pessimism in the common sense of the word. Tragedy is not pessimistic; it is life-affirming.

Such ideas must have been extremely appealing to O'Neill, who mistrusted mind and intellect and favoured feeling and pathos. O'Neill repeatedly emphasised that he had been greatly influenced by the Greek tragedians. In 1922, he described what to his mind constitutes the proper material for tragic conflict:

Life in itself is nothing. It is the dream that keeps us fighting, willing – living! Achievement in the narrow sense of possession is a stale finale. The dreams that can be completely realized are not worth dreaming. The higher the dream, the more impossible it is to realize it fully. But you would not say, since this is true, that we should dream only of easily attained ideals. A man wills his own defeat when he pursues the unattainable. But his struggle is his success! He is an example of the spiritual significance which life attains when it aims high enough, when the individual fights all the hostile forces within and without himself to achieve a future of nobler values. Such a figure is necessarily tragic. But to me he is not depressing; he is exhilarating.[25]

The search for a substitute to his lost Catholic faith permeates the early plays. As for many others of his generation (Eliot included) the crucial issue was how to exist in a world of disappearing gods and of metaphysical absence. Although O'Neill followed a different path from Eliot and remained forever estranged from established religion, he was deeply conscious of this 'absence'. Outliving two World Wars and viewing culture itself as being in a state of disintegration, he sought to go beyond rationalism and humanism to a new religious beginning. To him, the playwright's task was 'to dig at the roots of the sickness of today... the death of the Old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new One for the surviving primitive religious instinct.'[26] This 'sickness' then, is attached to the cultural and private realities of the modern world as well as to the death of the religious instinct. Already in *The Great God Brown*, we observe a concern for the metaphysical situation of man.

In the early Twenties, O'Neill became acquainted with Freudian theory, which provided the means of placing conflict within the human psyche. Indeed, as he stated, man's 'struggle used to be with the gods, but is now with himself, his own past.'[27] Towards the late Twenties a polarisation of opposing forces appears that

cannot be compromised. The unifying conceptual axis around which the whole of his work revolves is a conviction that human nature is basically ambivalent. By 1929, when he started composing *Mourning Becomes Electra*, this ambivalence is identified with the subliminal drives that trap the individual in a permanent struggle with itself; id versus ego, determinism versus free will. C. W. E. Bigsby remarks that the Apollonian vision, the dream meant to aestheticise life and give reality the coherence it lacks is often depicted by O'Neill as 'self-deception' while the struggle against fate and the pursuit of the unattainable appear as illusions 'which are the acknowledgements of defeat.' These elements, Bigsby continues, generate absurdity rather than tragedy.[28] The culmination of a vision of a Sisyphean victory similar to that of Camus does appear, especially in the last plays. In 1958, the French critic Roger Assilineau writing about *Mourning Becomes Electra* remarked: 'In its darkest moments this tragedy ... expresses a form of existentialist pessimism and constitutes a protest against the absurdity of the human condition.'[29]

The issue of tragedy and of what could potentially constitute a modern concept of the tragic were – and still are – areas of critical controversy. Efforts to re-define the tragic are often judged against the idea of the tragic as this derives from Aristotle, classical drama and the relevant criticism. Greek tragedy is a unique artistic form, generated within the specific cultural, political and social circumstances of the Athenian *polis* (city) that cannot be re-created. The notion of the tragic is already different in Shakespeare and the Renaissance. In the years between the two World Wars, Camus persistently attempted to define the essence of the modern tragic within the context of Existentialist philosophy and the notion of the absurd.[30] The objections raised are mostly based on the assumption that absurdity is incompatible with tragedy, in fact, that the one directly contradicts the other. The idea that self-consciousness, and emphasis on the trivial and the un-heroic cannot generate tragic conflict is an argument supported by critics such as George Steiner, Lionel Abel, Georg Lukàcs and others.[31] O'Neill always thought in terms of a contemporary ethos and sensibility. What perhaps distinguishes him from other playwrights of the era is a deep understanding of the Greek sense of Fate. In attempting to restore the 'otherness' of Greek fate, O'Neill combined elements and conventions from Greek tragic drama with depth psychology – the new 'myth' of his times. In doing so, he produced a personal vision, which (particularly in *The Iceman Cometh*, *The Moon of the Misbegotten* and *A Touch of the Poet*) is more obviously in accordance with the

dark, tragicomic essence of post-war theatre than with that of the classics. Because his dramas often present characters of psychological complexity, O'Neill has been described as a playwright of extreme subjectivity whose conceptual universe is limited or morbid and, therefore, lacking the qualities of the tragic writer. Even perceptive critics have tended to isolate his work from ideology, historical and social context focusing on its psychological if not Freudian dimensions.[32] Such elements form only part of his work. O'Neill dealt with continuities of character, and the cultural and historical aspects of the American past and present. He believed that the American experience of the progressive loss of the nation's spirit and the frustration of its ideals in the pursuit of money, success and power offered the proper material for the creation of tragedy.[33] O'Neill consciously attempted to create conditions for modern tragedy and tackled crucial questions that had to be answered: what would be the conceptual substratum and the dramatic form of a modern tragedy? What would be the meaning of fate, of catastrophe and of the death this catastrophe involves?

In 1920, O'Neill described his second dramaturgical aim. He was aspiring, he said 'to a wedding of the theme for a novel to the play form in a way that would leave the play master of the house'; in 1924, he significantly observed that modern plays deal with people's inner struggles and that this makes them 'plotless'.[34]

In a synthesis of dramatic, theatrical and novelistic elements, O'Neill saw the possibility of a new dramatic form that could accommodate his notion of modern tragedy. As early as 1953, Martin Lamm was the first to notice O'Neill's gift for narrative and claimed that the one-act plays (1910-20) can be seen as 'evocative short-stories' while his 'mammoth dramas as half-novels'.[35] Thirty-five years later, Peter Egri expanded on Lamm's assertion, claiming that the one-act plays show an almost natural inclination towards narrative manifested in the detailed descriptions of the dramatis personae and the set as well as in the extensive stage directions. He also documented thematic borrowings from Chaucer, Joseph Conrad and Conan Doyle while in the last extant play, *Hughie*, he finds idiosyncratic affinities of tone and atmosphere with Chekhov.[36] Egri maintains that O'Neill destroyed the cycle of plays *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed* because he eventually realised that they tended towards the novelistic rather than the dramatic.[37]

In the late twenties – an intensely experimental period for O'Neill – his tendencies towards narrative undergo a decisive shift. Until then, his efforts to master his medium had resulted in experiments that varied from play to play. Expressionistic

techniques and scenic effects, Nietzschean aesthetics and ideas, built masks, large choruses and soliloquies were tried in order to convey the inner reality of the characters and their state of mind. Freud's impact became increasingly obvious in the psychoanalytic approach of the subject matter and in the use of 'manifest' and 'latent' dialogues. Around 1926-7, O'Neill seemed to become more conscious of the potentialities of narrative/novelistic elements to expand the range of his drama. The length of the plays was extended far beyond the usual duration and long monologues, even interior monologues, were integrated within the action. Even more indicative was the massive accumulation of stage directions which were very precise and descriptive – a sort of 'running commentary' to supplement action. According to Egri, these stage directions add a somehow 'epic aspect which is enhanced by the fact that they are unplayable'.[38]

O'Neill's shift towards the novelistic coincides with the rise of the European modernist novel and the general awareness that the novel is the most important literary genre of the century, the genre that best delineates the sensibilities of the era. Though he possessed an extensive knowledge of American literature – Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman should be mentioned in particular – he was relying on the most sophisticated and self-conscious aspects of the European drama and novel for the realisation of his goals; all the more, because he was deeply aware of the pioneering nature of his own work and of his role as *the* shaper of American drama.

In 1926, while temporarily living in Bermuda, O'Neill read *Ulysses*. 'Greatly impressed' by the book he thought it one of the most extraordinary texts ever written.[35] O'Neill's admiration for Joyce dated from the years of *The Provincetown Players*. He was proud of their common 'Irishness' and frequently inquired about Joyce and his life from friends that had met him. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Dubliners* and particularly *Exiles* had engaged his close attention.[39] His reading of *Ulysses* occurred at a crucial moment when O'Neill was reconsidering issues of form and content. *Ulysses* must have been a breakthrough (as for many others) reinforcing his tendency to narrative in a more self-conscious, modernist mode. It is clearly manifested in *Strange Interlude*, written immediately after (1926-27), in its substantially lengthy, novelistic form and in the use of stream-of-consciousness monologues and 'thought asides'. Charles Marsden, one of the main characters, is a writer working on an autobiographical novel whose plot he narrates while the action

is taking place. O'Neill labelled the first two acts 'plot for a novel'. In the acclaimed production of the play in London (1984) the director Keith Hack had Marsden on the stage from the very beginning, thus sustaining the novelistic quality of the text. Berlin remarks that with 'his critical comments on the world around him he emerged as the play's spokesman, even putting Nina Leeds (the protagonist) into his perspective.'[40]

The first entry in O'Neill's notebooks about a future project of writing a 'Greek Tragedy' occurs in 1928.[41] But we know without a doubt that O'Neill conceived the idea during his stay in Bermuda in 1926 when he spoke to a friend about a modern tragedy using classical myth.[42] This discussion – as reported by Sheaffer – coincides with the reading of *Ulysses*. Considering the impression the book made on O'Neill, it seems improbable that he should not have noticed the intrinsic dialogue Joyce initiated with the Homeric epic as well as the numerous parallels/analogies he shrewdly engineered. In fact, there must have been quite a few aspects of Joyce's treatment of *The Odyssey* that attracted O'Neill's attention. Being committed to creating a new drama and to conceiving an idea of what kind of conflict could provoke a tragic impact, O'Neill was always interested in handling the 'big themes' through aspects of modern life. His reluctance to admit to any direct use of myths in his previous plays and his insistence that they were original products of his imagination must be interpreted in this context. But here was Joyce offering a method whereby myth could be intrinsic to a modern artefact without being obstructive; it enhanced resonance and provoked comparison by pointing to a mythical past while simultaneously maintaining the focus dynamically on the present. There are passages in *Ulysses*, like the visit to the brothel (Circe episode) and the scene in the Library (Proteus) that distinctively tend to the theatrical; they resemble short drama pieces where dialogue and discourse are inserted within the flux of the narrative.[43] Such techniques must have channelled O'Neill's thought towards a more self-conscious synthesis of dialogue, novelistic elements, and 'running commentary' evident already in *Strange Interlude* and later in *Mourning Becomes Electra* and startlingly achieved with a genuinely modern effect in *The Iceman Cometh* and *Hughie* in particular.

Biographers and critics are reluctant to establish any connection whatsoever between the birth of *Mourning Becomes Electra* and the reading of *Ulysses*. Yet, the temporal coincidence can hardly be accidental. Most ascribe the idea of *Mourning* to Hoffmannsthal's *Electra*, which O'Neill read in Arthur Symons' translation in the spring of 1926. In a letter to his friend and collaborator Kenneth Macgowan, (4 April

1926) O'Neill writes that the play is 'a beautifully written thing' and wondered: 'why has no one ever done it?'[44] Sheaffer, however, informs the reader of *Ulysses'* impact on O'Neill and then proceeds to the next paragraph by saying that immediately after, O'Neill read Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, which was the literary sensation of the day. O'Neill remarked to a friend – and this is the first existing reference – that 'Dreiser had written the novel of the unexceptional man, whereas he was (planning) a novel in dramatic form of an exceptional woman.' It would be, he added, of a 'revolutionary length'.[45] Sheaffer does not refer to Hoffmannsthal at all. During his long residence in Bermuda – he arrived in February 1926 – O'Neill is reported to have asked in March for a number of books on ancient Greek Tragedy, on primitive religion and history (*The Golden Bough* among them) as well as works of Saltius and Suetonius. He also decided to learn ancient Greek in order to read tragedies in the original. By following Sheaffer, we can conclude that the reading of *Ulysses* and the idea for a modern tragedy was concretised before the reading of Hoffmannstahl's play. By all existing data it becomes evident that late in the winter of 1926 his mind was firmly orientated towards a big project with Greek myth as 'a plot idea'. Joyce's book must have been a major reinforcement both for its method of myth handling, its narrative methods and epic aspects.

It should be remembered that O'Neill's attitude towards thinkers and writers that had influenced him – and there were quite a few – was one of aloof superiority. He unequivocally acknowledged only Nietzsche and Strindberg as his intellectual mentors. Even towards Freud, whose influence was formative, O'Neill's public attitude was rather ambivalent. 'There is no conscious use of psychoanalytical material in any of my plays... All of them could easily be written by a dramatist who never heard of the Freudian theory and was simply guided by an intuitive psychological insight into human beings and their life-impulsions that is as old as Greek Drama.' And elsewhere he remarked: 'I respect Freud's work tremendously but I'm not an addict.'[46] O'Neill had a critical attitude to whatever he appropriated for his own purposes, whether it was literary material, Nietzschean ideas or Freudianism. The trilogy was his first and last attempt to use a Greek myth – the Orestes and Electra myth as structured by Aeschylus – which is paralleled with the modern plot. It was a decisive step towards the achievement of his last plays, embodying previous preoccupations with form and content as well as his experiments with speech, set, movement and techniques mostly taken from German Expressionist Drama. The

trilogy is his most self-conscious experiment with myth where the focus is on the double process of paralleling Aeschylus' plot while simultaneously attempting to re-allocate the meaning of fate, catastrophe, and catharsis. It is a lengthy project with novelistic elements integrated in the dramatic form and with 'an exceptional heroine' in contrast to the 'unexceptional' characters populating the novel and the drama of the era. He asserted his right to move away from practices already tried and he consciously undertook the task of giving America a 'big opus', a worthy equivalent of the Aeschylean Trilogy.[47]

A second entry concerning the 'Greek idea' appeared in a work diary in 1928. He had previously flirted with the *Medea* and the *Oedipus Rex* but finally focused on 'the Electra idea' with a note to include the theme of incest from *Oedipus Rex*.[48] The insistence on incest suggests that in the story of the Atreides the playwright sought to combine both the myth and the psychological complex. Oscar Cargill, Angela Belli, and Hugh Dickinson point to a second source: Robinson Jeffers' dramatic poem *The Tower Beyond Tragedy*, whose treatment of the incest theme caused a sensation when published in 1925.[49] Jeffers is the first modern dramatist to use the incest theme as an important element of the plot and does so in a highly individual interpretation of the Electra/Orestes fraternal relation. Incest is seen as a condition of utter introversion brought about by Orestes and Electra's violent revenge. For Jeffers violence begets violence and the chain of crime and revenge is an indication of racial introversion with incest as its logical outcome and ultimate expression.[50] Most likely then, O'Neill got more stimuli than just the incest theme from Jeffers since introversion is one of the driving forces behind his trilogy.

During the two years (1929-31) of writing and rewriting the trilogy, he repeatedly declared that 'Electra is to me the most interesting of all women in drama.'[51] Both the Gelbs and Sheafer suggest that Lavinia Mannon is O'Neill himself.[52] The trilogy was completed in the spring of 1931 and opened on the 26th of October 1931 at *The Guild Theatre* on Broadway.

> The Trilogy of Aeschylus was what I had in mind...As for individual
> characters, I did not consciously follow any one of the Greek
> dramatists. On the contrary, I tried my best to forget all about their
> differing Electras, etc. All I wanted to borrow was the theme pattern of

Aeschylus (and the old legends) and re-interpret it in modern psychological terms.[53]

Deciding to displace the focus from Orestes to Electra, O'Neill read Sophocles' and Euripides' tragedies and wondered 'why did the chain of fated crime and retribution ignore her mother's murderess?' Commenting on Euripides' heroine who marries Pylades, he noted that 'she peter[s] out into un-dramatic married banality' and promised to give his 'Yankee Electra an end worthy of her'.[54]

In a world of dying gods and disintegrating values where audiences share no common faith or cultural background, O'Neill wondered what kind of fate would seem plausible. In 1926, he directed his thoughts towards 'a psychological approximation to the Greek sense of Fate...which an intelligent audience of today, possessed of no beliefs in gods or supernatural retribution, could accept and be moved by.'[55] In 1929, when he started composing the trilogy, he spoke of 'a drama of hidden life forces – fate – behind lives of characters' which means that O'Neill was trying to broaden his vision and not limit himself to a drama of human relations.[56] Around 1930, his notes contained phrases like 'psychic fate from the past', 'fate springing out of the family' or 'psychological fate'. He also underlines that the drama of the Mannon family 'takes place on a plane where outer reality is a mask of true fated reality – unreal realism.'[57] As finally realised in the trilogy the 'modern approximation of the Greek sense of fate' combines with the psychological determinism springing from Freudian cause- and-effect and historical determinism of New England Puritanism.

The Mannon family is depicted as a close entity, breeding 'murder, love and hate.'[58] The curse is identified with the self–destructive relations the Mannons inherit from generation to generation leading to their inevitable doom 'from within'. Abe Mannon (Atreus), the head of the house, and his brother David (Thyestes) have made a huge fortune in the shipping business and are 'top heads' (*MBE19*) in the town. David seduces Marie Bratome, a French Canadian nurse employed by the family, whom Abe wants for himself. Abe throws the couple out of the house and cheats David out of his share in the business at a forced sale. The couple get married and have a son, Adam. The marriage proves unhappy, David turns to alcohol and eventually commits suicide. Ezra, Abe's son, inherits the entire property. Adam runs away to the sea and neglects his mother who turns to Ezra for help. Ezra refuses her

request and Marie dies. Ezra (Agamemnon) marries Christine (Clytaemnestra) and has a daughter, Lavinia (Electra) and a son, Orin (Orestes). While Ezra is away during the Civil War, Adam (Aegisthus) meets Ezra's wife, Christine Mannon, and becomes her lover. In order to conceal her relationship with Adam, Christine persuades him to court Lavinia. Although she is greatly attracted to Adam, she suspects his relation with Christine. The trilogy opens on the night of Ezra's return from the Civil War.

O'Neill states that 'the reason for Clytaemnestra's hatred for Agamemnon sexual frustration by his puritan sense of guilt turning love to lust.'[59] Christine married Ezra because he seemed mysterious and romantic but 'marriage turned his romance into disgust. (*MBE56*) Ezra is a puritan, trapped in his Calvinistic notion of guilt, sin, and pride. In the Mannon family 'beauty was an abomination and love a vile thing...Life was a dying. Being born was starting to die.'(*MBE92*) Yet, Ezra is fascinated by a woman such as Christine because she is sensual, passionate and 'has the flowing grace of an animal.' (*MBE20*) Of French descent, she represents an unknown world the Mannons consciously reject yet subconsciously desire. She appeals to Ezra's romantic nature, to his life-instinct, which is suppressed by his puritan upbringing; it is a duality shared by all the Mannons, men and women alike.

Christine's frustrated love for Ezra is transferred to Orin, and Ezra's love for Christine to Lavinia. Christine explains to her daughter: 'I tried to love you but I could never make myself feel you were born of any body but his!' (*MBE56*). Orin, born later, during Ezra's subsequent absence fighting the Mexican War, 'seemed my child, only mine, and I loved him for that.'(*MBE56-7*) Orin, who physically resembles Ezra and so Adam, equates his mother with the South Sea Islands of his dreams. When he returns wounded from the Civil War, he says that he had a feeling of murdering the same man again and again and this man turned out to be his father and then himself. When he learns of Ezra's death he equivocally remarks: 'He was the war to me', that is, literally (as a general) and metaphorically as a rival to his mother's affections. (*MBE126*) Orin sees Adam Brant, as a projection of his own self because Brant has been an accomplice to Ezra's murder and Orin has subconsciously desired this murder. Christine's suicide makes it impossible for Orin to take Brant or Ezra's position. From the moment he kills Brant he symbolically commits suicide. Whatever Orin's actions or desires, all are reflections of his wish to resume the position of the son as a substitute to the father.

Lavinia physically resembles her mother but possesses the temperament of her father. O'Neill calls her 'a puritan maiden'. Exceptionally strong willed, she is blind to the true motives of her actions and sees herself as a minister of justice who pursues revenge for Ezra's murder. O'Neill writes that as her mother's rival 'she's destined to be always the loser.'[60] When in *The Haunted* her sexuality is awakened, it becomes obvious that she would spare nothing and no one in order to disengage herself from the Mannons' embrace. She drives Orin to suicide and strives to protect herself and Peter (Pylades) from the Mannons since 'they are not to be trusted with love'. (*MBE284*) She vehemently denies guilt and defies divine punishment: 'I am not asking God or anybody for forgiveness. I forgive myself'. (*MBE281*) At that moment, through a slip of tongue she calls Peter 'Adam'. Only then, does Lavinia realise that escape from the world of the Mannons is not possible and that the core of destruction lies in her; she abandons Peter and shuts herself in the house never to come out again.

Ezra is the substitute for the male in Lavinia's cosmos. He is a god-like figure embodying the family's moral principles and social supremacy. He gradually becomes a terrifying presence. The principles of Puritanism he typifies seem to manipulate the fortunes of his family even from the grave. In front of his dead body, Lavinia cries: 'Oh father, don't leave me alone.... Tell me what to do.' (*MBE108*) When Orin kills Brant, Lavinia exclaims: 'It is justice! It is your justice, father!' (*MBE201*) Even Christine appeals to the husband she murdered: 'Ezra, don't let her harm Adam. I'm the only guilty one.' (*MBE167*)

To visualise this self-centred family, O'Neill worked out a net of facial and psychic resemblances among the characters whose faces bear 'a death mask-like expression'. Blue eyes and copper brown-bronze gold hair are physical characteristics common to all Mannon women and point back to the image of Marie Brantome. Both Abe and David claimed Marie. Christine resembles Marie physically as well as psychically since she possesses the same free and 'frisky' nature. It is inevitable then that Ezra, Adam and Orin would love Christine, who in body and soul is the reincarnation of Marie Brantome, the mother image. Similarly, all Mannon women fall in love with the same type of man. Christine once fell in love with Ezra. Her son, Orin resembles Ezra. Her lover Adam is the image of a romantic Ezra. O'Neill describes Adam as 'dressed with an almost foppish extravagance...as if a romantic Byronic appearance were the ideal in mind.' (*MBE40*) When Christine and Adam conspire to poison Ezra, there is a moment when she feels terrified by the facial

resemblance between her husband and her lover. (*MBE64*) In Ezra, we trace the typical Mannon male figure all Mannon women fall in love with.

In his 'Notes and Diaries', O'Neill emphasises 'the separateness, the fated isolation of the family'[61] The mask-like faces signify their inability to communicate with each other, even less with the world outside. The White House with the Greek Portico, described as a tomb, is a symbol of their isolation. All the Mannons yearn for a life outside the house on some 'blessed island'. But they dream 'the escape rather than its realization'.[62] Those who attempt to escape (David and Christine) are unable to participate in the historical flux of the real world. Their incapacity for pleasure and self-fulfilment traps them into a world of stasis and death. Their struggle to flee – because they do struggle to the end – is fatal.

The utopian longing is the counter-theme, the one juxtaposed to the themes of Puritanism and repression. O'Neill stresses its significance by insisting on the connection of the Mannons with the sea. Ezra and his ancestors were shipbuilders. Brant is a sea captain who compares ships to beautiful, pale women. Wilkins, the man who allegedly attracted Lavinia sexually during her voyage to the islands, is a ship captain who reminds her of Brant. Finally, Seth, the keeper of the house, is heard throughout the trilogy singing the sea chanty 'Shenandoah': 'Oh, Shenandoah, I long to hear you/ A-way, my rolling river! / Oh Shenandoah, I can't get near you/ Way-ay, I'm bound away...' In his diaries O'Neill writes: 'use this (the chanty) more – as a sort of theme song – its simple sad rhythm of hopeless sea longing peculiarly significant – even the stupid words have striking meaning when considered in relation to tragic events of the play.'[63]

The theme of utopian longing enters through the Mannons' wish to escape to the 'blessed' islands. O'Neill notes in his Diaries: 'Develop South Sea motive – its appeal for them all (in various aspects) – release, peace, security, beauty, freedom of conscience, sinlessness etc. – longing for the primitive – and Mother symbol – yearning for pre-natal non-competitive freedom from fear – make this island theme recurrent motive.'[64] The sea and the islands, this 'longing for the primitive' do acquire a different meaning for each of the characters. As mother symbols they retain the basic Jungian ambivalence of the Mother: they are means of both death and rebirth. When Orin speaks to his mother he identifies the island with her, quoting almost verbatim from Melville's *Typee.* (1845) In this way, Orin unconsciously reveals his desire for incest. His obsession to escape expresses a wish to satisfy his

impulses in a world where the notion of sin and guilt is unknown. When Christine kills herself, Orin is cut off from his island, the mother, and is transformed into the image of the father.

Similarly, Christine's love for Adam is incestuous not only because he is a Mannon but also because, physically, he is the alter ego of Ezra and Orin. For Orin, Adam, and Christine, the islands express a death wish. On the contrary, Ezra's and Lavinia's yearning signifies a wish for psychological and spiritual rebirth.[65] Just before his murder, Ezra realises the futility of his previous life, acknowledging that his love for Christine 'seemed like something dying that had never lived.' (MBE93) Lavinia visits the islands with Orin and, in contrast to him, returns completely changed – she has become the living image of her mother. She strives to attach herself to this new reality where love and happiness are possible. However, in both cases the islands dreamt by all the Mannons represent an illusory world of pre-lapsarian innocence. Hence the islands are a utopia on which the Mannons project their frustration. [66]

The continuous game of facial resemblances mirrors the incapacity of the Mannons to love anybody else except their own self-images. Theirs is a fatal love for the self-reflection that constructs an utterly narcissistic world. The Mannons reproduce the same patterns of relationships from generation to generation thus displaying an obsessive attachment to the past and a refusal to change. This denial is expressed through the 'death mask-like faces in repose'. O'Neill describes the mask as the visible sign of the family fate.[67] The characters hide behind masks, the house itself is described as a mask and its whiteness as a mockery. (MBE15) As O'Neill directs the Mannon drama 'takes place on a plane where outer reality is a mask of true fated reality – "unreal realism."

This mask of 'true fated reality' is eloquently conveyed in *The Haunted*, the third part of the trilogy. The authoritarian figures of the Mannons' ancestors, whose portraits are hung on the walls, are the proper setting for an Orin transformed into the living image of Ezra and a Lavinia the image of Christine. Their portraits are like Furies that seek retribution. *The Haunted* is permeated with the presence of the dead. 'They are everywhere' cries a desperate Orin. His words echo as the ultimate irony – of the many ironies developed in the trilogy – since it is he and Lavinia who have assumed the images of the dead. Orin and Lavinia strive with the deceptive images, which the one reflects upon the other: they pursue ghosts born out of their own

minds. In the library scene, the identification of Orin with Ezra is so complete that Orin suggests an incestuous relation with his sister. When Lavinia wishes he would kill himself, Orin, in a state of delirium, is fascinated at the thought of a death that would reunite him with the mother. The deceptive facial resemblances reveal the illusory nature of the Mannons' relations.[68] If in *The Eumenides*, the ghost of Clytaemnestra appears on stage haunting Orestes, in *Mourning* Christine is re-incarnated into Lavinia and drives Orin to death. *The Haunted* is a landscape of the tortured mind.

The trilogy ends with Lavinia standing in front of the portico while Seth is nailing the shutters upon her instructions. 'And throw away all the flowers' is her last command before she turns to shut herself in the house. It is a magnificent coda, a startling re-assessment of the themes, the concepts and the images developed in the whole of the trilogy. The subconscious as 'self-contained and self-sufficient,'[69] the Furies working from within, the family curse identified with Puritan inheritance – these are the lines along which O'Neill works out his approximation of the Greek sense of Fate. Resorting to Freudian psychology he identifies the conflict between the ego and the id with the distorted values of New England Puritanism and the longing for escape and sexual fulfilment.

The above analysis provides a synopsis of the guiding lines along which the critical evaluation of the trilogy has moved for quite a long time. Well-documented and pertinent to the text as it may be, it is a criticism, I submit, which elucidates *Mourning* only on a primary level. By limiting itself almost exclusively to a psychoanalytic reading and by applying criteria more or less adequate to naturalistic or psychological drama, it neglects fundamental aspects of form and structure, undermines the significant role of the mask and misinterprets the function of the Freudian cause-and-effect. Creating a modern tragedy implies a system of concepts and a significant form suitable to the expression of these concepts. It is a factor many commentators have tended to overlook. When Bigsby, for example, decides that 'psychopathology is finally no substitute for the tragic imagination'[70] one could agree in principle but it is a criticism that cannot account for what O'Neill is trying to do in *Mourning*, regardless of the degree of success. Any approach to the trilogy should take into consideration the fact that O'Neill works on a multiplicity of levels. He builds up a pyramid of conceptual, formal, theatrical, and visual devices that

gradually converge into an image of horror, creating a dramatic composition of mythical intentions and epic ambitions. In an attempt to examine how each of these co-ordinates is exploited, I shall begin with the use of *The Oresteia*.

O'Neill weaves a net of correspondences and parallels to *The Oresteia*. There is a formal parallelism in that he retains the trilogy form. There is the story parallel, precise in *The Homecoming* (*Agamemnon*) and *The Hunted* (*The Choephoroi*) and deviating from the *Eumenides* in the *Haunted*. Aeschylus' unities of time, place, and action are preserved while O'Neill adheres to some of the basic conventions of Greek tragedy, as does the chorus. O'Neill's consists of townspeople and Seth. Gossipers and provincial folks, they provide information on the past of the family; they do not intervene in the action neither can they conceive the drama of the Mannons. The chorus appears at the beginning of each act. Seth is the leading man of the chorus (the koryphaios); much more of a character than a type as the rest of them, he also functions independently as the keeper of the house.

Retaining a continuous parallelism to the events of *The Oresteia*, O'Neill proceeds to further elaborations of Aeschylus' plot by inventing new incidents, situations and motifs that are constantly opposed, juxtaposed and varied. He creates a plot of an amazing efficiency that emancipates itself from the underlying myth. The idea of the house (family) and the curse dominates throughout. The quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes is not due to adultery but to a scandal that involves the social image of the family. Since the 'self' is the only authority in the world of the Mannons, Iphigeneia's sacrifice as an actual cause of Clytaemnestra's hatred for Agamemnon is omitted. Sexual frustration is explicitly stated by O'Neill as Christine's reason for hating Ezra; but the text implies that the immediate cause for her affair with Adam is Orin's enlisting in the war. Chrisothemis is omitted, Cassandra as well. In the absence of the supernatural element O'Neill saw that he had to invent a mechanism of foreshadowing. He replaces it by the mechanism of the Freudian cause-and-effect and a system of repetitions; repetition of motivation, incidents, and motifs as well as verbal repetition create a mechanism of 'dramatic recall,' which effectively contrives a sense of pre-destined doom.[71]

In *The Haunted*, O'Neill radically moves away from *The Eumenides*. Dispensing with Aeschylus' plot and aiming at his own version of fate, he retains crucial elements of the myth permutated into modern equivalents. The Furies are not personified but they do exist. They exist through the facial resemblances and the

portraits of the Mannons' ancestors; 'the death mask-like faces' unify the story as a continuous reminder of the Mannons' idiosyncratic personalities and their fate. On the conceptual level, the mask functions as the jailer of the soul and is a consistent, powerful reference to a mythic past.[72] O'Neill contrives an end that leaves no possibility of catharsis. In Lavinia's end, worthy of her puritan ethos, he strictly adheres to conventions of Greek tragedy. Dickinson remarks that 'her recognition or anagnorisis...brings about her defeat so that, as in the classic fashion of *Oedipus Rex*, her recognition and her catastrophe exactly coincide. This is a formal virtue of the play that has not, as far as I know, been recognized or appreciated.' [73]

O'Neill's technique with parallels/allusions to *The Oresteia* includes various non-verbal devices. For example, the introductory description of the set prescribes a special curtain which the audience confronts when entering the auditorium and before the trilogy starts. On it, the whole of the Mannon estate, as seen by the outsiders (in this case the audience) is depicted: the white Greek portico, the garden, the trees, the flowers – an idyllic picture alluding to the beauty and harmony of the classic age. Egil Törnqvist claims that 'this curtain may be in a sense regarded as a fragmentary counterpart of the widely known myth the Greek tragedians rely on for it offers the audience a background story of sorts and introduces it to the major conflict in the trilogy.'[74] But the painting on the curtain works by means of contrast rather than by introducing the conflicts of the play. O'Neill works in a contrapuntal way. The curtain alludes to the cultural milieu in which myth and tragedy flourished; if the reference to the glorious past is evident, then the implied irony is even greater because the curtain reveals nothing of the terror of this house, which in the course of the performance is lit (according to stage directions) so as to convey the sense of a 'mask', of 'ugliness', 'mockery', 'with windows as 'revengeful eyes'. Once the curtain is removed the audience is involved in nearly a six-hour drama which alludes to *The Oresteia* on a number of levels. Yet – and this is certified by many accounts of even minor productions – *Mourning* imposes itself with such an extraordinary efficiency that it completely emancipates itself from the underlying myth. Myth and modern play, the 'then' and the 'now', are organically fused in a plot that needs no aid from the underlying myth. 'The play.... achieves its undoubted effectiveness without having to rely on the suggestiveness of its parallels or on the enrichment of associative imagery and classical allusions...The informed spectator understandably derives from the parallels and associations additional pleasures... The mythical

archetypes are in the play, not merely suggested by it; in O'Neill's case they have been so thoroughly transmuted as to bear the modern playwright's signature.'[75] The comparison with Eliot is almost inevitable. Eliot adopted references to myths, suggestive and cryptic, which finally frustrated his aim to show the continuities between the mythical past and modern Christian ethics.

Although it is difficult to speak of influences on a work of such originality as *Mourning*, it is here that one would like to refer to Joyce. In Joyce's treatment of *The Odyssey*, O'Neill saw an inextricable fusion of structural parallelism and thematic permutation. His creative application of the Joycean example served both his dramatic aims and his epic ambitions. Reading Joyce with great intelligence and insight he understood the significance of the structural parallelism as a co-ordinating, authorial principle that could assist the laying out of his material while the underlying myth could remain in focus, yet, unobtrusive to the modern plot. He understood the qualities of Joyce's method: the interplay of fact and myth, the necessity to construct a self-sufficient developing action. By using the title device, by retaining a parallelism to Aeschylus in the two first plays (*Homecoming*, *The Hunted*) and through various devices and symbolisms (mask-like faces, facial resemblances, colour symbolism, etc.) O'Neill created focuses of reference to the mythical past that direct the spectator's mind to the underlying myth. In the third play, *The Haunted* O'Neill changed course. Since he was aiming at a new notion of fate he apparently could not follow the ancient story. Obliged to abandon structural parallelism, he worked mostly with thematic permutations: he kept the idea of the furies, of retribution and punishment. Having firmly established the identity of the characters and his allusions to his mythological prototype in the first two plays of the trilogy, O'Neill managed in the *Haunted* to establish his own myth.

In his 'Working Notes and Diaries', O'Neill appears to be very careful in choosing the historical milieu and finding a proper counterpart for the Trojan War. Noting that the play should have 'nothing to do with period except to use it as a mask' he wonders:

> What War? – Revolution too far off and too clogged in people's minds
> with romantic grammar-school-history associations. World War too
> near and recognizable in its obstructing (for my purpose) minor

aspects and superficial character identifications (audience would not see fated wood because too busy recalling tree) – needs distance and perspective – period not too distant for audience to associate itself with, yet possessing costume etc. – possessing sufficient mask of time and space, so that audiences will unconsciously grasp at once, it is primarily drama of hidden forces – fate – behind lives of characters. Civil War is only possibility – fits into picture – Civil War as background of drama of murderous family love hate.[76]

In a later entry O'Neill seems more confident and becomes more specific:

New England background best possible dramatically for Greek plot of crime and retribution, chain of Fate – Puritan conviction of man born to sin and punishment – Orestes' Furies within him, his conscience – etc.[77]

O'Neill realised that the Civil War could function as a historical background *and* a distancing effect, permitting both mythicising and historising. He was fascinated with the themes of New England Puritanism and the American Civil War since both could be employed as a means of criticising cultural and political realities of his country at that time. Of course, his primary aim was to build a perception of modern Fate, which he sought in the workings of the subconscious and in the perennial conflict between the ego and the id. Within this conflict, O'Neill integrated two major American themes: the theme of Puritanism and that of innocence and experience, which enter through the utopian longing. It is interesting to examine how these themes connect with the American historical and cultural tradition.

Puritanism in the United States springs from colonial times. It was a prevailing mode of thinking and living among the first inhabitants who came to the New World in search of freedom to practise their faith. Puritanism deals with the relations between God and Man and considers the existence of evil in a world submitted to the absolute power of an almighty God. The notion of free will is neutralised by a strong conviction in predestination and by the Calvinistic idea of Man being born deprived since the original sin is a cardinal doctrine attached to human existence.

It should be noted, however, that initially Puritanism expressed a genuine wish for a return to the roots and the substance of Christian faith. The first Puritans wanted to restore a spirit of fraternity and simplicity to their lives similar to that of the first Christian communities. Eventually, it became a strict code of social morality and conduct. In fact, with the victory of the North and the economic growth, Puritanism became 'both more vulnerable and austere' thus losing its potentially benign aspects.[78] In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber has minutely shown how the Calvinistic doctrine of the 'elected' came to signify, in worldly terms, that money, social position, and power are acquired as a reward from God for one's irreproachable and pious life based on hard labour.[79]

In the American literature of the nineteenth century and, especially, in Hawthorne's work, Puritanism already appears as a system of distorted values. As a reaction to Puritanism, there is the culmination of its opposing movement in nineteenth-century America, that of Transcendentalism. Man is in total harmony with nature. The American, the citizen of the New World, is conceived in a state of innocence, as an Adam before the Fall. The belief in the infinite possibilities of the New Man in the New Land – what has come to be called the 'American Dream' – was taking shape in the work of Ralph Emerson and W. D. Thoreau.

In Walt Whitman, we see a balancing of the two themes as evil enters this pre-lapsarian 'garden'. In *The Song of Myself*, Whitman celebrates man's freedom in the image of his own self, naked in front of the waves of the ocean, under the yearning eyes of 'a puritan maiden', who stares behind shut windows:

'Where are you off, lady? For I see you,
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock
Still in your room.

....

Dancing and laughing along the beach came
The twenty-ninth bather.
The rest did not see her, but she saw them
And loved them.'[80]

In this image of oneness with nature, Whitman subtly introduces the recluse puritan girl who stares at the vastness of the ocean and the naked male bodies. Only

the poet-seer, the 'twenty-ninth bather' is aware of this invisible presence. This juxtaposition appears under many disguises not only in the work of nineteenth-century writers but that of the twentieth century as well. In calling Lavinia a 'puritan maiden' O'Neill points to a recognisable code of morality. 'What are you moongazing at? Puritan maidens shouldn't peer too inquisitively into spring! Isn't beauty an abomination and love a vile thing?' Christine sarcastically remarks to Lavinia (*MBE78*). The 'gaze' of Whitman's Puritan girl to the outer world is the gaze of the depraved Mannons to the world of self-fulfilment and release.

Innocence is a sign of childhood and the road to experience is a traumatic procedure in the course of which the dream of the American Adam is shattered. In Hawthorne's allegories we already see the reaction of a startled individual who faces an unfriendly world that cannot be explained in simple terms. Good is not easily distinguished from evil. Puritanism and technology frequently appear as the evil, the snake that intrudes into the garden. In Melville, appearances are false and belie the mind. He shows the individual revolting against the order of things, against a world of false appearances that escape his/her understanding. (Claggart in *Billy Budd* is a characteristic example of evil hidden behind astounding beauty). Melville implies that the effort to conceive the nature of things behind the surface is a painful experience that can lead to self-destruction. In the climactic moment of *Moby Dick*, when Ahab's battle against the whale has come to an end, when shipwreck and human corpses float in the sea, the reader is struck by Melville's insistence on the whiteness of the landscape. In the dominance of the white, the synthesis of all colours, the symbol of purity and death, innocence and the terror of knowledge, Melville comments on the deceptive appearances, the ambiguities and the complexities of the world.

Within the first decades of the twentieth century, the American Dream had been stripped of the idealism of Emerson and Thoreau. It was transformed into a relentless pursuit of wealth, power, and social prestige. Sinclair Lewis in his *Babbit* (1932) provided the classic picture of the American middle-class conformist. Hemingway's and Fitzerald's heroes and heroines are the neurotic products of a philistine society vainly attempting to reconstruct a meaningful world of their own. O'Neill himself had always been a severe critic of his country. He frequently attacked the sacred image of success and thought that the Americans were hysterically participating in the perpetuation of a destructive national myth.

The social, cultural and historical aspects to which O'Neill persistently points make *Mourning Becomes Electra* a far more complex work than a clinical application of the Freudian cause-and-effect pattern many have claimed it to be. According to Peter Egri's analysis, the Civil War and Puritanism are treated as cultural and historical parameters that shaped the nation's moral fibre. The placing of the action during the last days of the Civil War points to a crucial moment in United States history; the victory of the North over the South and the abolition of slavery 'gave a impetus to an uninhibited upsurge of capitalist economy, industry and Liberalism.'[81] O'Neill emphasises the social and financial pre-eminence of the family and their ancestors. The play opens on the day the Civil War ends; three of the main characters are soldiers (Ezra, Orin and Peter), while there are references to the abolition of slavery and the assassination of Lincoln. Egri draws attention to the fact that *Mourning* was written at a time (1929-31) when O'Neill had become completely disillusioned with the political and social realities of his country. He believed that the United States had no cause to enter World War I and that they had paid a very heavy price in human lives. The shattered morale that followed the War, the economic crisis, and Prohibition all reached their peak during the years *Mourning* was being written.[82] His reactions are projected on the historical events of 1861-65 during which the trilogy takes place. O'Neill, through well-sustained ironies, constantly opposes and juxtaposes historical fact, personal experience and allegedly national interests. Ezra, a very successful man in his public life, is satisfied with the peace achieved between North and South but cannot find his own peace: his beloved wife is about to murder him. Orin explains his act of heroism as a result of fear and mockingly recalls the wives and relatives waving handkerchiefs to the soldiers who were leaving to become heroes in the War. Apart from the over-analysed, psychological significance, his obsessive dream of killing himself again and again can be an expression of his conviction that war is suicidal. Egri refers to the increased number of suicides that followed World War I pointing out that Orin is in the position of a narrator who conveys actual experience: psychological abnormality as a result of war experience.[83]

Lavinia exemplifies the various contradictions and distortions of the family. She amalgamates the rigidity of Puritanism and the urge for revolt, austerity and sensuality. Her blind determination to revenge Ezra's cuckolding and murder cannot be completely explained by the Electra complex: in the society in which she lives, crimes that publicly disgrace a family have to be punished and punished in secrecy.[84]

The fear of their public exposure and public scandal is an unthinkable alternative. In contrast, the members of society – as represented by the chorus – 'the untroubled, contented, good' or those whose 'virtue remains un-tempted'[85] like Hazel and Peter, are either eroded by their puritan upbringing or unable to conceive the complexity of the world. O'Neill takes great pains to convey the understanding that austerity and secrecy are not just idiosyncratic peculiarities of the Mannons but specific qualities of the American character and mentality.[86]

In *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the spirit of Puritanism serves either to rationalise unsatisfied impulses (Lavinia, Orin) or to channel frustration into the pursuit of social and financial profit (Ezra and Abe). Both Abe and Ezra recall great characters of the American literary tradition, Melville's Ahab and Hawthorne's Arthur Dimmesdale. Hybres in *Mourning* has to do with the crimes Abe and Ezra committed against love and life by imposing a model of living and thinking that suffocates vital impulses of sexuality and fulfilment. Secondary characters are poignantly contrasted to the isolation and psychological perplexity of the Mannon family. By destroying the Mannons, O'Neill symbolically denies a world that generates social distortion and psychological introversion, a world of stasis and death. It is a symbolic gesture that, as Chioles and Egri point out, manifests a romantic and partly ahistorical approach.[87] Puritanism is presented as a code of ethics, which survives from generation to generation and, therefore, transcends the story of the Mannons. Through the endless repetitions, the thematic variations, the direct and indirect references to the Puritan ethos, Puritanism acquires the authority of an independent force.

By identifying unconscious wishes with the 'American Dream' and repression with Puritanism, O'Neill brings the trilogy into the very centre of his country's consciousness. He indirectly exposes the disintegration of a national myth through the moral collapse of the characters for whom the dream is impossible and reality beyond their grasp. The desires and expectations projected on the future remain forever unfulfilled. The individual turns to an introspective voyage into the past and retreats into the self as an ultimate protest and expression of its frustration. This is, in fact, a complete reversal of the American Myth – the 'American Dream', which O'Neill integrates within the myth of the Atreides. Lavinia's voluntary imprisonment in the house can be interpreted in such terms. O'Neill's emphatic remark that his aim was to

delineate the portrait of a 'Yankee' Electra reflects his intention to write a tragedy based on vital issues of American life and experience.

In 1928, when O'Neill decided upon the 'Electra idea', he studied the relevant tragedies (Sophocles' and Euripides' *Electra*, Euripides' *Orestes*). Lavinia seems to be a descendant of both Sophocles' and Euripides' heroines. Orin presents startling affinities with the title hero of Euripides' *Orestes*.[88] In Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, Electra has a limited role; she is always in the shadow of Orestes. Given O'Neill's fascination with the character and his intention that she would be at the centre, it may seem rather strange that he finally chose to use *The Oresteia*. Such an assumption, however, would be justified if psychological delineation of character and a thematic re-working were the only focuses of the playwright's attention. His main concern was to secure a form that would combine novelistic detail and tragic experience while, simultaneously, 'leav[ing] the play master of the house'.

According to John Chioles, the choice of *The Oresteia* was prompted by its trilogic form. The trilogic form appeared and vanished with Aeschylus and *The Oresteia*. By the time Sophocles' early tragedies appeared, this 'art form has vanished and vanished forever from the tragic contests of the Dionysia.'[89] Chioles argues that Aeschylus invented a formal composition consisting of three parts and that each part offers a 'thea' (view) on a chain of murderous events that lead to a human and divine impasse. In the *Agamemnon*, a primitive world dominated by crime, bloodshed and revenge builds up 'a perception of criminal act and nemesis'.[90] In *The Choephoroi* this world collapses in ruins with no visible hope of catharsis. Divine and human parameters reach a deadlock in the first two parts (*Agamemnon*, *Choephoroi*) inevitably followed in the third (*Eumenides*) by the establishment of a new order. In *The Eumenides*, human justice fails to solve the impasse. The intervention of Athena releases Orestes from the hunting of the Erynies and transforms them into benevolent deities. Chioles argues that '[h]ealing and celebration in the resolution of the trilogy become necessary parts of an intelligible structure; they authenticate the "tragic form" where the story and frame of the story become one, and action is fundamentally tragic action, a victim of time and perishing.'[91] The collapse of the human and cosmic order in the first two parts 'necessitates a reconstruction through ananke within a profound disorder of the larger reality implicit in the world of the trilogy.'[92] The trilogic form then comprises a process of 'structuring, de-structuring and piecing together'.[93] Form

and essence are inseparable in the trilogic composition which is the formal conceptualisation of tragic thought and action.

In O'Neill's trilogy divine intervention and catharsis are unattainable. Society is neutralised by distorted values and the nation is involved in a civil war. The expansive (and fragmented) form of trilogy enabled O'Neill to expose a huge canvas of social impotence and metaphysical absence analytically, to present at length the struggle to avoid fate, and to establish a pattern of revolt and repression which brings the curse to its fulfilment. In *Mourning*, the chain of bloodshed and revenge in *Agamemnon* and *The Choephoroi* is not counter-balanced in *The Haunted* as it is in *The Eumenides*. Consciously working out precise parallels and one-to-one correspondences for *Agamemnon* and *The Choephoroi* in *The Homecoming* and *The Hunted*, O'Neill dramatically projects his complete break with *The Eumenides*. He takes the chain of destruction from the end of *The Choephoroi* and brings it to its logical fulfilment. While at the end of *The Eumenides* the stage is populated with the communality of the chorus, which represents a healed and appeased humanity, in *The Haunted* 'the separateness, the fated isolation' of the self dominates. The arbitrariness of the 'self', who has nowhere to rely on, bursts out with an almost demonic power. Lavinia and Orin resemble demons of a primitive past that inflict punishments of extreme cruelty. O'Neill depicts a world of evil. The bleakness of vision and the metaphysical nihilism the trilogy conveys are indeed extreme. 'Healing and celebration and piecing together' are negated by the very nature of O'Neill's vision.

As O'Neill inverts the American Dream so he uses the trilogy form to invert its primary significance and to endow it with a new content. Whether his is a limited or morbid vision, as many have claimed, one has to admire his self-consciousness in weaving and elaborating a coherent notion of fate and in attempting to tackle conceptual and formal issues relevant to the problem of modern tragedy.

The Notes and Diaries on *Mourning Becomes Electra* testify to the playwright's efforts to find the appropriate form and language. There are six drafts in all, which reveal experimentations with asides, soliloquies and built masks. After six weeks of unsuccessful attempts all were abandoned for 'an utmost simplicity and naturalness'; built masks were rejected in favour of make-up that conveyed 'mask like faces'.[94] Later notes, however, suggest that O'Neill became increasingly concerned with formal and structural problems. He finally decided to 'get an

architectural fixed form into the outer structure – and more composition into inner structure'.[95] To achieve this, he created a symmetrical diagram for each of the three plays. Each play starts outside the portico with Seth and the chorus of townspeople. The action is subsequently transferred to the house. The only exception is the fourth act of *The Hunted* – set exactly in the middle of the trilogy – which occurs on board Brant's ship and underlines the impossibility of escape.

O'Neill uses the patterns of the Oedipus and Electra complexes as a dramatic mechanism. The possibilities offered by depth psychology in exploiting human relations, character and emotional depth are discarded. This is a key issue for the understanding of what O'Neill means when using the terms 'psychology', 'psychological' or 'realistic'. Employing the Freudian cause-and-effect pattern in a consciously single-minded and schematic way, he managed to create an inexorable mechanism, a fate. Used thus the Freudian pattern excludes psychological delineation and provides a limited motivation which repeated throughout amounts to a machine that engineers destruction. Through its repetition the Freudian mechanism becomes an almost autonomous force that manoeuvres the development of plot and action in a variety of ways. In fact, to achieve his 'unreal realism,' O'Neill employs a strategy based on various forms of repetition. Repetition of motivation with variations according to each character is interrelated with repetitions in speech and dialogue: the same words and phrases, each time recited by different characters with a different connotation. Through verbal repetition, words and phrases acquire a cumulative power and significance; they become keys that enhance meaning and resonance. Such a system of interrelated repetitive patterns generates reversals and ironies and produces a highly patterned plot, characteristic of anti–realistic dramatic/narrative structures.[96] Language, despite wordiness, melodramatic overtones and the 'self-analytic' manner in which the Mannons express themselves, is well naturalised within the 'unreality' of the play's world.[97] The strict geometrical design, repetition, and Freudian cause-and-effect as a mechanism of plot and action illustrate the inevitability of Fate.

Aiming at 'abstraction in character-drawing' O'Neill used realistic detail selectively.[98] By creating dramatis personae that oppose their fate to the end and by juxtaposing the temperamental qualities of each character to those of the others – strong-will (Ezra, Lavinia) to vulnerability (Christine), sensuality and eroticism (Christine, Adam) to austerity – he managed to avoid flat characters. In this respect,

characters in *Mourning* are strongly reminiscent of characters in Strindberg's chamber plays, especially of the Mother in *The Pelican*, of Mummy and the Daughter in *The Ghost Sonata*. Strindberg's characters are thoroughly convincing though hardly developed in the manner of the realistic mode; the same can be said of the characters in *Mourning*. But, there is another element that aligns O'Neill's characters with those in the chamber plays. The notion of the mask, the demon and the vampire permeate these last of Strindberg's chamber plays; in performances, actresses and actors rarely appear in realistic make-up; make-up is invariably exaggerated, pointing to the idea of a mask rather than that of a face. Considering O'Neill's veneration for Strindberg, it is not unlikely that he got the sources of his idea of the 'mask-like faces in repose' from his artistic mentor. Form, repetition, characters, and language counter-balance the realistic story, dialogue and historical locale thus serving O'Neill's notion of 'unreal realism': they are techniques of subverting realism. That is why thematic analysis based solely on a psychoanalytic approach is totally inadequate here. His techniques of subverting realism and creating classic fate as 'otherness' converge in the idea of the mask-like faces 'in repose':

> What I want from this mask concept is a dramatic arresting visual symbol of the separateness, the fated isolation of this family. I see now how to retain this effect without the use of built masks.... I can visualize the death-mask-like expression of characters torn open by passion as extraordinarily effective.[99]

What O'Neill describes here is a constant alternation of abstraction and empathy: the mask is a barrier that pushes the psyche into the dark depths; at moments, the psyche temporarily manages to overcome the mask and expresses itself with an explosive force. As the trilogy proceeds, one becomes aware of a progressive dominance of the mask that swallows the members of the fated family. The mask, whether the mask-like faces or the mask of the house, signifies death as well as a notion of destructive impulses that refers to a primitive past. *Mourning Becomes Electra* conveys a sense of 'a vindictive fate' that belongs to a world which is 'older than that of *The Oresteia*, even older than that of the myth itself.'[100] The mask functions as the fusion point of the various textual and formal aspects of O'Neill's treatment of the story, while it simultaneously encompasses various layers of racial

and human experience. As Chioles observes 'the mask... reinstates in O'Neill's trilogy the multiple phases of the myth, taking it beyond a "mechanistic" view of the psyche. An Elektra-complex is joined by an Oedipus-complex to wreak destruction.'[101]

If O'Neill creatively appropriates the Joycean technique of parallels and uses *The Oresteia* as an underlying pattern, then he simultaneously subverts it by bringing the mask to the foreground. The mask signifies the presence of myth in the trilogy. Which myth though? The mask – and this is a paradox – in a way diverts attention from the parallelism with *The Oresteia* and enriches the trilogy with a broader primitive *and* modern dimension. It is noteworthy that in 1932, a year after the performance of the trilogy, O'Neill expressed a wish to 'see *Mourning Becomes Electra* done entirely with masks', further reflecting that 'now I can view it... quite removed from the confusing preoccupations the classical derivation of plot once caused me.'[102] This is a significant comment. Having put tremendous energy into creating a modern equivalent to the ancient plot and to classical fate, he most likely felt that he should have handled Aeschylus' version of the relevant myth with more freedom since the fixity of the mask made sufficient reference to the mythic past, without disturbing the modernity of the whole. The mask dissociates the trilogy from both the underlying myth and the cause-and-effect mechanism and endows it with a primitive/mythic as well as an utterly modern context. Painters, writers and thinkers of the modernist era such as Picasso, Yeats, Pound, T. S. Eliot (*Sweeney*), Brecht, and O'Neill himself (*The Great God Brown, Lazarus Laughed*) – not to mention Freud – intensely dealt with the idea of the mask in its capacity to hide as well as uncover multiple layers of racial experience, human personality and psyche. O'Neill's idea of the mask-like-faces 'in repose' assimilates the ethos and the preoccupations with concepts, myths (primitive and modern alike) and methods of dramatic/theatrical exposition that are characteristic of his era. The mask, the multi-layered face, the split personality, the cult of introversion, the 'myth' of Freudianism, all constitute the conceptual and artistic cosmos of modernity; they are part of its own mythicity.

O'Neill subtitled *Lazarus Laughed* 'a play for an imaginative theatre' but *Mourning Becomes Electra* is the one that undoubtedly deserves the label: for its artistry and theatricality, its balancing and re-balancing between high passion and abstraction, its visual eloquence as well as its inextricable interweaving of form and content. Its novelistic qualities are evident in the impeccable narrative evolution, the

complex and elaborate plot, the length and the peculiarities of conflict, as elaborated above. The stage directions include specific directorial and lighting suggestions. They dictate a specific representation of set, characters and stage lighting, implying the playwright's intention to exercise control over the stage iconicity and the overall performance towards a particular interpretation of the text. Most notably, the detailed descriptions and stage directions imply a narrator who – in the written text – addresses the mind of the reader leading his/her imagination to construct a panorama of characters, incidents and milieu.

The playwright was present throughout the rehearsals at *The Guild Theatre* and had expressed his satisfaction with the final result and the acting. At a later stage, he confessed his doubts by saying that 'Alla Nazimova (Christine) and Alice Brandy (Lavinia) gave wonderful performances in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, but they did not carry out my conception at all. I saw a different play from the one I thought I had written.'[103] His objections possibly had to do with the special demands of the trilogy: stylisation, differentiations in their body language and conduct that should alter from act to act, resemblances, etc. O'Neill's idea of 'an imaginative theatre' is mostly to be found in the elements that are difficult to realise in a performance context. The facial resemblances, if ideally achieved, are not only effective; they are also self-provable. But there is an obvious difficulty in fully managing such resemblances. Even more intriguing are the physical resemblances while transformations have been criticised as unconvincing.[104] In the beginning, Lavinia is a rigid and flat-chested girl and after the voyage to the islands her body, formerly thin and undeveloped, has filled out. 'Her movements have lost their square-shouldered stiffness and Orin has acquired a stiffness of bodily movement that reminds Ezra.' (*MBE* 222) The idea was probably taken from Strindberg's *The Pelican,* where, by the end of the play, Gerda is transformed physically and psychically. Whatever efforts are made such devices can never be adequately achieved and, taking into consideration the various performances of the trilogy, one can legitimately claim that they are not even necessary. In a performance context, they are mostly revealed through dialogue and the shock of each character that s/he sees the other as a re-incarnation of another dead character. This may partly account for the over-explicitness of the text, which becomes more obvious when reading it than when attending a performance. The reader, through the stage directions, can immediately grasp their significance with no support from the text. The audience often needs the support of the dialogue in order to conceive the

directions' full extent and connotations. Indeed, the stage directions indicate a special concern for the reader. And despite the remarkable theatrical effectiveness of the trilogy, it is also striking that O'Neill conceives a whole visual and figurative language meant to engage the imagination of the spectator but mostly of the reader as to what the result would 'imaginatively' be if such devices could ideally be materialised. The trilogy offers an example of how he understood the 'wedding' of novelistic and dramatic/theatrical elements, how he subverted realism, and how he integrated all these elements into a significant form.

Having conceived the basic co-ordinates of what might constitute a notion of fate and a ground for tragedy, O'Neill felt no need to return to a thorough handling of a single classical myth again. After *Mourning Becomes Electra*, he went back to techniques of allusion and mythological reference employed more subtly and functionally than in the earlier plays (*The Great God Brown, Desire Under the Elms, Lazarus Laughed*). Underlying mythological motifs and conventions borrowed from Greek tragedy abide within the dynamics of thoroughly original plots; characters enacting their individual pathos frequently acquire their own mythic status. O'Neill spoke little of tragedy but continued to elaborate and develop his notion of fate and to further speculate on the kind of catastrophe that would befall the modern hero (or anti-hero) in terms acceptable to contemporary audiences.

By the late Thirties, envisaging the world marching once again towards destruction, O'Neill was deeply sceptical about the future of Western civilisation. He had always felt a deep repulsion for the unequal distribution of wealth and the exploitation of men. In his youth, he was an 'active socialist' and was subsequently genuinely attracted by anarchism and its 'utopian' ideals, which, to his mind, were a much 'preferable alternative to the dehumanising consequences of capitalism'.[105] O'Neill now described himself as a 'philosophical anarchist' and envisaged the rise of Fascism as a total collapse of history – of any sense of religious, social and political civilisation. After the completion of *The Iceman Cometh*, early in 1940, he had numerous projects on plays, all dealing with historical or religious personages or the history of Christianity: a play on Robespierre, a caustic comedy on a modern counterpart of the legendary anarchist, Enrico Malatesta, as well as two plays on

Hitler – O'Neill's incarnation of evil, the greatest threat to individual freedom, the pre-figuration of a new totalitarian world.[106]

In the last plays, the prevailing sense is one of a culture already dead – a discovery that immobilises the individual as far as its societal role is concerned. Unlike Eliot – who transcended the 'sickness of today' finding salvation and a sense of eternity through his attachment to the Anglo-Catholic Church – O'Neill, passionately experiencing the destructive impulse and the new barbarism of his times, managed to retain his sense of participating in the historical flux. For the mature O'Neill, one has to exist in, even surrender to, the processes of the disintegrating culture all the while retaining what he himself labelled 'a hopeless hope'.

Ernest G. Griffin, examining O'Neill's attitude towards culture, observes that the last plays indicate 'the inevitable tragedy of the cultural approach.'[107] He points to Freud's essay *Civilization and Its Discontents,* where Freud foresees the possible end of Western culture. Freud writes: 'Human beings have made such strides in controlling the forces of nature that, with the help of these forces, they will have no difficulty in exterminating one another, down to the last man.' Freud ends quite equivocally: 'And now it is to be expected that the other of the two "heavenly powers", immortal Eros, will try to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary (Thanatos). But who can foresee the outcome?'[108] Freud's struggle between Eros and Thanatos is astutely exemplified in O'Neill's last plays as a precarious *agon* between life instinct and death wish, between the destructive suicidal impulses (Hickey, Parritt in *The Iceman Cometh*) and 'hopeless hope,' i.e., the urge to sustain life within the flux of personal failures and abandoned societal roles, historical absurdity and metaphysical absence (the derelicts at Harry Hope' bar).

To be sustained, life needs a 'pipe-dream' whether it is alcohol, oblivion, revolution, or role-playing. Role-playing is a form of withdrawal from the pressures of historical and societal failures; it becomes a mode of existing. Confrontation with reality is unavoidable and, therefore, violent and traumatic. Characters like Captain Melody in *A Touch of the Poet*, Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey* or the derelicts in *The Iceman Cometh* impersonate themselves-to-be, how they dreamt to be but could not. The state where characters 'lose control of themselves' through the use of alcohol or drugs,[109] as in *The Iceman Cometh* or in *Long Day's Journey into Night*,

reveals or conceals the true self: role-playing becomes a game of ambiguity creating a tension between reality and illusion, past and present.

None of these plays is situated in the historical past. They unfold in dilapidated farmhouses (*The Moon for the Misbegotten, A Touch of the Poet*) or within the lower echelons of society, in the subculture of social pariahs and fallen angels (*The Iceman Cometh, Hughie*), where the sense of the ridiculous sometimes builds up a very specific sense of tragicomedy. Mary McCarthy, speaking of *The Moon for the Misbegotten,* wonderfully (though ironically and critically) characterises it as 'a sort of Olympian knockdown comedy' and notes that 'despite the tone of barber shop harmony that enters into all of O'Neill's plays, this play exacts homage for its mythic powers, for the element of transcendence jutting up in it like a great wooden Trojan horse.'[110] 'Mythic' is not an inappropriate word to characterise these last plays. Mythicising the past, placing particular emphasis on the inter-play of memory and forgetfulness, distancing devices, and various forms of repetition are O'Neill's methods of creating his own mythicity. Mythological or biblical motifs are inscribed within the plots. The ethos of mythological heroes is dynamically echoed in characters like Parritt, O'Neill's Orestes in *The Iceman Cometh*, who bears the stamp of a thoroughly original creation yet, unmistakably carries reminiscences of his mythical prototype. Griffin observes that O'Neill uses a form of 'mythopoetic irony,' which creates 'charades' based on myths:

> By making a comic masque of our rituals he causes us to feel again
> some of the power out of which rituals grew. He takes us literally into
> the world of the profane, the world just outside the temple or *fanum*
> where, within earshot, one might say, of the Last Supper, we
> participate in the obverse Feast of Fools, the basic scene of *The*
> *Iceman Cometh.*[111]

The 'approximation to the Greek sense of Fate' does not reside in the application of the Freudian cause-and-effect mechanism but in a combination of psychic forces and cultural parameters that shape human personality. *The Iceman Cometh* (1939) alongside *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1940) *The Moon for the Misbegotten* (1943), *A Touch of the Poet* and *Hughie* (1940) exemplify O'Neill's idea of fate and catastrophe. Catastrophe is invariably associated with the fate of a family,

whether an actual family as the Tyrones in *Long Day's Journey into Night* or the bunch of derelicts inhabiting Harry Hope's saloon in *The Iceman Cometh*. 'Death' acquires a very specific connotation. In fact, there is no actual death, on stage at least. We witness a psychological death that occurs long before physical death.[112] Although Lavinia's voluntary imprisonment is the first manifestation of such a 'death', in the last plays – particularly in *The Iceman Cometh* – we actually witness the dying individual experiencing the slow process of its extinction in the course of which s/he is both the sufferer and the observer of his/her own death. The essence of the tragic and the notion of catastrophe are epitomised in the condition of a slow psychological death that takes place in a historical and social void.

The Iceman Cometh expresses the sum total of O'Neill's idea of tragedy. Written in 1939 and first produced in 1946, *The Iceman Cometh* was not a success on Broadway until its legendary revival in 1956 – three years after O'Neill's death – with director José Quintero and Jason Robards as Hickey making theatre history.[113] The play had a run of 565 performances – the longest of any O'Neill play – and signalled a first re-appraisal of his work.

Back in 1946, the play seemed too long, too detailed and static. 'The weakness of the play is its interminable length and the lack of plot motivation' a reviewer noted while another decided that 'as a novel of a certain kind it is superb, convincing, full of interest... as a play... we are given much more than we need to know about characters for the purpose of the drama.'[114] O'Neill's response to such criticism is revealing. He explained his intention to use novelistic techniques in exposing his material and to delineate in detail the psychological condition of the characters. He suggests that the slow unravelling of the derelicts' private stories and the minimum of physical movement in the very long Act I, amplifies the dramatic impact of the climactic action that follows:

> I've tried to write... a play where at the end you feel you know the
> souls of the seventeen men and women who appear – and the women
> who don't appear – as well as if you'd read a play about each of
> them...You would find if it did not build up the complete picture of the
> group as it now is in the first part – the atmosphere of the place, the
> humour and friendship and human warmth and *deep inner contentment*

of the bottom – you would not be interested in these people and you would find the impact of what follows a lot less profoundly disturbing.[115]

The Iceman Cometh is an enormously complex work, rich in ambiguities and does not easily yield to interpretation. The realistic and the symbolic, the comic and the tragic are communicated through the interweaving of the various narratives, historical critique, underlying myth and tragic anagnorisis. It is practically impossible to cover the multiple aspects of such a text here; the the focus will be on how O'Neill's idea of using myth and conventions from Greek tragedy develop in the most representative play of his maturity.

The opening scene shows the bar of Harry Hope's saloon with all the roomers sleeping except for two: Larry, the old anarchist philosopher, and Rocky, the bartender. The image is one of stasis. This immobility inevitably shifts the focus exclusively to the dialogue until the moment of Hickey's cataclysmic arrival. The derelicts at Harry Hope's have betrayed societal roles and ideological beliefs. War correspondents and editors, revolutionaries, proletariats or distinctive members of the anarchist movement, commandoes at the Boer War, circus men, gambling house owners, law students, police lieutenants, captains of the British infantry, all have ended up at the 'No Chance Saloon', the 'last harbour,' (*IC27*) buried in alcohol and oblivion. Rocky and the three whores – 'street walkers' O'Neill calls them – are the only ones who share time between Harry Hope's and the outside world. Echoes of societal life and its cruel antagonisms enter through Rocky's and the girls' reports. For people who live on pipe dreams of futurity and have no sense of temporality, life has become almost unreal. Significantly, O'Neill places his three protagonists (Larry, Hickey, Parritt) in the middle of this group.

The derelicts come from various social classes and have different nationalities; they possess varying degrees of education and, therefore, of articulacy.[116] This variety is reflected in the way each speaks and expresses his thoughts as well as in the kind of vernacular, idiom, slang or national accent each uses. Each roomer has his own pipe dream for a better tomorrow where the better tomorrow is based on resuming his past life and role. Each has a story to narrate and each narrative is a fictionalised version of his previous self, offering an idealised aspect of the past. As such, their stories could be little but melodramatic: self-

victimisation provides sympathy and justification for their present condition. Jimmy thinks his wife's adultery is the cause of his decline; Hope thinks it is his wife's death; Hope wants to return to ward politics, Jimmy to journalism, Ed Mosher to the circus. Hugo Kalmar, a pivotal character among the bums, still nourishes illusions of proletarian rebellion and dreams of resuming his leading role in 'the revolution'. Each narrator demands an audience. Each character passes from the state of the narrator, who for a while becomes the centre of attention, to that of a member of the audience on stage that sympathises with, supports, and validates the stories of the other narrators.

These narratives also form O'Neill's basic method of exposing his themes.[117] Narrative and action, realistic dialogue/situations and symbolic connotations build up a drama that reflects the workings of each character's interior consciousness. The reciprocity between narrators/actors and spectators is a major device upon which O'Neill builds the dialectics of fantasy and reality, of deception and truth, a constant alternation of memory and intentional oblivion, of empathy and withdrawal. These stories of self-deception cover a length of an hour or so, in the course of which O'Neill has the opportunity to build up the expectancy of Hickey's arrival. Throughout Act I, the roomers constantly refer to the 'hardware salesman' or 'the great salesman' waiting for him to celebrate Harry's birthday. On his visits, Hickey entertains the bums with booze and obscene jokes about a salesman who knows his wife is safe because he left her in bed with the iceman. 'Has the iceman come?' asks the salesman. 'No, but he is breathing hard' replies the wife. Hickey's appearance is unusually protracted: 'Would that Hickey or Death would come,' Willie Oban wonders. The arrival almost acquires the significance of an epiphany that would bring relief and joy. Hickey appears at last, a reformed man: he has found 'peace' because he had 'the guts to face myself'. The former entertainer poses as a self-appointed prophet; clear of booze, fanatically preaching against pipe dreams, selling remedies of rehabilitating the derelicts back to society. As things develop, he brings the ice of death.

O'Neill explained that the title 'is a matter of great significance' and that it has a somehow 'religious significance'.[118] Indeed, the archaic 'Cometh' directly signals the biblical reference. Cyrus Day points out that the 'bridegroom' is always identified with Christ.[119] Matthew's (25:5-6) symbolic reference to 'the bridegroom cometh' signifying victory over death and after-life salvation is cancelled by the

115

coming of the 'iceman,' which signifies death. The salesman's joke is a pun, a parody of the union with the bridegroom implying surrender to death. Hickey is the iceman; he has been repeatedly compared with self-appointed savers like Werle in Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* and Luka in Gorki's *Lower Depths*.[120] Hickey, however, is a much more blasphemous figure than Werle or Luka. One can hardly miss that O'Neill aligns Hickey to Christ but also to Freud.[121] Hickey's salvation programme is a sort of practical psychoanalytic remedy against illusion. For Freud religion was an illusion men are in no need of. O'Neill believed it to be an illusion men could not live without, although he had no doubt that it was a collective illusion that offered no consolation in a world of collapsing values. There are numerous suggestions to this end in the *Iceman*. Willie Oban's irreverent references to American religious history speak for themselves. Day claims that the twelve roomers correspond to the twelve disciples of Jesus, the three whores are the three Marys and Parritt is Judas Iscariot.[122] The allusion to the apostles is further indicated by the positioning of the tables and chairs (as indicated by O'Neill), which is that of the Last Supper. For O'Neill, secular and religious saviours are unable to heal the wounds of an ailing culture. No wonder that a reviewer in 1946, reproducing one of the pipe-dreams of American society itself, decided that *The Iceman* is 'bereft of the dynamic promise of betterment for the human race which modern psychotherapy envisions'.[123]

The Iceman Cometh is a parable on life and man, a critique of history at a terminal crisis. Kurt Eisen, discussing the significance of the 'iceman' symbolism, observes that 'in his image of the "iceman-as-bridegroom" O'Neill creates a vision of catastrophe, fusing the themes of marriage, history, revolution, and world cataclysm.'[124] In 1939, O'Neill was experiencing the agony of an impending Second World War and projected his mocking vision of Mankind as the Ship of Fools on the play. In the post-war optimism that swept America in 1946, O'Neill noted that the United States, instead of being the greatest country in the world, was 'the worst failure' because it was given huge opportunities that were wasted.[125] If in most of his plays there is a prevailing sense of 'a great chance missed'[126] in *The Iceman Cometh* it becomes the informing force behind the vision of a writer who, compassionately yet with the necessary detachment, re-assesses the values and distortions that form the mentality of the American nation. Through Harry Hope's microcosm, O'Neill relays his criticism of world history with a bleak sarcasm, a mocking jokiness and an

undercutting bitterness. Revolutions (the American Revolution included) fail because as Larry Slade says:

> 'I'm through with the Movement long since. I saw men didn't want to be saved from themselves, for that would mean they'd have to give up greed, and they'll never pay that price for liberty.' (*IC16*)

And elsewhere Larry observes:

> As the history of the world proves, the truth has no bearing on anything. It's irrelevant and immaterial, as the lawyers say. The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober. (*IC15-6*)

Furthermore:

> [H]istory proves, to be a worldly success at anything, especially revolution, you have to wear blinders like a horse and see only straight in front of you. You have to see, too, that this is all black, and that is all white. (*IC32*)

The broader political implications of the play have not been always acknowledged. However, they do form a powerful motif in the play. In 1939, O'Neill prophetically speaks of a post-war experience, of generations of people that saw their struggles and ideologies ruined. Pipe-dreams, demoralisation, betrayals, and moral dilemmas can be seen as consequences of psychological, cultural, historical, and political impasses. O'Neill shows psychological devastation and stasis as side-effects on those of the bums who once believed in a great cause and now have no alternative. Through the failure of Hickey's salvation campaign, the failure of the 'Movement' (intentionally indiscriminate whether it is the proletariat or the anarchist Movement), the pivotal personae of Hugo Calmar and Larry Slade, the residents' melodramatic, self-indulging narratives, the assaults against the bourgeoisie and capitalism, and the monotonously repeated singing of 'La Carmagnole', 'Revolutions are born as melodrama.'[127]

Norman Berlin observes that *The Iceman Cometh* could have been titled *Waiting for Hickey* since 'waiting for Hickey is like waiting for Godot, and in both O'Neill and Beckett the waiters are in a frozen condition, a boundary condition... in O'Neill, however, Godot comes.'[128] The mixture of the obscene and the biblical, the realistic and the archetypical summarised in the title points to a blend of similar elements in the text. In 1946, returning to Broadway after a silence of almost ten years for the premiere of *The Iceman Cometh*, O'Neill made a special reference to his sense of comedy that turns to tragedy:

> There is a feeling around, or I'm mistaken, of fate. Kismet, the negative fate; not the Greek sense... It's struck me as time goes on, how something funny, even farcical, can suddenly without any apparent reason, break up into something gloomy and tragic... A sort of unfair *non sequitur*, as though events, as though life, were being manipulated just to confuse us. I think I'm aware of comedy more than I ever was before, a big kind of comedy that doesn't stay funny very long. I've made some use of it in *The Iceman*. The first act is hilarious comedy, *I think*, but then some people may not even laugh. At any rate, the comedy breaks up and the tragedy comes on.[129]

Of the three protagonists, Larry is a rationalist, an independent mind, a former member of the 'Movement' who has lost faith in the Cause. He presents himself as an aloof observer occupying what he calls 'the grandstand of philosophical detachment' and proclaiming not to have pipe dreams anymore. With his ironic wit he complacently describes Harry Hope's as the bottom of the world: one can go no farther. Apart from being an observer and commentator, Larry is a participant as well. According to Eisen he is 'the central consciousness,' the 'mediating consciousness of the play' since 'a play about the relation between consciousness and truth, requires a character such as Larry, who like a first-person narrator witnesses and reflects upon the changes wrought by the events unfolding on stage.'[130] Larry's illusion of having no illusions is threatened by the arrival of Don Parritt – an undesirable, eighteen-year-old guest – and later of Hickey.

Parritt takes refuge in the saloon after having betrayed his mother, Rosa, and her comrades to the police because, as he maintains, he needed money to spend on a

whore. Rosa, a leading member of the 'Movement' – the name probably alludes to Rosa Luxemburg but the character is drawn on Emma Goldman – had been Larry's lover when Parritt was a child.[131] Her promiscuity and devotion to the Cause eventually alienated Larry from her and the Movement but his deeper feelings still seem unresolved. Parritt used to see and still sees a father in Larry: from the moment he arrives, he is anxious to gain Larry's sympathy, even make him empathise with his condition – something the old man consistently avoids: 'I don't want to know – and I won't know.' (IC113)

Hickey's preaching arouses discord among the group. Those persuaded by his programme are able to take a few steps outside the saloon before they return defeated to their secured isolation. In the long monologue that follows, Hickey confesses to having murdered his wife, Evelyn. (IC191-207) Faithful and loving, she always forgave his infidelities and drunkenness with patience and a blind faith in her husband's good nature. Hickey is entrapped in a profound ambiguity between his own love for Evelyn and his accumulating guilt motivated by her endless capacity to 'forgive'. As this edgy balance begins to falter, guilt erupts in hate and results in murder. It was the only solution, Hickey stubbornly maintains, the one that could bring Evelyn 'peace'. (IC134) Only by the end of the play, he almost involuntarily snaps that he hated the 'bitch' (IC207) but immediately relapses into deceiving himself. Evelyn has been consummated in a fatal embrace with the iceman. Alongside Rosa, she is the other great absentee O'Neill speaks of. In absentia, they both not only trigger inner conflict and devastating guilt, but motivate significant action as well.

Manheim sees Hickey as the centre of 'tragic action' while Stephen A. Black as 'the catalyst' to tragic anagnorisis – functions that enhance Hickey's 'already mythic stature'.[132] Black calls Parritt 'O'Neill's other Orestes' and discusses the evolution of the youth's inner consciousness, which O'Neill minutely shows.[133] Parritt seems not to have fully realised the gravity of his crime or the motives of it. He seeks Larry's support and companionship, trying to make him share his mounting guilt and sense of alienation. The sense of being a pariah becomes progressively stronger in Parritt. Larry suspects that there is more behind Parritt's story but resists its disclosure since it would mean the kind of involvement he abhors. Hickey, smelling guilt and crime similar his own, avoids Parritt. (IC104) The more alien Parritt feels, the nearer he approaches the truth about his betrayal. (IC138-41) He

turns to Larry and with increasing persistence demands his understanding so that he could feel less of a pariah and more of a flawed human being that deserves to be punished with dignity and the sense of belonging to a 'community'.[134] Recollections from his childhood and life with Rosa, his exchanges with Larry, the disclosure of Evelyn's murder, and above all Hickey's final collapse and surrender to the police are Parritt's intermediate steps towards the realisation of his true motives. He addresses Larry:

> 'I may as well confess, Larry. There's no use lying any more. You know anyway. I didn't give a damn about the money. It was because I hated her.' (*IC207*)

Anagnorisis leads Parritt to self-knowledge and punishment. Hearing Parritt's revelation, Larry is overwhelmed by genuine empathy: 'Go! Get the hell out of Life, God damn you, before I choke it out of you! Go up –!' (*IC213*) By now, Larry has moved from the role of the observer/commentator to that of a deeply involved participant; he is the initiator of ominous action since it is actually with his permission, if not the instigation, that the youth inflicts his cruel self-judgement. O'Neill emphasises Parritt's young age, his confusion, his need to be assured that the idea of the fatal self-judgement which gradually takes shape in his consciousness (he more than once refers to the fire escape provoking Larry) is the proper exorcism for his crime. In contrast to Hickey, Parritt finally accepts his own realities; that the betrayal was motivated by his love-hate relation with Rosa; that bereft of freedom, Rosa is already a living dead; she would rather die than be in prison – something that makes his crime more serious than Hickey's. As a modern Orestes 'maddened by maternal Furies', 'he lives and dies by a harsher, more primitive sense of justice than Hickey imagines' while with his suicide 'the Oresteian alienation, the isolation into madness are relieved' observes Stephen A. Black who sees Parritt as the centre of tragic anagnorisis in the play, the most tragic, if not *the* tragic hero of the play.[135]

Hickey's confession and the shock of Parritt's suicide drive Larry out of his complacency. He is ultimately forced to conceive the insidious and multi-facet meaning of 'illusion': that truth can destroy, that life and illusion are inseparable, that involvement and empathy are innate human qualities that cannot be 'logically' denied. Parritt's body is heard crashing down and Larry delivers his final lines:

(*In a whisper of horrified pity*) Poor devil! (*A long forgotten faith returns to him for a moment and he mumbles*) God rest his soul in peace. (*Opens his eyes – with a bitter self-derision*) Ah, the damned pity – the wrong kind, as Hickey said! Be God, there's no hope! I'll never be a success in the grandstand – or anywhere else! Life is too much for me! I'll be a weak fool looking with pity at the two sides of everything till the day I die! (*With an intense bitter sincerity*) May that day come soon! (*He pauses startedly, surprised at himself – then with a sardonic grin*) Be God, I'm the only real convert to death Hickey made here. From the bottom of my coward's heart, I mean that now! (*IC222*)

The derelicts hardly pay attention to the sound of Parritt's body crashing down. They are happily drinking, roaring with laughter and singing 'in weird cacophony' (Hugo resumes 'La Carmagnole' and screams of 'capitalist swine' and 'stupid bourgeois monkeys'). Larry is 'staring in front of him, oblivious of their racket' as if silenced by the overwhelming awareness that nothing more can be said of life, history, or the state of things. O'Neill places particular emphasis on the derelicts' 'racket' – this Feast of Fools with the muted Larry at the other side of the stage. He was so much carried away by the final image of the derelicts that he noted with satisfaction: '*I* don't write this piece of playwriting. *They do it. They have to.* Each of them! In just that way! It is tragically, pitifully important for them to do this.'[136] Freud's 'eternal Eros' overwhelms his 'immortal adversary, Thanatos' in their final feast. Thanatos has beaten Hickey and Parritt and now inhabits Larry. Griffin observes that the urge to 'destroy the self' is strongest in those who are the protagonists since:

> they have 'advanced' so far with the self on which Freud concentrates...that they have lost the chance to renew the 'choral' or 'friendly' self...[T]here is hope for those who failed to travel so far, for those in fact, who 'betrayed' their aggressive drive....What they [the derelicts] have betrayed were their roles in the social culture of the time, not their deeper selves, the selves that can accept life as

communion and a sharing in friendship, in which old enmities have become jokes and "betrayals" have been transformed in human bonds....They have abandoned all except of life itself...[137]

O'Neill wrote to Kenneth Macgowan: 'It's hard to explain exactly my intuitions about this play. Perhaps I can put it best by saying *The Iceman Cometh* is something I want to make life reveal about itself, fully and deeply and roundly.'[138] Ignoring Larry, the bums turn to their half real-half illusionary world renouncing the self-to-be; celebrating life, their solidarity and independence with the '*deep inner contentment of the bottom*' the playwright speaks of. They represent the 'choral', 'friendly' self; they express O'Neill's 'hopeless hope,' the deeper urge to participate in, communicate with life in their almost ridiculous comicality and blindness despite the collapsing values, disintegrating culture, personal betrayals and failures.

Larry's position is more ambiguous. In the last scene, he expresses the fundamental ambivalence of one who, at long last, reaches a state beyond illusion *and* detachment, one condemned to 'look at both sides of everything'. Larry is the true centre of the play's consciousness; he is the one who experiences and communicates the impact of the events that devastate him. His last monologue (cited above) has fuelled heated controversy. Stephen A. Black believes that it does not 'show any significant insight or any sense of the tragic, except that he (Larry) feels mortality more deeply. But the change is obscured by references to Hickey. If the play has shown anything clearly it is that Hickey is a poor authority on pity and death.'[139] Judith Barlow sees Larry as 'the only genuine tragic figure in this complex dramatic work, yet...less histrionic than many of the others' concluding that 'Larry must *live* with the pain of his pity for humanity.' Susan L. Cole thinks that the end reveals Larry having learned 'to mourn' and that his blessing to Parritt conveys a strong sense of 'Aristotelic tragic catharsis in a whisper'.[140]

Yet, the constant shifting of emphasis from the protagonists to the group and vice versa that occurs throughout the play may suggest that we need to read the last scene of *The Iceman* as an integral whole from which Larry cannot be isolated. We see the two poles of the play – the three protagonists and the community – each enacting a different life impulse. We have already seen Hickey – the centre of tragic action – and Parritt – the centre of tragic anagnorisis and primitive self-punishment – enacting their own impulses towards self-destruction. As the observer, the narrator

and a participant Larry has a different role to fulfil. Larry is, alongside the roomers, the 'other' survivor of the catastrophe who, in contrast to them, will bear the full awareness and trauma of his participation in the catastrophe.

Examining Larry's position from a different angle, Kurt Eisen reaches a significant conclusion, albeit of a different order:

> By making Larry the play's central consciousness, its would-be 'grandstand' observer, O'Neill establishes a profound meditation between stage and audience. Larry's own pretence of detachment is dismantled until at last he finds himself 'a weak fool looking with pity at the two sides of everything'; so is the detachment of the audience. From this identification of audience and dramatic central consciousness emerges the play's tragic power...O'Neill's dramaturgy compels an audience, like Larry, to contemplate events which threaten its illusion of pure observation, the seeming distance between itself, the life on stage, and the disturbing implications of history. This dissolution of the barrier between the audience and tragic action serves as the most compelling justification of O'Neill's persistent attempts to novelise drama.[141]

The illuminating critical comments *The Iceman Cometh* has received would seem incomplete unless examined in relation to O'Neill's preoccupation with the issue of 'modern' tragedy that progressively brought him into a profound rapport with both Freud and aspects of the Greek dramaturgy, which were finally filtered and reverberated in his private universe. That O'Neill chose to express his most comprehensive assessment of culture, history, and fate in the form of a choral drama where biblical allusion, myth, historical critique, and tragic anagnorisis fuse is significant; as is the fact that he uses three different 'voices' (Larry's, Hickey's, Parritt's), each representing a different life impulse, thus splitting the functions performed by the traditional tragic hero into three dramatis personae that mutually illuminate states of the modern mind and psyche, both on the level of fantasy and reality.

What Cole and Barlow actually describe is the tragic pattern of *pathos mathos,* (one that suffers/learns), a basic stage in the hero's experience towards the

fulfilment of tragic action and catharsis. What Eisen actually suggests is that O'Neill's novelistic and narrative strategies permit the dialectics of the differing 'voices', of distancing and empathy, of observing and participating in the action to be thoroughly established and unfold simultaneously and appositionally, until, by the end of the play, they all merge into a total synthesis of tragic experience. The play's tragic impact was never really disputed; that the traditional unities of time and place are retained and the devices of revelation and conflict are largely exploited can hardly be argued. What needs to be emphasised is the modern, multi-faceted approach to his thematic material and the far from conventional way traditional conventions are employed. O'Neill appears to master methods of narrativity and dramatic exposure in a complex play that is rarely performed and is in need of more practical exploration through performance. Its choral nature, the mode in which mythological patterns are inscribed, and the tragic experience it conveys combine to make this play one of the remarkable achievements of the era but also one of the most demanding. As eloquently shown in the performance of *The Iceman* at the Almeida some years ago, good acting and an intelligent staging can, indeed, result in a good performance; but this is hardly enough to illuminate crucial aspects of O'Neill's text that could and should be brought forward to reveal the play's inner life, its deeply contemplative and ideological nature – finally its delicate, 'haunting grace.'[142]

The word 'chorus' occurs so many times in the stage directions that it leaves no doubt of O'Neill's deliberate allusion to Greek tragedy. The derelicts and the three women constitute an imaginative reconstruction of the ancient convention in thoroughly modern terms. Protagonists and members of the chorus exchange roles as narrators and spectators, as observers and participants. Hickey's long monologue is an example where the functions of the individual and the collective interact and the emphasis constantly oscillates from individual pathos to reactions of various degrees of empathy on the part of the group. *The Iceman* is a choral drama itself; the chorus is not a device but the basis of its dramaturgical composition. There is an impressive orchestration and instrumentation of the different 'voices' of the roomers *and* the protagonists, each of whom speaks in a distinct vernacular, dialect, idiom, and accent, and has his own rhythm of speech, accentuated or differentiated at crucial instances of the action.

The form is loose and very musical. Motifs, themes, individual stories and narratives are exposed, varied and counter-pointed in ways that construct a drama of

remarkable inner mobility and variety, despite the simplicity of the plot, the long duration (four and a half hours) and the minimal action. Within such a musical score, the three *hypocrites* (actors) – Larry, Hickey and Parritt – proceed to action, revelations of secrets and hidden crimes. These are revealed step-by-step, building up suspense and following a pattern identical to that of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex.*[143] The three protagonists are closely interrelated and their interaction is a means of keeping the audience's interest and advancing the development of the action. In fact, none of the three proceeds to action or revelation without the consent or at least the neutrality of the other two. All three bring the action to its fulfilment in unanimous consent.

In this context, Larry's pivotal role can be seen in a somehow different light. Larry is not an intruder; he is a member of the group and will continue to live among them. Despite his ironic and sharp comments on their condition, he represents and articulates the basic condition of Harry Hope's community. As the most introspective and cerebral character, he resists any involvement that would disturb the balance and the solidarity of their secured world: he resists Parritt's provocations; he tries to avert Hickey's confession ('we don't want to know things that will make us help send you to the Chair.' [*IC193*]) As a participant he fulfils a special role. Though he hardly acts, he plays a crucial part in Parritt's suicide. Larry's role is analogous to that of the *koryfaeos*, the leading man of the chorus – a reminder of the mythical Silenus – who shares a role between the collective and the protagonists. Furthermore, O'Neill shrewdly endows Larry with the characteristics of a modern and psychologically complicated observer/narrator, not simply shifting positions between protagonist/s-chorus but himself divided between role-playing and his ambivalent, contradictory nature. By the end, Larry is the witness survived, Homer's muse silenced. That he is placed alongside the group's racket, silenced but convinced that he would continue to 'see' both sides of everything, is suggestive of O'Neill's aim to leave Larry's position ambivalent and, therefore, endow all possible interpretations with equal authority.

In *The Iceman Cometh*, O'Neill's lifelong experimentations with myth and tragedy find an eloquent formal and thematic concretisation. What is of great interest is how functionally the mythological motif is combined with the biblical – that of Judas and the prodigal son – and how effectively it is transvalorised and transplanted into the modern. Quite shrewdly, O'Neill does not equate the two in Parritt's case; the Oresteian predicament comes through much more forcefully than the biblical through

the psychological dependence of the son on the mother (Parritt/Rosa) and the theme of the alienated pariah prosecuted by maternal furies of guilt and remorse. Both the mythological and the biblical are used as co-ordinating principles of structural and conceptual significance and as material for thematic permutation. Inscribed within a structural design identical to that of *Oedipus Rex*, the Oresteian motif is thoroughly absorbed and acquires a startling contemporary dimension. In the private stories of his heroes, O'Neill fuses the psychological and the political, the private and the historical, the temporal and the diachronic; he integrates major themes that cut through Western and Christian tradition and go back to primordial myth and archetypal patterns of conduct. With *The Iceman* O'Neill succeeds where Eliot has failed. Whereas for Eliot myth becomes a distraction, for O'Neill it is a constant stimulus to his imagination. In *The Iceman Cometh*, he finds ways of moving from the actual, thoroughly contemporary story towards myth and its archetypal significance without the need to remind the audience of the myth/s he had in mind: O'Neill reaches a stage where he reads modern sensibility and thought, historical momentum and Freudianism through the Greeks and their paradigmatic stories.

5. Myth as Plot: French Playwrights of the Inter-War Years

If Joyce and Eliot's model of the 'mythical method' originates directly from modernist sensibilities and modes of thinking, then the model of dramatising myth-plots is as old as Greek dramaturgy.

In the inter-war period the traditional model was invigorated. It flourished throughout Europe but mostly in Paris where playwrights turned en masse to Greek myths. Jean Cocteau, Paul Claudel, André Obey, Jean Giraudoux, Henri de Montherlant, Jean Anouilh, Jean Paul Sartre and others whose reputations have not survived, have each written at least one play with Greek myth as plot or subject matter. The fact that they all derive from a tradition with roots deep in the Greek classical world and that they were written within a span of almost twenty-five years offers the opportunity of examining their various dramaturgical strategies and their conceptual attitude towards myth within the advantages or the limitations of the model they employ. It also offers the opportunity to examine how the traditional method was re-shaped by the artistic and philosophical pressures of the modernist era.

Cocteau, Giraudoux, Anouilh and Sartre produced interesting samples of this model, and it seems reasonable to focus on them. I have chosen Cocteau's *La Machine Infernale* (The Infernal Machine), Giraudoux's *La Guerre de Troie n' aura pas lieu* (Tiger at the Gates), and *Electre* (Electra), Anouilh's *Antigone* (Antigone), and Sartre's *Les Mouches* (The Flies) because they form a line of development that reaches its peak with Anouilh and ends with Sartre.[1] There are influences from one playwright on another but, despite their common elements, there are also marked differences between the plays of the Twenties and the Thirties (Cocteau, Giraudoux) and those of the Forties (Anouilh, Sartre.) I shall, therefore, examine them in one context, in an effort to show the evolution of the method within the cultural and political milieu of the era.

French writers since Racine and Corneille have shown an amazing predilection for the myths of Greek antiquity. Even in the nineteenth century, when the predominance of realism and subsequently of scientific naturalism brought themes of everyday life to the stage, the use of Greek myths was not utterly abandoned. Michael Grant reports that '582 French imitations, translations or

adaptations of classical originals sprang from *le rêve hellénique* between 1840 and 1900.'[2] In the second part of the century, elements of satire and burlesque were amply employed in the handling of mythological material. There was a strong tendency to ridicule and debuke myths and mythological heroes while anachronisms and topical allusions to the mores of the Second Empire made Greek myths an ideal pretext for political parody. Jacques Offenbach is a notable example. His popular operetta *Orphée aux Enfers* (1858) was a vitriolic satire against the emperor and his corrupted court, while *La Belle Hélène* (1864) provoked a huge scandal.[3] Even more suggestive is the case of Honoré Daumier's caricatures that were drawn from Greek mythology to satirise current social/political events and personalities. That heroes of Greek mythology were extensively used in caricatures and popular shows suggests that readers/audiences were well acquainted with such material; they could immediately grasp the political implication and make the necessary connections with current events. Offenbach and Daumier's lightly frivolous and iconoclastic approach to myth survived down to the twentieth century, especially in the plays of Jean Cocteau.

By the end of the nineteenth century, we have a surge of renewed interest in myths by writers such as André Gide. His approach to myths in his fiction and subsequently in the plays *Philoctetes* (1899) *King Candaleus* (1904) and *Oedipus* (1931) provided guidelines for the emerging French playwrights – most of whom had already made careers as novelists. [4]

In contrast to Gide's fiction, which displays a witty, inventive and unconventional re-working of mythological material, his plays were not successful; his dramatic style is old-fashioned and nearer to that of the nineteenth century. Gide, however, was one of the first to see myth as a key to the unconscious. Simultaneously, he emphasised the rational dimension of the 'Greek fable', whose malleability can produce 'endless meaning for us'.[5] In the heroes of Greek mythology, Gide traced a 'psychological fatality' which is an innate trait of their personality; as such, it guides them to their adventures and does not permit fate or chance to influence them. If we eliminate fate and chance, the psychological truth of the myth is revealed, says Gide.[6] Myths have a liberating power since they permit a returning to a pre-Christian world, free from guilt and remorse. Eventually, Gide shifted the focus from the psychological to the philosophical and the ethical, using myths as a vehicle of ideas. Gide dealt with the exceptional individual who realises his true self and vocation in his conflicts with society, bourgeois ethics, and God.

Used thus, mythological heroes exemplified a new ethical order that rejected the past. In using myths as a vehicle for ideas, Gide is a precursor of Camus and Sartre's 'theatre of ideas'.

Circa 1920, Paris, as a metropolis of modernism, became the centre of the most important developments of the avant-garde. It was the city that most eagerly accepted the achievement of Joyce and the city that hosted the international artistic 'Diaspora' where Diaghilev, Stravinsky, Picasso, the Cubist painters, Gertrude Stein, Scott Fitzgerald and others radically changed the face of the arts. By the early Twenties, we recognise two lines of development in the French theatre: that of the anti-naturalistic play and the poetic style of production of Jacques Copeau and the Cartel, and that of the avant-garde with Alfred Jarry, Guillaume Apollinaire, Tristan Tzara and Charles Vitrac.

In *Ubu Roi* (Théâtre de L' Oeuvre, 1896), Jarry parodied the Shakespearean tragic hero, Macbeth in particular. Jarry obliterated any psychological trait that would make the character plausible while the incidents of the plot hardly correspond to a logical motivation or sequence of action. The premiere of *Ubu Roi* was an unprecedented scandal since the play rejected any previous theatrical convention or codes of ethics. The Surrealists, the Dadaists and other exponents of the avant-garde subverted language and denied the Cartesian approach to art. Emphasis was shifted to unconscious impulses, eroticism, extravagance and the fortuitous – what we generally describe as irrational. These artists descended into the world of the unconscious and frequently employed myths or archetypal motifs to convey the state of modernity.

Apollinaire, who greatly admired Jarry, wrote *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* (The Breasts of Tiresias) in 1916.[7] Of special interest in this surrealist extravaganza is the use of the figure of Tiresias. The heroine, Thérèse, changes sex and is transformed into Tiresias. The image is one of a creature with huge breasts that float like balloons towards the skies. She gives birth to more than forty thousand children in an effort to make up for the loss resulting from the carnage of World War I: Thérèse is a parody of Apollinaire's own patriotic obsessions. The androgynous mythological figure offered the opportunity for a vitriolic comment on the then French government's obsession with the declining birth rate, which eventually resulted in the revival of the traditional role of the woman within the home as mother and wife.[8]

In 1938, Artaud published his essays *Le Théâtre et son double*, where he challenged previous practices and conceived a radically new conception of theatre.[9]

The book remained unknown until its re-issue in 1944, while its major influence is to be traced after World War II. Akakia-Viala, Louise Lara and Eduard Autant created the *Laboratoire de Recherches Art et Action* where surrealist experiments were conducted and artists experimented with new approaches to acting and staging. Their programme explicitly refers to the use of primitive myth/s as a means of expressing the condition of the modern mind:

> Renewal of theatre, both in form and content...creation of synchronism between the different forms of dramatic expression, evocation of the abstract by concrete means; use of old themes and myths, not disinterred and restored but brutally renewed...recourse to the fantastic and the grotesque to convey thoughts of gravity and concepts of the deepest pathos.[10]

It is no coincidence that the synchronism of different forms, the evocation of the abstract by concrete means, and the renewal of myth/s was shared by other artists of the era, particularly by T. S. Eliot in his early experiments. Of course, these were far-reaching goals for the inter-war theatre. Nevertheless, the manifesto of the *Laboratoire* is suggestive of the revolutionary air that swept groups of the Parisian avant-garde in the early Twenties and was receding already by the end of the decade. Cultural, social and political experimentation provoked a reactionary surge and a general conservatism was already being observed by the mid-Thirties.

Copeau (1879-1949), who engendered a spirit of innovation, is considered the architect of modern French poetic theatre. He attacked the frivolity of the boulevards, sensational stage effects, and flamboyant acting of the protagonists that had corrupted public taste.[11] He rejected naturalism and the 'slice-of-life' pieces. He wanted a theatre of simplicity where written text and performance would form an integral whole so that audiences would be encouraged to focus on the ideas expressed and not on the effects displayed. The poetic impact of a performance and its dependence on the actor were pre-requisites for Copeau. The Cartel, established in 1927, was a loose association of four theatres run by Louis Jouvet, Charles Dullin (both disciples of Copeau), Georges Pitoëff and Gaston Batty. They had a more or less common artistic policy, based on the lines of Copeau's ideas. The Cartel encouraged and introduced actors, directors, and especially writers to the Parisian audience: Claudel, Giraudoux,

Sartre, Lenormand, Cocteau and Anouilh. In contrast, its repertoire was centred on the Greek tragedians and Aristophanes, as well as the Elizabethans and the French classical dramatists. As Bradby notes, theatre people in France were quite isolated and hardly acquainted with Expressionism, Brecht, or the work of directors like Piscator and Meyerhold. Of the European playwrights, Luigi Pirandello was quite well known and his impact on Cocteau and Anouilh should be noted. It should be also noted that the playwrights discussed here were working for the commercial theatres since state subsidy policies were not established until after the war.[12]

Referring to the massive recourse to myth, André Gide spoke of 'une Oedipémie' and thought that the 'new' playwrights dipped myth in an unnecessary 'ultra-modern sauce'.[13] Others, lacking perhaps his combination of ironic scepticism and puritanical severity, thought that myth-plays formed a new school in the French Theatre. Already in 1935, perceptive critics such as Pierre Veber had already described myth-plays as a theatre of 'legendary moralities'.[14] David Bradby notes that the return to classical myths is no surprise for a country whose awareness of its own neo-classical tradition was dominant. He contends that myths not only offered the writers an opportunity to escape from the apparent mediocrity of contemporary life, but also appealed to the educated audiences of commercial theatre, offering the assurance that high standards and 'culturedness' were preserved despite the occasional roughness of language, anachronism and reference to current realities.[15] Bradby sees the recourse to myth in France, especially during the Occupation, as a mere revival of the past. Likewise, Marc Eli Blanchard observes that the use of myth on the French stage 'is characterised by a superficial presentation of stories inherited from the Greeks,' and that 'the image of Greece afforded by those short views is essentially formalist and reductive.'[16]

One has to agree that the recourse to myth in France was not supported by an active discourse on new modes of employing myth similar to those of Joyce, Eliot and Pound, nor by experimentations as those of the early Eliot or O' Neill or the ones described in the surrealist manifesto of the *Laboratoire de Recherches Art et Action* which had a limited influence. It would be misleading, however, to approach the uniqueness of the French phenomenon exclusively on the grounds of a simple revival of the past; neither can it be disengaged from the general tendency towards myths or isolated from the radicalism of a broader artistic milieu. Furthermore, the recourse to myth coincided with a renewed interest in tragedy. Such preoccupations underlie the

work of playwrights such as Claudel, Giraudoux, Anouilh, Montherlant, Camus and Sartre. It is significant that in Giraudoux's *Electre* and Anouilh's *Antigone* characters directly address their audiences, discussing the issue of tragedy.

Despite the impact of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* on the Parisian intelligentsia, Joyce/Eliot's model encouraged the preoccupation with new modes of myth-handling but it did not serve as a model. The French go back to their own tradition of dramatising myths that stems from Racine and Corneille. The myth (i.e. the story) preserves the broad outline of plot as found in the original tragedies or the various versions of myth known to us. The plays are direct dramatisations of the various versions of Greek mythology. This dramatisation normally requires a thematic treatment of myth; it is used as a means of expressing philosophical, psychoanalytic or existential ideas, of making overt or disguised allusions to political situations. This is an issue worth noting, because critics have often compared the plays of some of the French playwrights with those of Eliot – a thoroughly erroneous basis for appreciating the individual character of each in the handling of myth.[17] On the other hand, the achievement of *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* was so great that any use of myth/s in those years tends to be measured against it, obscuring the fact that the fragmentary form Eliot presupposes in his description of the 'mythical method' was a radical goal for the theatre: Eliot's own early, frustrated experiments and subsequent plays testify to this.

One of the apparent attractions of myth, for these playwrights, must have been its indefinable and fluid quality. Its double structure, described by Lévi-Strauss as 'historical and a-historical', 'synchronic and diachronic' pertains to the realm of both the past (the events of the story) and the present (time of their narration). Therefore, 'the specific pattern described [by the myth] is everlasting; it explains the present and the past as well as the future.'[18] Myth, thus, becomes suitable material for abolishing the unities of time and place, a pretext for experimenting with dramatic form and theatrical devices. The French imbued the old model with anti-realistic and other, modernist elements, an eloquent theatricality that supplemented the written text and through which symbols and images were cleverly manipulated; still, the balance between tradition and experimentation is precarious. Bettina Knapp effectively describes these plays when she argues that:

[Cocteau, Giraudoux and Anouilh] were not convention breakers; neither are their works plotless nor does the irrational world reign, though sequences and antics are certainly absurd... But they [the plays] crackle with energy and excitement, offering audiences a new poetic language, fresh worlds which tingle and palpitate before them. Each viewer and reader is invited to see and experience life and the creative act in a wondrously moving and thrilling way, as a participant in the fabulation of a myth.[19]

In these plays then, the myth *is* the play. The insistence on the method of its direct dramatisation is, I submit, the key to understanding the plays since it is the method itself that imposes a number of restrictions on the playwrights. Problems deriving from the 'confinement' of the play's plot within a given mythological plot brought about initiatives in the dramatic and formal arrangement of their material, destroying conventions and limitations of the 'closed' forms of naturalism. As with Joyce, Eliot, Pound, and others, the need to combine the 'now' and 'then' is dominant. To this end, meta-theatrical devices and stage effects are dynamically introduced in order to overcome the inflexibility of the form. In the efforts of the artists to encompass myth as a major component in the search for new modes of expression, the French contributed an intense exploration and exploitation of the possibilities of the old method to stretch its boundaries beyond traditional representation and its reproduction of the illusion of reality. This is what makes the plays interesting and this is the reason I have chosen these particular plays among the numerous French and European plays that employ the method of dramatising myths in the period 1920-1944.

We shall see how such problems are handled in Cocteau's *La Machine Infernale* and Giraudoux's *La Guerre de Trois n'aura pas lieu* and especially his *Electre*. With Anouilh's *Antigone*, the old method acquires an unexpected malleability under the pressures of presenting a modern version of a myth where both the myth and the present have to be communicated not by analogy or parallelism (as in Joyce/Eliot's model) but through the development of the given (mythological) plot. With Sartre's version of the Orestes myth in *Les Mouches,* the endless production of modernised versions of myths comes to its logical end. The possibilities of the old

model are exhausted. It is certainly not accidental that with the appearance of the so-called Theatre of the Absurd in the late Forties, myths once again disappear.

A careful reading of the plays examined here, reveals that an immediate influence, if not *a* model, must have been (again) a piece of fiction. I am referring to Jean Giraudoux's novella, *Elpénor*.[20] It was published in 1919, made an immediate impact and had successive publications.

The novella is an account of the Greeks' return from Troy. Giraudoux follows closely the events in Homer's epic with one exception: the leader in the adventurous *nostos* is not Ulysses but one of his minor comrades, Elpenor. A secondary character in Homer, Elpenor has exercised a tremendous charm on twentieth-century writers and poets – probably because he combines representative qualities of a modern Everyman. For Giraudoux, as for many other writers of the era, Elpenor is a perfect example of an anti-heroic figure.[21]

Giraudoux's character provokes laughter and contempt. It is not the inexorable forces that toss the Greeks from hardship to hardship, but Elpenor's unpredictable whims. His nausea forces the group to disembark on the earth of Kikones; a sudden impulse to meet again some relatives of his drives the exhausted crew to the island of Laestrigones, while his endless sexual appetite brings them to the Island of the Sun. Finally, 'Il est à la source de chacun de nos malheurs.' The story is conveyed through a narrator who does not involve himself in the action but makes crucial observations, comments, and descriptions in the course of the narrative. Frequent and effective anachronisms enrich myth with elements of contemporaneity. The narrator is the 'now' and prevents the reader from forgetting it. The ancient locale is retained; the plot develops linearly; the detached mode and a caustic, almost burlesque humour, account for a modernist approach that sees mythological material playfully. Apart from the reversal of the roles and the complete disengagement from the atmosphere and mood of Homer, two things should be noted here: first, the attachment to the plot of *The Odyssey*, and second, there's an underlying but distinct intention to subvert the original plot. *Elpénor*, as much as anything else, can be seen as an effort to present a de-mythologised version of the Homeric epic.

Both these devices, that is, the adherence to an original plot and the de-mythologising process, are major co-ordinates on which the playwrights who are examined in this chapter work. At this point, many might express doubts as to whether these playwrights retain the story as it appears in the various myth versions.

They could point out interventions or even changes. Is it not a substantial change that in *La Machine Infernale* Cocteau makes the Sphinx reveal the solution of the riddle to Oedipus? Is it not the same with Giraudoux's *Electre,* where the eponymous heroine ignores Agamemnon's murder by Clytemnaestra and Aegisthus? She believes that the king slipped in his bathroom – an accidental death! Objections might arise when we come to Anouilh's *Antigone.* Both Eteocles and Polynices are conspirators against the state. The unburied corpse is so deformed that nobody can decide which of the two brothers it is. Antigone realises that her sacrifice is futile. Yet, she chooses death. Finally, one could point to Sartre and say that *Les Mouches,* as a whole, radically changes the myth of Orestes.

The above examples are indications of major changes in concept and attitude towards myth but not of the story. What drastically changes is the scope. It alters to such a degree that the same old story seems distorted. Yet, it does not actually change. Thus, in *La Machine Infernale,* Oedipus enters Thebes and marries Queen Jocasta. Seventeen years later, his identity is revealed. Jocasta commits suicide, Oedipus blinds and exiles himself from Thebes, guided by Antigone. The polluted city is cleansed. In Giraudoux's *Electre,* Orestes' arrival triggers the fated chain of events. As has been remarked, Giraudoux combines elements from Sophocles and Euripides' versions[22] to create his own. Similarly, the story, in fact the plot, of Anouilh's *Antigone* closely follows that of Sophocles'. In *Les Mouches,* Sartre begins with Orestes' arrival in Argos, where he murders Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra and leaves persecuted by the furies. The city is saved from guilt and remorse.

Dramatising the actual encounter of the Sphinx and Oedipus, showing the wedding night of Jocasta and Oedipus (as portrayed in *La Machine Infernale*) or the cancelling the wedding of Electra and the Gardener (in Giraudoux's *Electre*) are events either contained or implied in the story or are references to interventions already initiated by the Greeks (for example, Euripides depicts Electra married to a peasant). Therefore, the rather pedantic task of spotting every single deviation from the myth as this appears in the Greek tragedies in order to prove that modern playwrights 'change' the story (the myth) is thoroughly unnecessary. It would be an historically ungrounded approach because it identifies myth with what the Greeks present as the Mythos (story, plot) of their tragedies while totally ignoring the fact that myth is not something utterly fixed. From their origins up to the fifth century BC – when they first served as material for dramaturgy – myths have displayed

considerable variations. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides worked out their own versions. But in all the different variations, there is a basic corpus of events that remains intact. Since a story can be recognised as the story of Oedipus, Electra or Antigone, then, we can speak of the myth of Oedipus, Electra or Antigone. Whatever changes the playwrights undertake, these do not affect the recognisable outlines of the story. The story remains the same.

On the thematic level, there are two prevailing motifs: the first is that of the collapse of the individual as a self-affirming entity in alien surroundings. The concerns persistently revolve around the trapped individual, the conflict between reality and idealism as well as nostalgia for an absolute innocence. This nostalgia becomes an almost obsessive theme, which takes various forms and meanings and can be traced back to Rousseau and even further, to what Roland Barthes calls the 'Racinian Man' of strict values and moral principles.[23] The second motif is that of the malevolence of gods who intentionally operate against mankind. The absence of a metaphysical and meaningful social order accounts for an almost mechanistic, if not deterministic, world where the myth is stripped of its multiple resonance and becomes the narrative thread, a structure without its context.

Starting with Cocteau and ending with Sartre, we witness a gradually strengthened intention to subvert the events and the values the myth prescribes and so change the course of its action. When we speak of a subversive mood and a de-mythologising process, however, the words themselves imply a conscious effort to invalidate patterns of behaviour and moral standards that have long been considered exemplary.[24] If Eliot and O'Neill keep myth in the background as an underlying pattern that by no way obstructs the modern plot, then the French bring the myth to the surface retaining locality, mythological names and settings. The evolution of the plot proceeds through anachronisms, displacement of ancient and modern times and occasionally, a deliberate depiction of characters as ordinary, anti-heroic personalities. Equally remarkable in some of the plays is the import of a reversible de-mythologising *and* mythologising process that combines the 'then' and the 'now' within a single plot. I shall examine how each playwright works with the plot (myth) and the techniques he engineers in order to achieve his goals.

In Cocteau's *critique poésie,* there is one and only reference to myth: 'Un mythe est un mythe parce que les poètes le reprennent et l'empêchent de mourir.'[25]

The artist is seen as the perpetuator of cultural memory and, therefore, of myth's survival. Cocteau sees art as an autonomous universe; the poet is at the centre of it and through his work participates in the 'primeval eternal order of the universe'.[26] This position is reflected in his writings: Cocteau created his own myths and re-worked or drew material from classical myths and medieval legends. His own life and personality were perhaps the most accomplished of all the myths he created. His attraction to the scandalous and the fashionable, his obsession to shock and surprise and his notorious inconsistency with ideas and movements made him a distinctive figure in inter-war Paris. He, therefore, set out to 'save' theatre from 'corruption' and the old masterpieces from 'the patina of time' by expressing his repulsion for 'the detestable habit of... magnifying myths that makes them seem so remote from us'.[27]

Cocteau's artistic origins are to be found in the Surrealist movement although his idiosyncratic idiom defies classification. He collaborated with Diaghilev, Erik Satie, Stravinsky and Picasso, who deeply influenced his overall approach to the performing arts. His first venture into myths coincided with the rise of theatricalism – a movement that emphasised performance and the exploitation of the technical possibilities of the modern stage. Cocteau disliked naturalism, symbolism and psychological drama. He attacked the symbolist 'invisible theatre' of Maeterlinck, insisting that the stage is not a place for symbols but a place where things should be shown rather than mean something. He explained: 'what our masters did was to conceal the object under poetry... What we have to do henceforward is to conceal poetry under the object. That is why I suggest setting traps, quite ordinary ones, for poetry. Who would guess that love, death and poetry live in that simple object over there?'[28]

His slogan 'poetry of the theatre' (meant to substitute 'poetry in the theatre') was directed towards a drama that would be free from the omnipotence of the word. Imagery should not spring from language and dialogue but should be found in the action. Text should not only be supplemented by performance; it is almost non-existent without it. Consequently, dialogue is merely one of the elements of drama alongside dance, music, acrobatics, pantomime, sets, sound and lighting effects. An imaginative synthesis of all can generate a kind of 'poetry' which would be verbal and plastic as well. Although, we are reminded of Wagner's Total Artwork (*Gesamtkunstwerk*), Cocteau was suspicious of the hypnotic and quasi-religious effect of the German's operas. He pursued another kind of poetry, a 'poésie de tous

les jours'.[29] Cocteau was aiming at a spare dialogue, subordinated to the visual and aural elements of the theatre so that magic could be created through images, objects and physical movement. According to Jean-Jacques Khim, Cocteau's objective was 'to transfer to the plot and the settings those figurative and imaginative functions usually performed by language'. Following such a line of thought, the evolution of the story becomes of paramount importance and is understood as a series of events that make for a linear and episodic form.[30]

Dickinson remarks that this kind of drama tends to 'dramatic picturization' that drains the spectacle from strong contrast, dramatic implication and emotional power.[31] Although Dickinson's is a fair comment, it is equally fair to remember that Cocteau was indifferent to such a kind of drama. He sought new ways of creating audience-actor empathy and to this end he employed shock techniques, hoaxes and traps, and laughter at the most unlikely moments.[32] The plays of the Twenties are certainly characterised by a certain degree of aesthetic formalisation and sensational effects that overbalance the feebleness of text or other inadequacies. Nevertheless, Cocteau's experiments were pioneering and quite shocking for the French theatre, which was characterised by verbosity, literariness and linguistic ornamentation.

His adaptations of Sophocles' *Antigone* (1922) for Honegger's eponymous opera, *Oedipus Rex* (1925) and his re-working of the myth of Orpheus in *Orphée* (1926) are products of his innovative ideas – they are theatrically adventurous and imaginative pieces. For the libretto of Honegger's *Antigone,* (in Picasso's setting), Cocteau freely adapted Sophocles' tragedy.[33] He sought to convey an image of the modern age: verse was substituted by colloquial prose; the rhythm of speech was rapid with abrupt changes of pace while the stage directions demanded a presentation of Sophocles' tragedy as seen from an aeroplane, 'as seen from the air, a kind of bird's-eye-view'. Stage effects and objects of beauty created a kind of magic, quite unusual for the theatre of the era. A disembodied voice spoke the parts of the chorus; it spoke through a hole placed in the middle of the set, reciting as if from a megaphone. The actors wore transparent masks similar to 'fencing-baskets', while audiences could see the faces of the actors and 'ethereal features were sewn on to the masks in white millinery wire...The general effect was suggestive of a sordid carnival of kings, a family of insects.'[34]

Orphée (Théatre des Arts-Pitoeff, 1926) was his first original play – a 'tragedy in one act and an interval' on the myth of Orpheus. The stage directions

minutely specify the sets, props, costumes, and colours and include a significant note: 'In staging this play the director must neither add nor subtract a chair or change the disposition of doorways and windows. The set, as described by the author, is a part of the text and every element, down to the last detail, plays its part in the action.'[35] According to a description of the play's first performance by Claude Mauriac, 'the interval' between the two acts is significant as it occurs the very moment Orpheus plunges through a mirror into the underworld. 'A brief fall of curtain marks it and two scenes link it which are repeated word for word... the same words, the repetition, [and] their symmetry are terrifying. We are seized with anguish as the author intended. He had to make us understand that time was changing its rhythm for Orphée, that between his time and ours there was no longer a common measure.'[36]

The action of *Orphée* takes place in a modern apartment, which is eventually transformed into Heaven. Orpheus is infatuated with a talking horse that transmits prophetic messages, described as 'poem(s) of a dream, a flower(s) plucked from the backyard of death'. (*O108*) Eurydice is jealous of the horse and wants to kill it; Aglaonice, a former associate of Eurydice, is jealous of Orpheus because he has taken Eurydice away from the Bacchantes. Aglaonice sends a poisoned letter to Eurydice, which causes her death. Death appears as a beautiful, young woman in a modern evening dress and rubber gloves, while her assistants (the angels Azrael and Raphael) wear surgical uniforms. She enters and exits through a mirror since 'mirrors are doors. It's through them that Death moves back and forth.' (*O128*) The woman and her assistants operate a sort of radio transmitter that releases Eurydice's soul in the form of a white dove. Finally, the head of the dismembered Orpheus bounces onto the stage to complain of his fate and declare that his name is Jean Cocteau.

Renewal was important for Cocteau. His blending of the ancient with the new and his fascination with the images, shapes and forms of technology are means of emphasising the present against the glorious past. The paraphernalia of modern technology are at the centre of his private mythology. Cocteau's mythology consisted of machines, appliances, traps, objects and the 'mysteries' of daily life – things that exist beside us but we fail to appreciate. Their revelation and re-instatement in artistic forms is the task of the poet. The old and the new merge in his universe since, as he claimed, 'time is a purely human notion that does not, in fact, exist.'[37]

Dickinson raises the question of whether these 'objects' are not actual symbols and tentatively concludes that we may, perhaps, call them 'stage symbols' as

opposed to 'literary symbols' since Cocteau refused to 'conceptualise' what can be shown on stage.[38] The distinction is problematic; it would be more accurate to say that Cocteau's refusal to admit that he used symbols was a reaction to the way they were employed by the symbolists and the playwrights of the poetic style play. He always emphasised the beauty of objects themselves which acquire a magic of their own without actually meaning or symbolising something. These 'objects' or symbols do appear in recurrent patterns and form a kind of personal vocabulary through which the pivotal theme of his plays – 'the death-and-resurrection theme' – is expressed in *Orphée* and in *La Machine Infernale*.[39]

Linda Crowson argues that Cocteau's oeuvre contains multiple mythic levels among which she recognises as most important: a) the need for 'divertissement' and play; b) the realisation that myth is the only factor that can accommodate the intricate relationship between the artist and the real; c) a tendency to go back to the origins; d) the composition of myth as Cocteau conceives it recapitulates that of reality. According to Crowson 'myth represents Cocteau's most far-reaching attempt to come to terms with the world as he perceived it: his works imply that each artist-hero, by virtue of the models he presents to the public, has the potential for forming the perpetual modes that will succeed him in time.'[40] Crowson's observations apply, more or less, to all of Cocteau's plays as well as to the work of any other writer placed under the rubric 'mythic'. Perhaps, particular emphasis should be placed on 'the need for play', that is, the need to escape historical time. In Cocteau, myth frequently functions as a means of escaping to an imaginary world of freedom and distinct forms that excites the imagination; it marks a return to the sources of life and recaptures the innocence of childhood (literally and metaphorically).[41] Crowson goes on to say that 'although Cocteau utilized the basic mythic structure of a return to the beginning, his modification of the usual sacred-profane axis implies a radical questioning of values and perceptions as well as an affirmation of the artist's power.'[42]

The radical approach Crowson describes is to be found in the farcical inconsequence, the strong tendency towards the burlesque, as well as the prosaic nature of dialogue and mythological figures that could be traced back to Offenbach. Cocteau noted that Offenbach proved that 'the spirit of poetry and its accompanying spirit of death' are not to be found only in works of melancholy but also in those of a 'frivolous nature'.[43] In the plays and libretti of the Twenties, the questioning of values

and perceptions, as Crowson puts it, occurs on the level of theatrical vocabulary and less on the textual or conceptual level. Cocteau was temperamentally and sentimentally drawn to fairy tales and myths through the readings of his childhood, while the simplicity of myth-plots offered an ideal framework for his theatrical experiments. His fascination with modern mythology was reflected in his efforts to find modern means to 'picturize' the incidents of a myth-plot and the emphasis was on the objects of his modern mythology: Cocteau engineered an entire mechanism of stage effects, objects and traps that visualised mythological notions and personae. Much depended on the visual, often flamboyant discourse woven around myth that formed a sort of superstructure upon it. Cocteau's preoccupation with ballet and opera led him to an almost choreographic and aesthetic approach that accounted for theatrical magic rather than textual effectiveness.[44]

In practice, Cocteau's dialogue was never as spare as his writings lead us to believe. By 1934, his plays had become more literary and *The Infernal Machine* (*Comédie des Champs-Élysées, Théâtre Louis Jouvet*, 1934), despite its striking theatricality, is more wordy and explicit than his previous texts. *The Infernal Machine* is a re-working of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*.[45] The central theme of the play is that of the death of a man and his rebirth as a mythic hero. The 'infernal machine' starts to operate before the opening of the play: a Voice, speaking as if out of time, summarises the story of Oedipus, ending with the following comment:

> Spectator, this machine you see here wound up to the full in such a
> way that the spring will slowly unwind the whole length of a human
> life is one of the most perfect constructed by the infernal Gods for the
> mathematical destruction of a mortal. (*MI.160*)

Cocteau creates a scenic space of Pirandellian significance. There is a lighted platform surrounded by curtains at the centre of the stage and a dark area that surrounds the platform. The platform is the actual and symbolic *locus* where the characters re-enact their personal plight. The set remains the same throughout the play. In the first act, the gossip of the two soldiers on wages and other everyday trivialities, the jazz music, and the sounds heard in the background establish the atmosphere of a modern city. The platform represents contemporary reality while the

semi-dark area represents the world of myth that gradually unfolds behind the curtains.

Cocteau's refusal to submit 'to the detestable habit of magnifying myths that makes them seem so remote from us' is manifested in his wish to make us see Oedipus as a 'man' as well as in his handling of the famous Sphinx's riddle. The first implies that Oedipus is inscribed in people's minds not as the man who seeks self-knowledge and through his fate becomes a 'myth' but as a fictional hero utterly cut off from the human domain. Therefore, Cocteau sets out to re-humanise (or de-mythologise) Oedipus in the first three acts in order to re-mythologise him in the fourth. As questionable as such an approach might be, it suggests that the playwright wanted to endow Oedipus with the characteristics of a modern Everyman. Oedipus is presented as a child of nature, not exceptionally endowed with intelligence, untouched by knowledge. His behaviour is one of naive pride, arrogance and strong resolution to achieve his goal, elements first encountered in Gide's *Oedipus*, performed three years earlier. He is described as 'a playing-card King,' a gambler, who defies the Sphinx and enrages Tiresias before he realises that the game has been lost. Jocasta is a cosmopolitan lady, with a foreign accent. In the first act, when she arrives at the ramparts to inquire about the ghost of the dead King Laius – a scene strongly reminiscent of *Hamlet* – her intimate dialogue with the young soldier and Tiresias echoes the camp style and the language of Guitry's plays.[46] Tiresias (Zizi according to Jocasta) is a crooked, shrewd manipulator who exercises considerable influence on the Queen. Oedipus, Iocasta and Tiresias are treated with an obvious intention to shock as extreme opposites of their prototypes. The up-to-date Parisian idiom with occasional vulgarities, the barrack talk of the soldiers at the ramparts, the cosmopolitanism of Jocasta might be extraneous elements of what Cocteau called 'la vie quotidienne' but hardly constitute a serious attempt to render modern sensibilities and mentality.

In such a context, the second issue previously raised – that of Oedipus' confrontation with the Sphinx – is treated in an equally unexpected way. The slaying of monsters 'who [are] unwilling to permit men to live' is a central theme in all mythologies. It has to do with the eternal fight of Man against natural elements consequently, his survival on earth. The deed of Oedipus, who confronts the monster as an equal, has the symbolic meaning 'of asserting Man's dominance on earth'.[47] In *La Machine Infernale*, the deed is nullified; the Sphinx falls in love with Oedipus and

reveals the solution to the riddle to him. Oedipus becomes the victim of a sexually frustrated Sphinx who engineers the former's downfall. Cocteau subverts the basic constituents of the myth.

The attitude towards the gods is the other issue that erodes the mythic fabric. The marriage to his mother, the slaughter of the father and Oedipus' own downfall are tricks gods play on men. 'We must obey. There are mysteries within mystery, gods above gods. We have our gods and they have theirs. That's called infinity,' says Anubis, suggesting a hierarchical, impersonal system of malevolence that controls the universe. (*MI185*) Powers that control the fortunes of both gods and mortals are here implied. The whole world is a trap; Gods appear both evil and weak; free will is gratuitous. The focus, then, is not on the struggle against implacable destiny but rather on the absence of divine grace and its replacement by a mechanism of malignity – an idea originally traced in Gide's *Oedipus* that speaks of the treachery of God.[48] This mechanism is almost the reverse of the tragic notion of fate where the tragic flaw is a result of ignorance (the ancient Greek 'agnoia') thus making conflicts credible and generating dramatic impact. Cocteau's idea of fate is characteristic of a mechanised age that controls individuals and renders the existence of free will utterly problematic. Although the requisite of a modern tragedy would and should demand a different idea of fate, Cocteau's substitution amounts to a system of philosophic determinism that re-produces evil and demeans human beings.

To further sustain this infernal machine, Cocteau introduces on-stage and off-stage devices that foreshadow the denouement. The most important off-stage device is the Voice; it foretells the outcome of every subsequent event. On-stage, Cocteau permeates the play with predictions (Laius' ghost, Tiresias' warnings, the Sphinx's threats) and other ominous signs that precipitate the fall. The emphasis on the foreknowledge of the story excludes any possibility of Oedipus' victorious battle against his Fate. There is a mixture of heterogeneous elements, anachronisms, irony and humour. There are implications of psychoanalytic theory but not a psychological treatment of characters or events. Cocteau uses the mechanism of the Freudian cause-and-effect quite schematically, in similar though not quite the same ways as O' Neill. Thus the Oedipal complex – visualised by the cradle of Oedipus placed next to the wedding bed in the third act – is part of the destructive infernal machine. Theatricality and an inventive game with props and scenic tricks enhance the impression of an unconventional treatment. Props and sets, in particular, undergo metamorphoses and

acquire multiple and, sometimes, menacing significance: the platform with the curtains on each side which, little by little, close in with Jocasta's final appearance, before her suicide; Jocasta's scarf becomes the instrument of her suicide; the carcass in the royal bedroom which, all of a sudden, takes the shape of Anubis, the Sphinx's companion; the belt offered to Oedipus as a reminder of the Sphinx's impending revenge. The whole mood and atmosphere is one of inconsequence and remoteness.

Through such devices, Cocteau tried to avoid identification, illusion and psychological depiction; instead, he emphasised the various stages of the story (myth.) The three first acts are quite static, snapshots from Oedipus' *peripeteia* – incidents implied in the myth, petrified moments seized in the course of a life-time: his encounter with the Sphinx, his wedding night, etc. Cocteau's rebellion against myth is well established in the course of the first three acts. The fourth act stands quite apart. Neither subversive mood nor originality in the thematic treatment is manifested. Cocteau unfolds the plot in exactly the same way as Sophocles, explaining that it was written as an adaptation of the last part of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. He only abstains from it in the very end when Tiresias prevents Creon from interfering with the departing family and closes the play with the following lines:

Creon: I shall not allow a madman to go out free with Antigone. It is
my duty to-
Tiresias: Duty! They no longer belong to you; they no longer come
under your authority.
Creon: And pray to whom should they belong?
Tiresias: To poets, people, the unspoiled souls ... to Glory. (*MI241*)

Cocteau has followed Oedipus step by step from his departure from the palace of Polibius and Merope – his foster parents – in Corinth to self-mutilation and flight from Thebes. The episodic, linear evolution of the plot is meant to depict how Oedipus came to be what he is: a mythic hero. At the climactic moment, when the hero learns his true identity from the Shepherd, Cocteau recites Sophocles' text verbatim:

I have killed whom I should not. I have married whom I should not.
I have perpetuated what I should not. All is clear. (*MI238*)

Cocteau most likely wanted to show that his version of the story and that of Sophocles converge at the moment of self-blinding, which marks Oedipus' entrance into the domain of myth. But do they really converge? Francis Fergusson states that the fourth act was meant to 'remind us with startling suddenness of a donné basis to the whole play, but which we had forgotten in the analysis of the three static situations of the first three acts: the story was over before it began.'[49] It is difficult to accept Fergusson's conclusion as the double line of development adopted in these three acts, i.e., the events as enacted in the play, parallel to the constantly repeated device of the off-stage Voice and the other forms of prediction hardly permit the spectator to forget the impending doom, that is, the 'donné basis'. But Fergusson's reference to the 'the donné basis' is worth noting because it seems to have been a central problem for Cocteau as well as for all the playwrights examined in this chapter. Each certainly strives to present an aspect of events and mythological personae that radically differs from previous treatments. This normally leads to the question of how the fated end would be worked out and integrated into the whole. If the overall handling radically reallocates the logic of events and relations, how would the 'donné' end be justified? Would it not be something utterly out of character? Should it be worked out as something of a surprise? Provided that a myth cannot change, what kind of a surprise can that be?

Cocteau was not unaware of such problems. This led him to a scenic image where life and art, myth and present reality are seen as permanent co-ordinates in constant exchange, juxtaposition, and parallelism. On the level of stage iconicity, he manages to encompass both present and mythological past in ways ostensibly reminiscent of Eliot's model in the *Waste Land*. The theatre-within-the-theatre device signifies the potentiality of a self-conscious re-enactment of individual tragedies in true Pirandellian fashion. Having effectively established the constituents of parallelism and juxtaposition, one would expect Cocteau to remain consistent with this line of treatment that would have eliminated the restrictions imposed by the archetypal plot. Similarly, the building up of powerful characters (and not types) that could carry out their own version of the Oedipus story would have permitted a substantial convergence with myth at the moment of Oedipus' self-mutilation. The perseverance in 'picturizing' incidents from the myth-plot and the device of prediction nullify the element of surprise and convey the sense of a 'self-defeating irony'.[50] With the closing in of the platform curtains, one has the feeling that the

archetypal myth has swallowed the play. Thus, Cocteau's version of the myth does not acquire a life of its own as a new version of the story, while the characters as delineated remain a central problem. Oedipus, Jocasta and Tiresias are contrived creations meant to demean their own prototypes, not modern Everymen who can substantiate an ethos different than that prescribed by the myth. When at the end Oedipus, Antigone, and Jocasta's ghost depart to enter the world of 'poets and glory' as Cocteau wishes them to, we are strongly reminded of Pirandello's six characters, who manage to enter the 'mythic' domain in their own right as legends of artistic creation.[51]

Both *Orphée* and *La Machine Infernale* had great impact at the time of their first performance. The iconoclastic treatment of myth was both unusual and shocking. The approach that sees myth teasingly – seriously and at once sardonically/subversively – alongside a new performance grammar was a startling experience. Cocteau's theatrical vocabulary and his use of stage and visual effects were pioneering and became points of reference for European theatre. The introduction of meta-theatrical and visual elements in the effort to overcome the restrictions of the method and to combine myth and contemporaneity make for a theatrical rather than a textual (dramatic) treatment of myth. If we extract the magic of Cocteau's theatricality, then both plays seem feeble in their treatment of myth and appear, somehow, dated. Despite his conscientious efforts, Cocteau failed to handle effectively the crucial problem that Fergusson calls the donné basis and Dickinson describes as 'the fatality assigned by myth'.[52] Still, Cocteau inaugurated self-conscious games with mythological plots and theatre conventions that were to become a pivotal axis for the re-telling of the old stories in modern terms. The perseverance in using the method of dramatising myth-plots produces a *nécessité littéraire,* which the French playwrights deliberately make part of their dramaturgical strategies. In contrast to Eliot and O' Neill, who were constantly conscious of the restrictions imposed by an ancient plot and whose method was directed to the elimination of such restrictions, the French seem to accept it as an element to address rather than to avoid.

This becomes quite obvious in the plays of Jean Giraudoux who made ample use of legends, mythology, and Biblical themes in his fiction and plays. A quick glance through some of his titles is revealing: *Siegfried* (1928), *Amphitryon 38*

(1929), *Judith* (1931), *La Guerre de Troie n' aura pas Lieu* (1935), *Electre* (1937), *Ondine* (1939), *Sodome et Gomorrhe* (1943). For Giraudoux the originality of the plot is immaterial; he is interested in the development of the theme – the way a writer elaborates on a (given) plot. His dramatic art is based on the unorthodox reworking of a well-known myth or legend whose denouement is always the one prescribed by the myth or legend. To achieve the utmost originality, he plays with diverse material: monologues and tirades, various clichés and worn-out conventions while he heavily depends on rhetorical balancing, arabesque and ironic contrasts. Giraudoux's plays constitute a triumph of the literary, poetic theatre. He was greatly influenced, in this respect, by Louis Jouvet; their fruitful co-operation in correcting and re-writing the plays became legendary. Giraudoux turned to the theatre at the time Cocteau's plays were the theatrical sensation of the day and saw myths as inexhaustible material for the kind of imaginative theatre he had in mind. When he wrote *La Guerre de Troie n'aura pas Lieu*, (Athénée, 1935), he was perhaps contemplating *La Machine Infernale*, performed the previous year, and tried to deal with some of the problems raised by Cocteau's handling of myth.

'Can a myth change?' Giraudoux posed the question and answered: No, it cannot. The proof of this becomes an almost strategic target and it is worthwhile examining the techniques he employed when dealing with mythological plots. In the case of *La Guerre de Troie n' aura pas Lieu*, Giraudoux juxtaposed an improbable hypothesis against Cocteau's determinism and set out to prove its absurdity. The subject of the play 'is not the arrival of war, but the hesitation of the world between war and peace.'[53] The action takes place in Troy, just before the outbreak of the Trojan War. Giraudoux does not dramatise a proper myth; he simply locates events in mythological time and employs characters from the Homeric Epic. As in his novella *Elpénor,* we have a similar reversal of situations and roles. All events are seen through the eyes of the Trojans and not through the Greeks as in Homer. Giraudoux avoids taking sides; neither does he vicitimise or idealise the defeated Trojans. Hector is the protagonist, not Agamemnon or Achilles. Cassandra denies her own prophetic powers explaining that: 'All I ever do is to take account of two great stupidities: the stupidity of men, and the stupidity of the elements.' (*GT1*) Surprisingly, Helen is the one who prophesises the fall of Troy, Paris' death, Andromache's and her son's weeping over Hector's body. (*GT29-30*)

147

The play begins with Andromache's remark, 'The Trojan War will not take place, Cassandra,' only to receive the latter's reply that, 'There will be a Trojan War.' Hector, the warrior, has experienced a moment of illumination on the battlefield where he has realised that his true self abhors war. With the passion of an idealist, he tries to avert it and nearly prevails. The leader of the Greeks, Ulysses, is not against reconciliation. They finally reach an agreement 'on a peaceful, if fudged, solution'[54] although in reality Ulysses is the prime warmonger, something Hector fails to realise. Helen is about to be given back to the Greeks in an effort to cancel the reason for the outbreak of the war. Yet, at the very last moment, through a casual incident, the war becomes inevitable. It is an ultimate irony when Hector admits that: 'the war will happen'. (*GT74*) Absurdity is at the bottom of war.

Publicly Giraudoux denied that the play reflected the political concerns of its time and the efforts to avert the war through an Anglo-German rapprochement, which he himself actively supported. Recent research has shown that he was expressing fears of an impending war and was attacking the incompetence of the politicians to avert it. The mythological locale and personae permitted allusions that would have been otherwise politically incorrect for a career statesman like Giraudoux, who became Minister of Propaganda during the Phoney War (September 1939). Indeed, both audiences and critics related the theme of *La Guerre* to current politics and saw topical allusions that could hardly be accidental.[55] The apparent contradiction between the implied fatalism of the play and the author's practice as an active pacifist had been duly noted.

The play is written in the form of a debate. It develops as an exhaustive series of negotiations between the pacifists and the warmongers. As a 'master of the antithetic dialogue' Giraudoux organises the conflicting arguments remarkably well, showing the opponents' mutual mistrust, and their (sometimes deliberate) misunderstandings.[56] In the long process until the outbreak of the war, Giraudoux excludes gods and divine intervention; he focuses on the force of destiny and on the dilemmas of characters entrapped in circumstances they fight but cannot avert, no matter how hard they try. He creates characters that appeal to the emotions. Simultaneously, he manipulates balances and keeps the uncertainty to the end, playing with the audience's expectation that anything but the fated end could happen.[57] The finality of the myth – the donné basis – far from imposing itself on the play is well integrated within its structure of feeling and experience. Nationalism,

patriotism, political arrogance and political blindness become targets of irony. Only with the benefit of hindsight can *La Guerre* be seen as a pessimistic play that addresses the force of destiny and foresees the defeat of France in the War. Otherwise, the closing lines of *La Guerre* 'The Trojan poet is dead...The word is now with the Greek poet' can be explained as an observation on the relativity of History.[58] In fact, the emphasis on the contingency of the denouement (the outbreak of the most famous ancient war by chance) extracts the play from its mythological or historical context and gives it an acute diachronic relevance.

There is something else to be noted here. The loose, extensive and detailed form of the epic with the interweaving of various myth-cycles, heroes and gods offers a far greater freedom of choice for dramatisation than the concise story of a single myth with its dearth of events and heroes. Therefore, the pressures and restrictions imposed on the playwrights when dramatising an Epic or parts of it are substantially eliminated. In the case of *La Guerre,* only the end is really given. Giraudoux was not obliged to include the basic corpus of events that constitute a myth since he did not dramatise a proper myth neither Homer's epic. He placed the action in the context of the Trojan War and freely devised a fictional situation by overturning a well-known fact in order to reaffirm it. Such a freedom was hardly possible with the Electra myth he dramatised in 1937. *Electre* was his only play that handled one of the most powerful and well-known myths and one all three Greek tragedians had dramatised. And though in *Electre* his techniques become more elaborate and dramatically cunning in order to overcome restrictions inherent by the myth-plot, the results were less satisfying.

Electre, (Athénée, 1937) is a two-act play. The action revolves around a crucial lie: in Argos everybody, including Electra, is ignorant of the fact that Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus slaughtered Agamemnon twenty years before. Citizens have been told that the King had a fatal accident in the royal bathroom. Furthermore, nobody suspects that Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus are lovers. It is a perfect crime.

Giraudoux presents an image of human inertia. Law and order are imposed by an oppressive regime and sanctioned by divine benediction. The alliance between divine and earthly powers – exposed through irony and sarcasm– is a strong element in the play. The gods do not interfere with human affairs unless they are provoked by sins and misconduct. Aegisthus, the politically successful Regent of Argos, has based

a whole philosophy of public welfare on the exploitation of the citizens' guilt and their fear of possible divine retribution. Aegisthus explains:

> A Chief of State's first concern is to be vigilant lest the Gods be shaken out of their lethargy. He must see that the only harm they do is in their sleep, snoring and thundering... I must admit that in this matter the Courts have given me ample backing... None of my sanctions has been vivid enough a target to enable the gods to adjust their aim in vengeance. I never exile. I kill. Exiles have the same tendency to crawl up steep places as the dung beetle. And I never publicize my punishments. Whereas our poor neighbours betray themselves by erecting their gallows on hilltops, I crucify men in the bottom of valleys. (*E173*)

Obedience to the laws and submission to the flux of everyday routine are the means to avoid divine intervention. 'Guilt' and 'oblivion' are key words in Argos; Aegisthus' strategies of intimidation are based on perpetuating the citizens' guilt, real or manufactured, through political manoeuvring. Memory is a dangerous human quality. Recalling unpunished crimes, past rivalries, and frustrated ambitions may lead to acts of violence and revolt. The regime is in no need of heroic or great deeds since they inflame passions, even wars. The idea of an immobilised humanity, plunging into a conscientious self-oblivion in order to escape divine retribution, is nothing but 'a reversal or rather a parody of the ancient notion of Moira' (Fate).[59]

The farcical sub-plot of the Theocatocles couple is meant to illustrate the Regent's concept of the ideal citizen and to model in miniature the Atreides story. The ironic contrast is well articulated in the Gardener's monologue after the end of Act I where, contemplating (among other things) the nature of tragedy, he offers a clue to the play:

> Kings practice pure science. They succeed with experiments which never work for the humble – they achieve pure hatred, pure wrath. It's always purity they are after. That's what tragedy is about, with its incest and parricides, purity, innocence, in effect. (*E202*)

Agatha Theocatocles, the judge's frivolous wife and one of the Regent's ex-lovers, hates her husband. She is, nevertheless, the means whereby Electra is driven to the discovery of Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus' crime. The Theocatocles manage to hide sins and infidelities as successfully as the Royals. Ironically, the revelation of the truth destroys the Royals, who 'practice pure science' but not the Theocatocles who practice lies and sins on the domestic level. Electra whose life is polarised between past memories and future expectations of Orestes' return is considered by Aegisthus as a public danger, a woman separated from the crowd, one who 'makes signals to Gods' – that is, one who provokes the intervention of fate. To rehabilitate 'all artists, dreamers and chemists' as well as Electra, the Regent enforces marriage. Marriage traps rebels in everyday conventionality and exhausts them before they become 'se-declarer'. The term indicates the moment the hero/ine accepts his/her own destiny and proceeds to act accordingly.

Against this humanity that shrinks into anonymity, Giraudoux juxtaposes Electra's restlessness and wilfulness. In the beginning, she is possessed by an instinctive hatred towards Clytaemnestra and the Regent. After the disclosure of her father's murder, she fiercely pursues justice through revenge. She creates her own destiny and leads the unwilling Orestes to murder the Queen and the Regent: she is Orestes' Fury. But Electra also expresses the basic ambiguity of her name's double significance: brilliance of light and 'a-lekta', which means without bed, without a bedmate. Her attachment to the dead father, the incestuous love for the brother that may well indicate a displacement of an unsatisfied sexuality and the instinctive hatred for her mother – even before the disclosure of the truth – that may spring from sexual jealousy can be explained as a sublimation of her obsessions into a super-human ideal of justice and chastity. It is interesting to note that Giraudoux's Electra as well as all modern Electras – from O' Neill's Lavinia to Anouilh's Electra – are passionate and deprived women; in this sense, they retain basic characteristics of Sophocles' and Euripides' heroines. In Sophocles' tragedy, we have the first attempt in the history of drama at delineating a psychological portrait of a woman. The focus is on the heroine and though the balance between dialogical and choral parts is sustained, the chorus performs a more conventional and passive role than in the rest of his tragedies.

Giraudoux's aim was far from delineating a psychological portrait of his heroine. He focuses on the struggle between two different ideologies: that of *justice humain* – a pragmatic acceptance of human and political expediency in exchange for

151

a blissful life, represented by Aegisthus; and that of *justice intégrale* – an absolutist pursuit of justice and purity regardless the price paid, represented by Electra.[60] They are two fundamentally diverse aspects that precipitate an irreparable conflict. But as Henri Godin remarks, the pattern of truth in Giraudoux is complexity.[61] Indeed, more than in any other of his plays, the pattern is deliberately one of endless arabesques, ironies, deceptions and half-truths. The conflict of *justice humaine* versus *justice intégrale* is communicated through complication and obliqueness. If Aegisthus' unheroic world is assaulted, so then is Electra's idea of heroism and single-minded determination. Serious causes that bring about catastrophe are viewed with scepticism and irony. The Girauducian Electra might perform the same actions as her model heroine yet the obscurity of her motivation renders the ultimate result (the destruction of Argos by the invaders) quite controversial. The ethical dilemma of whether justice should be pursued regardless to the price paid remains unresolved. In her *agon* with Aegisthus, who dynamically defends his vision, Electra hardly wins the argument, even less the sympathy of the audience. Still, she carries the action to its completion. The key to understanding Giraudoux's complicated schema lies in the particular significance he places on Electra and on the myth itself. An exposition of the evolution of the plot, particularly of Act I, itself manifests the writer's aims.

Act I starts as an ominous game. In front of Agamemnon's palace, guests – invited and uninvited – appear to attend Electra's wedding ceremony enforced by Aegisthus. The groom (the Gardener of the palace) is already there, as is the unidentified Orestes as well. Three little girls who have been following Orestes since the moment of his entrance into Argos are there too. Nobody knows who are they but the girls themselves claim to be called the Eumenides. Another uninvited guest, the Beggar, appears declaring that he arrived in the city all of a sudden two days before.

While the Queen, Regent, and bride are awaited before the ceremony begins, the Eumenides enact role-playing games full of references to and insinuations about the past of the Atreides. The judge Theocatocles and his wife Agatha are the only invited guests and, ironically, those who want the wedding cancelled. The Gardener is the judge's cousin and the judge fears that troubles will ensue for his own family. The Regent appears to declare that the marriage will, at all costs, take place. The Beggar pronounces odd prophesies: Aegisthus, he says, will kill Electra before she 'declares herself' (se-declarer). But perhaps, Electra will kill Aegisthus, the Beggar continues. It depends on who manages to make the first movement.

The Queen enters and Electra accosts her; they quarrel over trivial matters, such as the incident with baby Orestes. Who is responsible for his falling on the floor? Did Electra push him, as Clytaemnestra claims or did Clytaemnestra let him drop from her arms, as Electra maintains? The Beggar gives a long lecture on the incident and concludes that Electra did not push Orestes. In the end, the Queen, who initially had given consent for the marriage, announces that she is now against it: a Gardener is not a proper husband for a princess! The Queen leaves. The recognition scene follows. Electra abandons the Gardener and refuses to return to the palace. The Queen reappears to say that she now recognises the stranger: he is Orestes, her son.

Brother and sister fall asleep. The Eumenides assume their role-playing games performing a recognition scene between Orestes and Clytaemnestra and make vague references to acts of revenge. The Beggar delivers a long tirade on what happened and, perhaps, on what is going to happen. The curtain then falls, followed by the entrance of the Gardener in front of the curtains. He delivers a monologue. 'The play will go on without me,' he says. It appears that he feels obliged to inform the audience that his marriage never took place. This is the end of Act I.

Is Giraudoux moving altogether away from myth? Can Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra be left unpunished? What happens, anyway? Through the slow procedure of Act I, where a great deal is anticipated but little happens, we become aware of two reversible movements working in the play. One is against the truth and the other seeks self-consciousness. The first is working against or rather away from myth; the second, represented by Electra, is working towards the myth. The line working away from myth, through complication and deception, goes as far as it can go. Once the truth is revealed, early in Act II, events accumulate. Everything takes shape and everyone acquires self-knowledge through Electra's action. Aegisthus, in his effort to defend the city, becomes a true leader. Clytaemnestra admits her guilt. Agatha unmasks herself and the judge turns against Aegisthus. Orestes performs the killings. In the blasted city with the Corinthians massacring citizens, Electra cries: 'I have justice! I have everything!' The Beggar closes the play speaking of a new 'dawn'. Giraudoux was quite explicit when he spoke of his *Electre*:

By the ability to forget, and by the fear of complication, humanity allows the most heinous crimes to sink into oblivion... But in every age arise the pure in heart who refuse to allow these crimes to be

overlooked, even should the means they take to prevent it lead to other crimes and disasters.[62]

Giraudoux saw Electra as the carrier of the mythic action that enforces tragedy on Argos: she is 'the bearer of the myth'.[63] In other words, as the 'bearer of myth' Electra pursues a kind of truth that leads to a catastrophe, which would have been otherwise impossible in the lethargic conditions of Argos. It is as if the moment of the revelation of truth signifies a dovetailing, an encasement of the play within the myth. Orestes and Electra are, ultimately, permitted to perform their traditional roles as ordained by the myth. Read in this light, the complicated schema of the play acquires meaning. Deviations from the original plot, deception and obliqueness are the means whereby we are drawn back to myth. In a world of insignificance and compromise, where everything is loose and fragmented, the solidity of the myth provides its raison d'être and the justification for the action. The complicated schema creates the illusion of a play moving away from myth, and the abrupt but inevitable dovetailing within the myth acquires the significance (or the surprise) of a discovery: the myth cannot change.

This accounts for the self-consciousness of the roles. All characters are trapped in self-images built up and heavily charged with centuries of human experience. In a sense, the characters' struggle can be seen as a struggle to break through and transcend the archetypal, mythical models in an attempt to find a personal identity. The whole play can be seen as an effort to go beyond the boundaries of the myth, to subvert its constituents and alter the course of events, which are already known to the audience. Nothing of the kind happens. The myth remains unchanged, the individual roles reaffirmed, the deeds materialised. The myth is literally and metaphorically a trap. The image of the contemporary world as communicated by Giraudoux is one of mediocrity, confusion, and lack of balance thus ascribing to myth an ideological superiority as a model world of exemplary patterns. The implied fatalism deriving from the agonising effort and subsequent failure to change the course of events (myth) can be interpreted as a lack of faith in the possibility of positive human intervention in the course of historical development.

The attitude was not irrelevant to the feelings of frustration and defeatism that spread throughout France and other countries in central Europe during the years before the outbreak of the Second World War. The rise of Nazism occurred at a time

when France was in the middle of a serious and protracted economic crisis and many believed that the country could have avoided invasion in 1940 had it not been politically divided between Right and Left and incapacitated by political incompetence.[64] *La Guerre* and *Electre* are Giraudoux's most overtly political plays, both written in the Thirties, when the writer, through essays, lectures, and his work as a diplomat, was promoting an understanding and a rapprochement between France and Germany. Towards the end of the decade, Giraudoux had formulated a somewhat different approach. In the essay *L' Avenir de France* written after the Anschluss, Giraudoux spoke about 'the degeneration in the French character' and considered the attitude of France before and during the war as wretched. Giraudoux explicitly states that the war was the last hope for the regeneration of his country; although it could not be the remedy, it could at least revive the morale of the decadent republic.[65]

Giraudoux's anthropocentric universe, his endless ambiguities, and his philosophising over human nature often create the sense of a fictional world that has no centre. Despite Giraudoux's long diplomatic and political career (or because of it?), freedom enters his work as a spiritual quality and not as a hot political issue whose loss engenders violent conflicts, social and political upheavals. Giraudoux's ideological stance towards Hitler was not as transparent as that of the left-wing intelligentsia in France. Nazi propaganda often took advantage of his speeches and articles at the time he served as a Minister of Propaganda during the Phoney War, while after the War, Giraudoux was repeatedly accused of political opportunism and criticised as unfit for this position.[66] In his article, *Jean Giraudoux et la Philosophie d'Aristote*, written in 1940, Jean-Paul Sartre called Giraudoux a 'schizophrenic' and attacked his humanism as an 'eudémonisme païen'. His lack of commitment, says Sartre, is unacceptable for a writer living in hard times; he concludes ironically that the world of Giraudoux is 'the world of Aristotle, a world buried for four hundred years'.[67] Sartre's polemical tone apart, one would probably agree. Nevertheless, the ideas expressed in *L' Avenir de France*, offer an explanation for the end of *Electre* since the Beggar's 'dawn' tentatively suggests a catharsis that could lead to the regeneration of Argos. Critics of the past decades find the end unsatisfactory. Donald Inskip speaks of 'an artificially-introduced optimism that is not in harmony with the dramatic development'[68] while Robert Cohen writes: 'the final verdict is ambiguous, for it will be a dawn of awesome proportions and chaotic results.'[69] Henri J. G. Godin aligns the end to the threat of the impending World War II but suggests that it is

controversial enough to persuade.[70] Raymond Williams observes that 'the structure of feeling, finally, is a central indecision'[71] pointing, in fact, to Giraudoux's basically idealistic and apolitical approach.

I would, however, like to examine the controversial end of *Electre* from a different angle and align it with the role of the Beggar and Giraudoux's preoccupations with the issue of tragedy. Some have seen the Beggar as analogous to the ancient chorus, others as an enigmatic, God-like figure.[72] In reality, his role is similar to that of the narrator in *Elpénor*. He neither participates in nor interferes with the action. He comments on it, sometimes reports it in advance, or describes events happening simultaneously off-stage (Orestes' murders). A sinister juggler, he is a brilliant and skilful invention of Giraudoux. In terms of dramatic conventions, the Beggar can be seen as an equivalent, even a parody of the Euripidean *deus ex machina*, who descends from heaven to end the drama by solving the impasse created in human affairs. The *deus ex machina* is not an integral part of the whole. As an imposed end, it is also an arbitrary though indispensable end since it implies the inadequacy of humans to handle their own conflicts. Thus, Euripides' *machina* imposes solutions but retains the tensions. The device of the *deus ex machina* somehow balances Euripides' scepticism towards the divine powers, even the lack of references to gods in some of his tragedies. As a technical device, it does not disturb the structural and formal conventions of the tragic genre. Giraudoux had no such conventions to compromise, nor did he have the need of divine intervention for an end. For the greater part of the play, Giraudoux has the Beggar on stage; he acts as an almost autonomous character, helping the play move by shrewdly pointing to possibilities for action through predicting or posing questions. In this capacity, the Beggar pronounces the last word but he is not *the* end. The action has been already concluded and the 'dawn' can be interpreted either as a potentiality, a wish, or a comment on the part of the playwright. Seen in this context, the end of *Electre* can be justified and, if handled properly in performance, it can provide a powerful coda to the play itself and a commentary on the play's own meta-theatrical aspects.

The second relevant issue is the presentation of the Eumenides. These little girls, who grow up during the course of the action and by the end acquire Electra's height, bring to mind the Moirae, the three women of Greek mythology who personify fate. Giraudoux calls them 'Flies' (*Mouches*) as well. The Eumenides are another unique invention of Giraudoux since they are neither old nor ugly as usually

presented. Like children, they utter horrible things in a disarming way. 'We lie, we slander, we insult people.' (*E162*) As a group of three, they form a chorus per se. In the absence of social and ideological coherence, a chorus expressing the 'collective conscience' of the city would have been at least incompatible. In their preposterous impersonations, the Eumenides either hint at the truth or distort it; they offer clues to the past and predict possible acts of revenge in the future thus retaining some of the chorus' functions. In the *Oresteia*, the Erinyes (Furies) are transformed into benign deities (Eumenides). In Giraudoux, their growing up implies a reverse procedure; their ambiguous, ostensibly innocent games become more and more malicious until as Furies, they set out to haunt Orestes 'until he begins to rave and then kills himself, cursing his sister'. (*E247*)

In his essay *Bellac et la Tragédie*, written in 1941, Giraudoux poses the question, 'What is tragedy?' Tragedy is described as 'the affirmation of a horrible bond between humanity and a greater-than-human destiny' where man is 'yanked from his horizontal, four-footed posture and held erect by a leash; a leash whose tyranny is abundantly evident, but whose governing will unknown.' Giraudoux expresses the concept of a universe in division that brings the individual at the desperate point of 'déchirement'. At birth, man is found in harmony with nature. This state of bliss is disturbed by a relentless 'humanity' that demands his uncompromised incorporation into the domain of human and state affairs.[73] The desire for an almost prenatal tenderness and a comprehensible simplicity is disrupted by the imperative claim of humanity to assimilate the individual into hypocritical conventions and compromises.

Giraudoux described such a world of uncompromised polarities in *Electre*. In the monologue of the Gardener quoted earlier in this chapter, the writer expresses the idea that Greek 'tragedy is about purity, innocence, in effect.' In the context of the play, the passage implies that tragedy is nowadays impossible unless a character like Electra comes forth to fulfil a deed or role that imposes total catastrophe, thus offering a vague potentiality of catharsis and rebirth. Seen, however, in the context of the Beggar's as well as of the Gardener's meta-theatrical function – according to his own words he left the play for good and is now addressing the audience outside the play – the monologue is a commentary on the play or rather on the possibility of the play being seen as a tragedy. *Electre* is not a tragedy as erroneously claimed; it is a play 'about tragedy'.[74]

One marvels at Giraudoux's ingenuity and self-consciousness in confronting the difficulties assigned by myth and the way he implicates the issue of 'tragedy'. As already suggested, the myth-plays of Giraudoux are today considered by many as mere 'revivals of the past'. The texts of *La Guerre* and *Electre* strongly contradict such assumptions. Especially in the latter, the elaborations of plot in conjunction with the other elements mentioned show that Giraudoux (even more than Cocteau) had an acute awareness of the problems innate in the handling of myths. The major challenge of combining the 'now' and the 'then' and of making the audience conscious of the contemporaneity of the new version is met through anachronisms, witticism and up-to-date language but mostly through the characters of the Beggar, the Gardener, and to a certain extent the Eumenides in their theatrical and meta-theatrical functions. The deceptive games aspire to produce astonishment, even surprise, at the abrupt shift back to myth. Tirades and monologues emphasise the artificiality of the process and establish a contact between the play and the spectator.[75] If Giraudoux partly manages to escape the deterministic premises of *La Machine Infernale,* then he neither avoids Cocteau's mistakes nor achieves an equal theatrical effectiveness. His characters are two-dimensional. The highly intellectual approach to myth, though admirably inventive when exposed or analysed, lacks dramatic impact. His plays convey the 'feeling of a central indecision', as Raymond Williams claims. The impression is often one of hesitation, of something not thoroughly articulated, unnecessarily complicated or obscure: 'complexity is structurally incompatible with the pattern of our understanding, so that truth has inevitably to be lopped into conciseness before it is digestible.'[76] But the problem with *Electre* is not so much one of complexity as of obscurity. Whereas the former can be interpreted, the latter is merely confusing. The myth offers ample clarification of the complicated schema of *Electre* as well as of the devices Giraudoux engineers in his attempts to re-tell the old story; it can account for neither matters of ideological confusion nor other inadequacies in the handling of the myth. One ultimately wonders whether or not the sophisticated techniques displayed are simply a means of disguising uneasiness in mastering the problems presented by the powerful material.

Despite the failures, *Electre* made a deep impression. Both Anouilh in *Antigone* and Sartre in *Les Mouches* borrowed crucial elements. Anouilh based his Chorus on the Beggar and his Creon on Aegisthus; the *agon* between Antigone and Creon is almost identical with that of Aegisthus and Electra. Sartre's title and the idea

of the furies as flies in *Les Mouches* were taken from Giraudoux's Eumenides. His gods are not dissimilar to Giraudoux's – Jupiter is strongly reminiscent of the Beggar. The idea of collective fear and guilt also originates in Giraudoux.

In many respects, the struggle of Cocteau and Giraudoux is a struggle with the form. Leaving aside the individual problems of each playwright, *La Machine Infernale* and *Electre* attempted to break through the inflexibility of the traditional method of dramatising myth-plots. All the more because their aim was to synchronise the 'now' and the 'then' within a single, well-known plot in ways that would emphasise the modernity of the approach and its emancipation from the conceptual apparatus of the myths they handled. The attitude to the supernatural and the overturning of basic constituents of the myth itself destroy the mythic fabric and dismantle its conceptual integrity. Whether the playful disposition and excessive games are contrived to result in Cocteau's convergence or Giraudoux's shift back to myth, the irrevocable locking of the plays within the myth-plot is of dubious success in both cases. Retrospectively seen, both plays illustrate the difficulties and the laborious efforts to control material that by itself resists conventional treatment as well as the measures both writers (hesitantly or incompletely) undertake to achieve a form that could be more open and less subservient to the mechanisms of the plot. When we reach Anouilh's *Antigone* (1944), it is neither the style nor the depth of his approach to myth that make it more successful than the plays of Cocteau and Giraudoux. Quite the contrary, it is the achievement of a more appropriate form that could eloquently 'speak' its content.

The Occupation marks the beginning of a new and very transitory period. Despite the war and the fear of the collaborationist regime, theatres in Paris were full and feelings of freedom and solidarity prevailed among the audiences. There was a preference for light shows and historical costume dramas in order to avoid the dangerous consequences of strict censorship. Cocteau and Giraudoux, who had been at the vanguard of the French stage in the years before the war, wrote plays 'making use of the myth of the good old days in various forms'.[77] In *Renaud et Armide* (1941), Cocteau dramatised a romantic fairy tale of love and death in Alexandrine verses, strictly abiding by the rules of seventeenth-century theatre. Giraudoux's only play to be performed during the Occupation was *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Placed in the world

of the Old Testament it deals with the struggle of Man and Woman. It was received with mixed feelings from both audiences and critics. One playwright who achieved great success during the Occupation was Henri de Montherlant. He borrowed his plots from the dramatists of the Spanish Golden Age; these works were also the models for his dramatic style. Montherlant exploited historical themes and mythological material and his plays, despite ironies and ambiguities, are of a deeply escapist nature with strong conflicts and characters of a 'heroic' temper.[78]

Simultaneously, new ideas as well as the seeds of a new dramatic language were beginning to be formulated. The development of the philosophy of Existentialism and the focus on the notion of the Absurd gradually formed a basis for a drama that viewed the human condition from a radically different angle. The Existentialist idea of freedom was one that contradicted fundamental concepts in Western thought since it envisaged human destiny itself as meaningless. The grotesque and the absurd, the comic and the tragic, as elements in the drama of the era and under the devastating experience of the War established in one way or another new conceptual territories and new criteria through which a modern essence of the tragic might be sought, if at all. The issue of tragedy was eventually linked with the new philosophy of Existentialism through Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre.

In his seminal essay *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, (1942) Camus sees the world as deprived of 'illusions and light' rendering man 'a stranger...an irremediable exile' since he has lost all memory of a 'homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.'[79] Camus claims that tension and ambiguity are the sources of the absurd and that both are found in the conflicts of Greek tragedy. In a later lecture on *The Future of Tragedy*, Camus draws attention to the fact that in Greek tragedy all the forces functioning are equally legitimate. Echoing Hegel, he claims that in Greek tragedy, 'All can be justified, no one is just', while in melodrama, 'one is good and the other is bad (which is why, in our days and age, propaganda plays are nothing but a resurrection of melodrama. Antigone is right, but Creon is not wrong.).' [80] Tragedy exists when the confrontation of all forces is constant and equal and the twentieth century is an era of equal and constant confrontations.

Modern man, realising that science and reason have failed to explain the world, begins to recognise the limits set by his impermanence and to acknowledge the

existence of a hostile destiny he must confront. 'If all is mystery, there is no tragedy. If all is reason, the same thing happens. Tragedy is born between light and shade, and from the struggle between them,' says Camus.[81] The refusal to accept the absurdity of this destiny calls for a revolt, which constitutes the proper basis for the rebirth of tragedy. Camus' idea of modern tragedy – which he pursued in his own plays – establishes the limits of this revolt (the transcendence of which is more or less equated with classical *hubris*) and of the subsequent actions undertaken in the name of human identity, which is threatened. The setting of such limits is of crucial importance; they are the boundaries that verify man's being and dignity. With Camus and Sartre we have what Germaine Brée and Margaret Guiton label a 'return to man'.[82] Both achieved it 'without reverting to a scientific viewpoint, a vision limited to psycho-physiological determinism,' but as an affirmation of 'man's privileged metaphysical position. With the added notion that philosophy is more an object of action than of a speculation, more part of life than a play of ideas.'[83]

The circumstances of the German Occupation, the fear of censorship, and the cruelties of the war made myths an important vehicle for disguising anti-German and anti-collaborationist attacks. Within such a political and ideological milieu, two important myth-plays were produced: Sartre's *Les Mouches* in 1943, and Anouilh's *Antigone* in 1944. Although Sartre's play is chronologically precedent to Anouilh's, I shall proceed with the latter since it is an almost logical extension of Cocteau's and Giraudoux's games with myth, form and structure while, at the same time, it can be placed within the broader preoccupations of the Existentialist movement. Sartre, with his philosophical and political orientations, parts company from the three presenting a substantially diverse approach to myth both on the conceptual and the dramatic level.

Anouilh emerged as a playwright in 1929. His early comedies (*pièces roses*) displayed an interesting mixture of grotesque and farcical elements as well as a bleak vision of the world. He was influenced by Cocteau's *poésie du théâtre* and had repeatedly acknowledged his debt to Giraudoux. But the eminent influence was that of Luigi Pirandello. Theatre-within-theatre is the basis of Anouilh's dramaturgy. In 1936 he was quoted as saying:

I realized that the dramatist could and should play *with* his characters, with their passions and their actions...To 'play' with a subject is to

create a new world of conventions and surround it with spells and a magic all your own.[84]

The term 'ludic' that H. G. McIntyre introduced for the plays of the Thirties aptly describes the idea of 'the play as a game', the 'deliberately improbable and larger-than-life' element even in the handling of 'basic situations'.[85] Anouilh imposed the ludic approach and the 'improbable' handling of characters and situations directly confronting the audience with a make-believe situation and no effort to re-create the illusion of reality. By 1944, when *Antigone* was performed, the theme that was to dominate his mature oeuvre – the clash between idealism and reality, innocence and experience – had emerged clearly. His heroes and heroines are idealists, maladjusted to social realities. There is a polarity between the young idealists and the compromised pragmatists. Polarities of characters and values as developed in the plays account for a basically a-social drama and an almost mechanistic world where the conflicts are fatal, characters are seen as players of roles and life is viewed as a theatrical event.

In the early Forties, Anouilh turned to myth and wrote three plays: *Eurydice* in 1941, *Antigone* in 1942 (performed in 1944) and *Medea* in 1946. The (unfinished) fragment *Orestes* was published in 1945 but is generally believed to be anterior to *Antigone*. It should be noted, however, that for Anouilh, the Forties signified a more general turn towards well-known legends and historical figures that subsequently produced plays like *Becket* (on St. Thomas Becket), *Roméo et Jeannette* (Romeo and Juliet) or *The Lark* (Joan D' Arc). Taking into consideration the formal and conceptual prescriptions of his previous oeuvre's myths, legends and historical figures were the proper material for the kind of drama he had in mind since they offered a set of readily available, widely recognisable, and authoritative patterns of predestined doom. McIntyre rightly notes the new violence of tone, which he ascribes to the outbreak of the War but mostly to the writer's realisation that the reasons for the failure of idealism are basically inherent in human nature. His heroes or heroines are engaged in a struggle to be true to a subjective, even arbitrary, ideal of purity and perfection; they are in a state of revolt. All plays based on legends or classical myths are *pièces noires*.[86]

Eurydice was Anouilh's first attempt to deal with myth. It is not based on an original tragedy since the Orpheus myth has not been dramatised by any of the Greek

tragedians. This permitted a freedom of handling, all the more because the myth of Orpheus itself numbers multiple versions with interesting variations in the story. Anouilh chose the simplest since his focus of interest was not the originality of the plot. The action is placed in a modern, urban and quasi-realistic milieu while the idealisation of the object of love is the driving force behind the drama. From Cocteau's *Orphée* he borrows the end: when Orpheus loses Eurydice once again because he disobeys the terms agreed upon for her return to life, he follows her to the underworld. To be with Eurydice in death is a preferable alternative to a life in a corrupted and corruptive world. Their love begins at a railway station; Orpheus wants to live a life full of 'things that are amusing, nice, terrible' while Eurydice speaks of filth and shame. (*E165*) With the revelation of their names the entrapment within myth triggers the mechanism of predestination and personalities seem to bend under the pressures of their prescribed roles. Eurydice has experienced life and brief sexual affairs. Orpheus' innocence and youthful optimism turns to an obsessive demand to learn the whole truth about his lover's past. What adds a cynical and bitter tone is the effect of Orpheus' passion on Eurydice; she asks to be allowed to 'live' the implication being that his possessive love destroys the object of love itself. On the other hand, the illusory urge for absolutes eliminates the sensuality normally expected of such legendary couples and makes their supposedly intense passion unconvincing.[87] Hence the conflict innocence versus experience leaves the omniscient Monsieur Henri, who represents death, master of the play.

Interestingly, only the two protagonists bear mythological names, which are revealed to the audience at the end of Act I. (*E184*) This permits the writer to establish a contemporary milieu and make indirect references to myth up to the end of Act I: the mythological title and the well-established tone of contemporaneity border on Joyce/Eliot's technique of the underlying mythological pattern. It also renders the revelation of the two protagonists' names a particularly significant moment in the play and provides a powerful end to the first act. Anouilh's dramatic strategy is to emphasise the subsequent locking of the play within the mythological plot, thus equating the choice of prescribed roles with fate. The dovetailing of the play within the myth-plot is a crucial element in Anouilh's approach as it provokingly emphasises the moment the two heroes embrace their fatal roles. *Eurydice* seems to be an exercise in the ways myth could fit Anouilh's obsessive theme of lonely individuals

trapped between their actual state of being and the ideal image of their own selves that enables him to deal more successfully with the myth of Antigone.

In *Antigone,* there is no credible motivation of character and action. As McIntyre rightly observes, Anouilh achieves a dramatically effective result by intensifying to the extreme the artificiality of the theatrical process and by revealing the mechanisms of both dramatic necessity and theatrical process.[88] *Antigone* is the only play Anouilh explicitly labelled 'a tragedy' although later, in his collected works, he removed the term. Sophocles' plot is closely followed while the structure is one of short consecutive scenes. W. D. Howarth draws attention to the fact that Anouilh abides by the Greek convention according to which more than two principal characters seldom appear in each scene.[89] The modifications of plot are minimal but significant in re-allocating the focuses of meaning. The absence of Tiresias and the lack of any reference to gods place myth on a strictly secular basis. Eurydice is a non-speaking character. A Nurse is added for the role of Antigone's confidant and a Page serves as a confidant to Creon. When the play begins, Eteocles has been buried with the honours due to a hero and Antigone has performed the burial of Polynices. There is no interval.

The action takes places on an empty stage with three steps leading to a dark semi-circular cyclorama that embraces the whole of the scenic space, a *décor neutre* with no props, timeless and impersonal. Photographs from the first performance of *Antigone* (Atelier, 1944) show the men wearing formal costumes or dinner jackets, the Guards black raincoats while the women were in long black dresses with the exception of Ismène who appeared in white. All costumes contrasted successfully with the stylised representation of the royal palace.

The Prologue-Chorus is the character that controls the mechanism of the whole play. In his capacity as Prologue, he introduces the *Personnages.* When the curtain rises, all the characters are on stage and during the introductory speech of the Prologue, they are discussing, laughing, knitting, and playing cards. His speech starts:

> Well, here we are. These personnages are about to act out for you the
> story of Antigone. Antigone is the thin one, sitting by herself over
> there, saying nothing, staring straight ahead. She is thinking that she is
> going to die, that she is young, and that she would much rather live

than die. But there is no help for it. Her name is Antigone, and she will have to play her role through to the end. (*A9*)

Following the introduction of the 'personnages', the Prologue gives a synopsis of the story towards the end of which the personnages disappear into the wings and re-appear when required by the action. Howarth incisively remarks that the Prologue speaks of 'personnages' and not of 'actors' 'so that even when the actors have taken on their allotted parts within the play, they are still going to be performing, or acting out, a predetermined course of events; a notion that is at once given a most challenging illustration' through the presentation of the heroine quoted above.[90] Thereafter, the Prologue assumes the role of the Chorus. He does not replace nor is he equated with the Greek chorus. Anouilh, as Cocteau and Giraudoux in the past, is very careful to avoid such pitfalls that would contradict the rationale of his own dramaturgical and conceptual aims. His Chorus is an extension of the prose narrator, detached from the action, quite cynical, yet, at moments, compassionate and comprehending. He also performs the role of a supplementary messenger.

From Cocteau, Anouilh borrowed the device of prediction and the image of the 'infernal machine', integrating both with remarkable versatility and sophistication. Thus the Chorus' summarising of the action before each scene within the context of a theatrical performance in process functions in order to make the fatality deriving from myth a tool of theatrical effectiveness. The Chorus repeatedly speaks of 'the spring wound up' (an image taken from Cocteau), a metaphor Anouilh uses to sustain his idea of fate since in *Antigone* individuals are entrapped in absurd and destructive mechanisms. Just before the conflict between Antigone and Creon, the Chorus delivers a speech on tragedy, making the distinction between 'melodrama' and 'tragedy' in terms identical to those of Camus:

> Tragedy is clean, it is restful, it is flawless. It has nothing to do with melodrama – with wicked villains, persecuted maidens, avengers, sudden revelations and eleventh-hour repentances. Death in melodrama, is really horrible because it is never inevitable...In a tragedy, nothing is in doubt and everyone's destiny is known. That makes for tranquillity. There is a sort of fellow-feeling among characters in a tragedy: he who kills is as innocent as he who gets

killed: it's a matter of what part you are playing...In melodrama, you argue and struggle in the hope of escape. That is vulgar; it's practical. But in tragedy, where there is no temptation to try to escape, argument is gratuitous: it's kingly. (*A34-35*).

The *agon* of Antigone and Creon is the central and by far the longest scene of the play; it consists of various sections or 'movements' as Howarth labels them.[91] Howarth claims that each movement in the *agon* reflects the procedures of Antigone's interior consciousness that leads to her choice of death. Creon wants to keep the burial secret and avoid dangerous political repercussions. Antigone rejects the compromise and defends her action on the grounds of moral principles and familial bonds. As Creon changes track and passes from threat to friendly advice, she, once more, expresses rejection by turning her back as if to return to the palace. A long pause introduces the next section or movement. Creon renews his efforts to 'save' her. He explains that political expediency drives him to leave the body unburied because the citizens must be kept content that one of the brothers is a traitor and the other a hero; that state burial ceremonies are a facade, 'pantomimes' to which Antigone answers: 'I know,' 'I've thought all that,' 'It is absurd.' (*A45*) Creon demands that she explains her motives: 'Then why, Antigone, why? For whose sake? For the sake of them that believe in it? To raise them against me?' Antigone replies: 'For nobody. For myself.' (*A.46*) Speaking in defence of the existing order of things and of the duty to his country as 'my trade forces me to', Creon displays 'a rational coherence that is not answered by his opponent.' Unable to counter his arguments, Antigone refuses to 'understand,' insists that she is there 'to say no and die' and emotionally retreats to the past projecting memories of her brother. (*A53*) Creon reveals that both bodies were deformed and therefore unrecognisable from each other, that both brothers were scoundrels and conspirators against the country, worthless of her sacrifice. In this last attack, Creon destroys the moral justification of her action and his victory is answered by another long pause during which Antigone makes as if to retreat to the palace. It is a moment of 'suspension' as if her fate could be reversed; she seems ready to capitulate not by intellectual persuasion but by a 'process of emotional humiliation'.[92] Then, Creon advises her to marry Haemon quickly, have children, and live a life of 'happiness'. Appalled by the word 'happiness' she declares that she prefers to die:

Antigone: I spit on your happiness! I spit on your idea of life – that life must go on, come what may. You are like dogs that lick everything they smell...I want to be sure of everything this very day; sure that everything will be as beautiful as when I was a little girl. If not I want to die. (*A58*)

Before being immured, Antigone writes a letter to Haemon saying that she does not even know 'why she dies' but she finally decides to destroy it. Haemon and Eurydice commit suicide while Creon continues with life, without uttering a word of apology or understanding for the deaths and the 'story of Antigone'.

The text oscillates between cynical pragmatism and sentimentality, detachment and passion, shifting the balance from one protagonist to the other, gradually building up the audience's sympathy for the heroine. It has been argued that *Antigone* fulfils the terms of the Hegelian 'ambiguity' according to which all forces functioning in tragedy are equally legitimate.[93] Antigone revolts against sordid realities and is subjected to a compulsive urge to escape. Anouilh's idea of the world is too limited and nihilistic to take account of 'forces' that are 'equally legitimate'; he rather establishes polarities he shrewdly manipulates to create dramatic impact. Many have aligned Anouilh's vision with Existentialism because of the emphasis placed on the heroine's moment of choice. *Antigone* does present a despairing, nihilistic world that borders on the philosophy of the Absurd although 'the means of expression' are totally different: situations, dialogue and characters display a rationalistic and coherent attitude towards the world.[94]

The cleverly manipulated and emotionally charged tension between the attitudes of the two heroes, a result of the sustained ambivalence and allusive nature of myth itself, helped avoid the difficulties of censorship at the time of the play's first performance. Interestingly, a play that could have been accused of ideological mist and a playwright notoriously a-political became objects of political controversy: censorship cleared the play presumably because Creon's arguments for dictatorship were persuasive. During the Occupation audiences identified Creon with the Nazis and Antigone with the heroes of the French Resistance. The collaborationist press praised the play. After the War, *Antigone* was attacked on the grounds of promoting reactionary ideas. The author was accused of being a collaborator and was threatened

with trial. The mythological subject matter, the political atmosphere in 1944 and the subsequent placing of *Antigone* into the then dominant existential trend focused attention on content and ideas rather than on form. But it is impossible to appreciate *Antigone* and decide what kind of play it is without examining the treatment of myth in close relation to its meta-theatrical form and the other techniques employed.

Criticism in more recent years has extensively reviewed and re-appraised the play, often unfavourably. Researchers such as H. Gignoux, John Harvey, Hugh Dickinson, David Grossvogel, H G. McIntyre, W. D. Howarth and others have offered critical comment on the controversial aspects of the play and discussed the author's initial contention that the play is a 'tragedy' in relation to the character of Antigone and the overall handling of the myth. The heroine has been seen as an anarchic rebel who rejects life itself; her action as devoid of moral significance; her motivation as 'so unconvincing that what amounts to her suicide evokes no more than a bemused pity for a rare case of alienation;' that her refusal to live can be better interpreted in psychological terms; she is 'an unreasonable adolescent who simply refuses to grow up'[95] 'an emotional fool' and 'an egocentric *extravagante*'.[96] Others argue that the treatment of the myth is itself problematic. Dickinson claims that for Anouilh, 'myth is almost a redundancy.'[97] Murray Sacks notes that it was not 'the symbolic meaning of these legends which chiefly attracted him [Anouilh] as it had so many of his contemporaries. Though each of the myths he worked on was fundamentally different, Anouilh managed to find pretty much the same meaning in all of them, i.e. the clash between an absolute ideal and daily reality.'[98] In such a context, 'the myth itself becomes contingent'[99] and the inevitability of tragedy becomes subordinate to an inherent trait in the character.[100] References to nightclubs, sport cars, central heating and family allowances have been criticised as unnecessary tricks of pseudo-modernisation, unbecoming to the myth or tragedy.

The issue of 'tragedy' as introduced by the Chorus is the most highly debated passage in the play. Howarth notes that it prevents our accepting the play as a tragedy since it makes us too conscious of the author pulling the strings and has no place within a tragedy itself.[101] W. C. Ince considers the speech on tragedy as 'a grave miscalculation' because 'the description of classical tragedy does not fit his [Anouilh's] meta-play'; that twentieth-century theatre cannot recreate the world of tragedy and that the 'description of tragedy is incomplete, for though it is convincing to stress its inevitability, Anouilh omits the transcendental element which underlines

the traditional tragic figure.'[102] Antigone's recantation towards the end has been seen as 'an inconsistency...between Anouilh's view of tragedy as pure fatality and the moment of free choice which he gives to Antigone.'[103]

Considering the difficulties of transplanting ancient myth into contemporary experience, Murray Sacks recalls the gap of time and the difference in the systems of values that separate us from classical Greece, pointing out that modern audiences might conceive the tragic dilemma of the Sophoclean heroine intellectually but cannot share her anguish for the unburied corpse beyond a specific level.[104] What is more, McIntyre, although positively biased, highlights issues connected with modern mythological drama. He reminds us that mythological heroes are inscribed in human consciousness as fictional characters each being an integral part of its own story and, therefore, they are not credible in the usual sense of the word. He asserts that *Antigone* is a naturalistic drama in reverse, where the heroine is progressively stripped of all the normally credible reasons for her conduct, laying bare the mechanism of dramatic necessity. All the rest, McIntyre claims, is a game the author plays with his public's notions of what is logical, plausible or probable. Concurring with Sacks, McIntyre refers to the radically different system of values that inform classical tragedy. He maintains that Anouilh solved this problem by having Creon rob the heroine's sense of moral duty and realise that her 'No' is the only way of resisting a mode of living she abhors. Her moment of hesitation is significant because it creates a paradoxical suspense and a tension between the heroine and her pre-ordained role.[105]

Many of the above-mentioned comments touch upon important albeit isolated aspects of the play. Much and perhaps unnecessary attention has been given to Anouilh's claim that the play is 'a tragedy'. Any criticism on such plays should be informed by the realisation that the meaning of tragedy is varied and changing and that whatever one conceives by the use of the term, *Antigone* or any other modern play cannot be judged with the criteria applied to Greek or neo-classical tragedy, as some of the previously quoted reviews suggest. If one admits that *Antigone* is a meta-play — a term thought to contradict any notion of the tragic — then, there is a substantial inconsistency in approaches that criticise anachronisms or the Chorus' contemplation on tragedy as contrived devices, incompatible with tragedy. Therefore, the speech on tragedy and the way myth is *utilised* to convey contemporary structures of feeling should pose questions of a different order. It is precisely the ideological

emptiness the play has been accused of and the artificiality of the process adopted that can provide the keys to Anouilh's dramaturgical and conceptual aims.

In *Antigone,* the moral, political and ethical issues posed by Sophocles' tragedy are neutralised. Neither Antigone nor Creon expresses a positive attitude towards life[106] although each faces her/his problem in a different way: Creon accepts the world, as it is, while Antigone chooses death rather than a meaningless life. Both attitudes suggest their efforts to justify the meaning of their existence in an absurd world. The balanced exposition of these two attitudes conveys the impasses and ambiguities of the situation. As already suggested, Antigone's agon with Creon reflects the process of her disillusionment. She starts by defending her action on the grounds of moral and familial laws. It has been repeatedly noted that her reasoning is similar to that of the Sophoclean heroine but eventually she is forced to admit that such reasoning is absurd. The expediencies of the surrounding reality gradually reduce her reactions to a deliberate 'silence' indicating not simply a lack of argument, but a retreat into her own self as the only affirming centre. Her moment of hesitation suggests that she freely chooses to accomplish her role as Antigone although the elements that would adhere to a meaningful sacrifice are systematically eroded throughout the play. The choice of death then is not simply the choice of a role that has to be fulfilled. Life itself is meaningless and meaning is created through the embracing of a role that can supply her with a personal identity. Deprived of the moral justification of her action, she is simultaneously deprived of her right to a meaningful death similar to that of her classical model. The realisation of this reality emancipates her from the reasoning and ethos of her prototypical model. Emancipation from the archetypal model leaves her with no possibility of a personal choice, with no identity. Hence, the refusal to compromise the role can only lead to death.

Anouilh's singularity is found in that he brings myth and present together with the purpose of *proving* that neither offers a viable outlet.[107] His de-mythologising process encompasses both present reality and mythological imagination. The rejection of myth and of the present is not accompanied by a search for a meaningful alternative but merely demonstrates an existing or perceived impasse. Antigone's revolt and choice of death are not acts of commitment but acts that testify to her total self-absorption. In such an ideological vacuum, the use of the meta-theatrical form itself articulates the ideological impasse.

The opening scene of *Antigone* is a brilliant *tour de force*. In terms of great dramatic effectiveness, the Chorus manages the task of exposing the whole plot in advance thus guiding the audience's expectations exclusively on *how* the well-known myth is going to be handled and leaving no doubt as to the prescribed end. More importantly, the opening scene where the Chorus presents *les personnages* and distributes the roles with cynical authority establishes an inter-play of illusion and reality: the re-enactment of myth within the context of a performance that takes place in front of our eyes establishes the relativity and the contingency of the event itself. It is Anouilh's deliberate strategy and not a weakness to render the myth contingent and the meta-theatrical process adopted is part of this strategy: the myth becomes a carcass without the flesh. It is just the 'story' of Antigone as the Chorus points out. Myth is seen as a mere structure devoid of meaning and resonance. Simultaneously, Anouilh keeps the archetypal myth in view by constantly emphasising its re-enactment as a theatrical event, so that the audience's mind automatically refers back to the archetypal myth for verification and comparison. Ostensibly recalling Eliot's 'mythical method', it should by no means be compared or confused with it, as the informing elements are not simply missing but consciously discarded as such. The tension generated between archetypal myth and its own version is critically faked by its own theatricalisation and by the fact that the exemplary crimes and deeds prescribed by myth are seen as reflections of a reality as impossible and absurd as that of the present.

One can argue that the situations and the characters in *Antigone* fit the Chorus' description of melodrama and not that of tragedy. But Anouilh is too self-conscious a playwright to be charged with such an inconsistency. One has to emphasise his demonstrative and reductive method in delineating the conditions of present reality and in destroying any romantic illusion about it. He deliberately creates a world of *drame* and through the expository and discursive practices of the Chorus overtly debates and questions the possibility of creating tragedy in such circumstances; or whether the circumstances of ideological impotence, of expediency and despair themselves can generate another notion of the tragic. *Antigone* is another play 'about tragedy,' or about tragedy being lost and potentially regained within the terms and conditions of a new world where any traditional notion of genre, character, convention and system of values is false and void. Hence, the mixing of established genres (from eighteenth-century comedy to vaudeville and bourgeois drama that

occurs in Anouilh's plays), the switching from one to the other, the lecture on tragedy (where Anouilh patches up vocabulary from Giraudoux and ideas from Camus), the exploitation of the myth and the allusions to everyday banalities are legitimately constituents of a self-conscious and self-parodied world where the 'play as game' is a proper medium to articulate it and where the supremacy of the theatrical event itself is the ultimate reality.

Anouilh's debt to Cocteau and, particularly, to Giraudoux's *Electre* hardly needs to be emphasised. There is practically no device in *Antigone* that has not been introduced by either of the two. What should be emphasised once more is the synthesis of such devices and their functional subordination to the overall form and structure of the play. The strict adherence to the mythological plot, in this case to Sophocles' arrangement of the incidents, aspires to reject its moral and conceptual patterns as much as those of the contemporary world. We are far from Giraudoux's and Cocteau's efforts to transform the present 'into a temporary embodiment of mythology or eternal magic'.[108] In *Antigone*, we see a new attitude that approaches, or rather confronts, myth more dynamically.

In *Les Mouches*, Sartre dealt with what surfaced in Cocteau's plays, became evident in Giraudoux's, and acquired explosive dimensions in Anouilh's: the lack of conceptual orientation, of ideological objectives, of a more substantial justification as to why the mythological material has been used as plot or subject matter. As the new theatrical vocabulary, the experimentations with theatricalist effects/devices, and the unorthodox handling of the archetypal stories became a common practice, it also became quite obvious that these sophisticated and endless games could not supply adequate substitutes for myths. As social and political confusion along with fear and anxiety over the impending War spread by the end of the Thirties, the need for a more substantial approach emerged which is clearly manifested in Sartre's *The Flies,* where philosophic and political concerns predominate aesthetic and formal issues.

In 'Forgers of Myths' (Forger des Mythes, 1946) – a lecture delivered on the occasion of a review for the first performance of Anouilh's *Antigone* in the United States – Sartre identifies himself as belonging to 'a new generation of French playwrights' that appeared in the early Forties.[109] He maintains that Anouilh, Camus and he himself reject the pre-war 'theatre of character' and seek a 'theatre of situations' that would appropriately express contemporary conflicts of rights,

suffering, death, exile and love with the force of ritual and myth 'which anyone can understand and feel deeply'. (*FM39*) Sartre claims that the playwrights of the Forties are 'less concerned with making innovations than with returning to a tradition'. (*FM34*) Rejecting symbolism and realism he, nevertheless, notes that 'we claim for ourselves the *true realism* because we know it is impossible, in everyday life, to distinguish between fact and right, the real from the ideal, psychology from ethics.' (*FM38*) 'The people in our plays will be distinct from one another – not as a coward is from a miser or a miser from a brave man, but rather as actions are divergent or clashing, as right may conflict with right. In this it may well be said that we derive from the Corneillean tradition.' (*FM36*) Sartre describes the plays as:

> violent and brief, centred around one single event; there are few players and the story is compressed within a short space of time, sometimes only a few hours. As a result they obey a kind of 'rule of the three unities,' which has been only a little rejuvenated and modified. A single set, a few entrances, a few exits, intense arguments among the characters who defend their individual rights with passion – this is what sets our plays at a great distance from the brilliant fantasies of Broadway...A small number of characters, not presented for their individual psychology, but thrown into a situation which forces them to make a choice. (*FM41*)

In such a context, dramatic characters acquire identity not through their psychological traits but through their acts. The moment of choice signifies the moment of freedom. In thus projecting the Existentialist belief that men create themselves through their own choices and acts, Sartre aligns the philosophy of Existentialism with the conception of the tragic: 'For us a man is a whole enterprise in himself. And passion is a part of that enterprise...In this we return to the concept of tragedy as the Greeks saw it. For them, as Hegel has shown, passion was never a simple storm of sentiment but fundamentally always the assertion of a right.' Sartre writes that he wants a theatre of myths, 'the great myths of death, exile, love' (*FM37*) pointing to the plays of Albert Camus that explore modern situations and 'yet they are mythical in the sense that the misunderstandings which separate them [the heroes] can serve as the embodiment of all misunderstandings.' (*FM40*)

Referring to *Les Mouches* (Sarah-Bernhardt, 1943) Sartre notes that his 'intention was to consider the tragedy of freedom as contrasted with the tragedy of fate. In other words, what my play is about can be summed up as the question, "How does a man behave towards an act committed by him, for which he takes the full responsibility upon himself, even if he is otherwise horrified by his act?"[110] The play was written at the time Sartre was developing the arguments of *L' Etre et le néant* (1943) where he explored in more specific terms the problem of individual consciousness. Freedom, Sartre argues, is pertinent to individual consciousness. The latter is asserted through the individual's free choice of a specific act and the subsequent acceptance of the responsibilities deriving therefrom. As Sartre pointed out, Freedom in *Les Mouches*, 'is not some vague abstract ability to soar above the human predicament; it is the most absurd and the most inexorable of commitments. Orestes will go onward, unjustifiable, with no excuse and with no right of appeal, alone. Like a hero. Like all of us.' Sartre summarised his approached to the Orestes myth: 'Orestes embodies the tragedy of liberty since he is 'a prey to liberty as Oedipus was a prey to fate.'[111] This is a crucial position, one that aligned Sartre's philosophic preoccupations with his personal involvement in the politics of the Communist Party.

Thus, Orestes' transformation from the intellectual and sceptical young man to one 'who belongs somewhere, a man amongst comrades' (*F278*) is in fact the transition from the state of intellectual freedom with no restrictions to the state of actual freedom where responsibility and commitment are welcomed. Orestes kills Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus not to avenge his father but to assert his personal freedom and liberate the city from guilt and remorse. Orestes willingly accepts the torture of the Flies (Furies) and abandons Argos, persecuted by them. Orestes' position is emphatically underlined through the sharp contrast Sartre draws between his, Philistos', and Electra's conduct. Philistos, Orestes' pedagogue, is a frivolous intellectual who would never undertake action. For Electra, the discovery of the terrifying dimensions of such freedom is beyond her limits. Her revolt and determination to take revenge collapse after the murders. At the sight of the Flies and of Jupiter, she denies responsibility and asks to be forgiven, thus remaining a case of un-realised freedom – a case of 'bad faith', in Sartre's terms. This term signifies the relapse of the individual to a state of blindness where s/he accepts the values of the established order.

In *Les Mouches,* the alliance of earthly and divine powers is clearly based on Giraudoux's *Electre.* Agamemnon's murder was the seminal event that established the sovereignty of Jupiter and Aegisthus in Argos. Through suppression and intimidation, the Argeans have been persuaded that they are accomplices in the royal murders since no one opposed the murders. They live in a state of constant penitence and self-humiliation. Their capacity to think and act as free human beings has been neutralized: they cannot challenge the omnipotence of the King or Jupiter.

Alongside Orestes and Electra, Jupiter is the other important presence that assists in the complete inversion of the myth as handled in Aeschylus' *The Choephoroi.* Sartre depicts Jupiter with irony and touches of satire. 'Jupiter is a terrible god and the parody of a terrible god.'[112] Keen to display his power, he is a grotesque juggler who becomes quite menacing through his transformations. The revelation of his weakness occurs when confronted with Orestes:

> Orestes: You should not have made me free.
>
> Jupiter: I gave you freedom so that you might serve me.
>
> Orestes: Perhaps. But now it has turned against its giver. And
>
>   neither you nor I can undo what has been done. (*F309*)

Sartre suggests that there is salvation only for those who can assume responsibility and actively defy the authority of the gods; therefore, Jupiter remains a manipulator until the end.

The form and the structure of *Les Mouches* is that of a more or less realistic play, as the playwright himself indicates in 'Forgers of Myths.' The Absurd and existential anguish are communicated through dialogue and action but not through a significant form that could articulate the new vision. Martin Esslin observes that the 'Theatre of the Absurd strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.'[113] Esslin singles out Camus and Sartre as examples that express the 'new content in the old convention' but accepts that alongside the French inter-war playwrights, they are the proponents of the post-war theatre, the 'pre-absurdists' as Esslin calls them. It is worth examining further how Sartre aligned myth and tragedy with Existentialism, not only because Brecht — whose work is analysed in the next chapter — knew and duly appreciated the plays of

the French playwrights (Giraudoux's Anouilh's and Sartre's), but also because he utterly rejected Existentialism as a reactionary celebration of the ego.[114] It is also interesting to note that Sartre was particularly interested in the work of Brecht and contributed a number of essays and articles on the latter's work in the Fifties.[115]

Since the individual is conceivable only in terms of action, the reasons and motives that initiate the action are minimised although taken into account. The individual is the absolute generator and executioner of the act and, therefore, the creator of his own essence. Both Camus and Sartre explore the ethical consequences of such an approach to human responsibility. As in Greek tragedy, the emphasis is on action. Acts are cruel and violent and, therefore, irreparable, as in Shakespeare and the Greek tragedy. The plays inevitably revolve around a hero or a heroine as in classical or neo-classical tragedy. Sartre's (and Camus') heroes have to act alone in the solitude of their angst; therefore, the acts they commit are accompanied by the hero's awareness that the condition of being a man is the only existing value.

Guicharnaud interestingly observes that such a complete reversal of the treatment of action means that acts are presented 'not as products but as inventions'. The act is seen as a creation, 'unique and irreplaceable', consequently it is 'a source of drama and drama itself.' He notes: 'Sartre's characters' frequent use of the expression "my act" emphasizes the idea of its being both outer object and a reciprocal bond between man and what he does.'[116]

Referring to the character of Jupiter in *Les Mouches*, Jean Guicharnaud, and Odette de Mourgues emphasise the theme of the play within the play and the characters' own staging of it.[117] Jupiter organises huge spectacles for the citizens of Argos (the Nazi rallies are brought to mind): the Ceremony of the Dead is a collective spectacle, a collective hysteria that characterises oppressive societies and distorted values. The High Priest conjures up all the deceased citizens of Argos in order to participate in Aegisthus' and Jupiter's policies of intimidation; the dead arise from a cave and avenge themselves on the living, who, in turn, express penitence in various forms of massive hysteria. Jupiter's accomplices – les mouches – bite and buzz, thus maddening people at his instigation. This is pure staging; Aegisthus and Jupiter stage terrifying spectacles with the sole purpose of implicating individuals in processes of dehumanisation that demand the extinction of human personality and the sacrifice of personal freedom. In such circumstances, tension is generated between director and actor as a result of which acts of explosive revolt and violence occur. In other words,

the play within the play is not an aesthetic game or solution to the problem of handling myths (as in Anouilh, Giraudoux or Cocteau) but a metaphorical representation of oppression as is the case with the Ceremony of the Dead in *Les Mouches*. Theatrical devices are used as a means to achieve a goal of a political or ideological nature.

The consequences of such an approach are vividly manifested in the handling of myth. In *Les Mouches*, the confrontation with the mythic model of the hero is more aggressive than in any other of the plays discussed in this chapter. Furnishing his Orestes with an ideological background lacking in the plays of Cocteau, Giraudoux and Anouilh, Sartre presents a character capable of articulating a vision of Man and a new code of ethics. On the philosophic and ethical level, the play was criticised for the inhumanity of a situation where someone assassinates in order to prove his free conscience. Eventually, Sartre himself renounced this position and defended his play against such allegations.[118] What is important is Sartre's double effort: not simply to destroy myth but also to reconstitute it on a modern and viable basis. In this respect, Sartre is thoroughly differentiated from the playwrights examined in this chapter. It is a major rift that the reversion to the myth and the mythic hero tends towards a new synthesis which is grounded on a new concept of man and the world, no matter how disputable this might be.

For Sartre the objective is not to re-work myth or simply produce a version of (a) myth but to *re-write myth* according to the prerogatives dictated by the ideological context of his philosophical and political choices. The re-writing of myth then is conceivable only on the condition that such a re-writing can relay a significant ideological/philosophical basis. Orestes commits matricide and patricide and accepts the haunting of the Erynies not as a punishment for his crime but in order to bring freedom and relief to the citizens of Argos. It is a crucial reallocation of meaning that, in *Les Mouches*, Orestes does not leave Argos haunted by the furies but rather drags the Furies away, so as to liberate the city from their destructive embrace. Sartre re-interprets every incident of the *Oresteia* forcing myth to make sense in terms compatible to the ethical, philosophical and political demands of the Occupation. It is a re-reading of Aeschylus through an ideologically and politically orientated discourse. The objective is to discard the conceptual apparatus of myth and whatever it traditionally stands for; myth is 'used' in order to be reinstated on a new,

constructive basis relevant to contemporary ethics and sensibilities: this is the double meaning of the 'forger' of myths.

In summarising the contribution of the playwrights discussed in this chapter, I once more emphasise the immediate and urgent tension created between the myth and its own modernised version. We are far from the elaborate and discreet correlations Eliot drew between the 'now' and the 'then', between myth and contemporaneity. The playwrights discussed in this chapter project the myth onto the surface and retain the mythological names, locale and milieu. In the Joyce/Eliot's model there is no interference with the constituent units of the myth; in the most peculiar way, the myth survives intact and integral. For those who can establish a contact with it, the connection in no way brings about a critical juxtaposition between the 'then' and the 'now'. Both Eliot and O'Neill used myth as a medium for amplifying the plays' scope and resonance, of showing that the plight of men is universal and diachronic. The 'mythical method' is a modernist method that relies on the ability of the reader/spectator to receive and enhance.

The traditional method employed by the dramatists examined in this chapter is more controlled and less open. The persistence in remaining faithful to the *story* aims at preserving 'the substance of the myth' and whatever it traditionally accounts for while, simultaneously, this 'substance' is undermined from within. The effort, for it remains an effort with the exception of Sartre, is not simply to interpret myth in contemporary terms but a dynamic attempt to change its archetypal structure and alter the course of events the myth prescribes. In Cocteau and Giraudoux such efforts are frustrated through the dovetailing, the encasement of the modern plot within myth as explained above. Anouilh's nihilism rejects mythical imagination, historical past and present. From a political point of view one could observe a pseudo-liberal approach that especially in Giraudoux and Anouilh becomes not simply fatalistic but almost reactionary. It is the modernist disposition that uses myth gingerly – now seriously and then iconoclastically – the general mood and feeling, the critical detachment, the anachronisms alongside the other techniques exposed that account for the modernity of the French approach to myth.

With Sartre, it becomes quite evident that we are irrevocably cut off from the inter-war era and that the concept that saw mythological, biblical and historical material as a fertile field for erratic games and experimentations with form and

theatrical devices has come to an end. The real merit of Sartre's theatre (and Camus') lies in the sphere of theme and discourse and not in that of form. Sartre with his Leftist orientation points to the theatre of political engagement that Brecht through his revolutionary practice and theory had been establishing since the late Twenties.

6. Brecht's Historicist Approach to Myth and Tragedy

Brecht staged *Antigone* at the Stadttheater of the small town of Chur, Switzerland, in February 1948. It was Brecht's only production after his return to Europe late in 1947 and before his departure for East Berlin in October 1948. For the staging of *Antigone*, Brecht chose Hölderlin's early eighteenth-century translation, which is, in fact, more of an adaptation.[1] Although Brecht had adapted Renaissance plays in the past and would adapt others in the future, this was his first and only attempt to deal with an ancient Greek text.[2]

Why Brecht chose to adapt a Greek tragedy at this particular moment of his career is not clear. The Zurich Schauspielhaus had rejected proposals for staging one of the great plays of his exile, *Galileo*. Still uncertain about the country of his permanent residence and dissatisfied with the antiquated style of Swiss performances, Brecht, nevertheless, took the opportunity offered at Chur.[3] Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* were considered as other possible choices. Upon Caspar Neher's recommendation, Brecht agreed to use Hölderlin's translation/adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy. Neher was to be the set and costume designer; Helene Wiegel would play the eponymous heroine.

Antigone was, in Brecht's words, a 'try-out for Berlin.' (*MB60*) It was also an intermediate step that bridged his pre-exile with his post-exile years at the Berliner Ensemble. With *Antigone*, he inaugurated the compilation of the Model-Books, which were meant to encourage the development of a performing style for each of the plays. 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', published later in the same year, shows Brecht adopting more flexible attitudes towards Aristotle and the 'classics.'[4]

From his conversion to Marxism in the late Twenties, to the staging of *Antigone* and the publication of 'A Short Organum' in 1948, Brecht's theory presents considerable shifts of content and terminology. The various stages of his work roughly correspond to the tremendous upheavals that occurred during the first part of the previous century. From 1933, when he left Germany after the fall of the Weimar Republic, to his exile in the Scandinavian countries (1933-1941) and the United States (1941-1947), to his return to Europe (Zurich 1947-1948) and then to East Berlin (1949-1956), Brecht's oeuvre reflects his responses to the socio-political issues and to the avant-garde movements of Europe, and especially of Russia. His

voluminous output, consisting of poems, plays, operas, short stories, ballet libretti, essays, journals and Model-Books of his own performances, became the object of intense analysis, of political exploitation in the countries of Eastern Europe up to 1989, of uncritical eulogy, serious and often negative or simplistic criticism in Western Europe and the United States. The inadequate knowledge of his theoretical writings and the scarcity of sources in English and French translations till recently (relatively improved), his efforts to achieve a consistent aesthetic theory, the incessant revisions of it, as well as his controversial personality account for the ongoing controversy on the ideological and aesthetic aspects of his work. Contradictions appear in his writings already by the mid-Twenties. John Willett reports that Brecht refused to discuss this matter and that he often underestimated the significance of his own theoretical pronouncements; he used to say that they were just notes on the plays which he could not constantly revise thus encouraging further critical argument[5] – finally the creation of a 'Brecht-myth'.

New approaches have attempted to disengage his work from the ideological prejudices that Marxist and non-Marxist criticism of the previous decades had imposed on it. Circa the Eighties and, particularly, after 1989 with the collapse of the Communist bloc, Brecht criticism took a post-modernist turn but there are still those who defend Brecht's legacy against postmodernist readings of his plays. Many attack the 'mythic proportions' Brecht has taken on in the last few years and claim that his work has been distorted and his model vulgarized by the exponents of postmodern criticism.[6] Neo-Marxists insist on Brecht's formative influence on European political theatre and avant-garde film of the Sixties and onwards, and point to the viability of his method as a means of intervening to halt the leveling and disorientating power of television; they criticize the opportunist and populist character of some postmodernist approaches.[7] Deconstructionists focus on fragmentary and contradictory elements that characterize part of his work and on the fact, that the individual does not appear unique as in previous forms of drama. Therefore, they claim Brecht as a precursor of postmodernism since he introduces the fundamentally post-modernist debate on subjectivism and the destabilization of human identity. Their analysis focuses on the early plays, *Baal* and *In the Jungle of the Cities*, while from the late plays they single out *The Good Person of Szetchuan*.[8] Other critics propose a thorough re-examination of Brecht through a psychosocial reading according to Deleuze-Guattari; or a reading of his plays through the philosophical and artistic tradition of the absurd, i.e. of

Nietzsche, Artaud and Beckett, whose philosophical perspective is in opposition to Brecht's empirical epistemology.[9]

This thesis does not propose to enter into a discussion on the ramifications of post-1989 Brechtian criticism. In creating a theory and practice based on Marxism, Brecht considered the significance and the clarity of the specific historical meaning conveyed of paramount importance. He consciously struggled to combine creative imagination, Marxist ideology, and political expediency: the impasses and the contradictions that derive thereof form part of his legacy, while his ideas on the contingency and impermanence of a work of art provide the ground for contemplating how this legacy might be viewed. Brecht's adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* vividly illustrates contradictions of a deeply ideological nature in his attempts to equate myth with folk legend and to substitute the tragic with Marxist historicity. *Antigone* astutely questions his ideological assumptions on the Greek idea of the tragic, on fate and catastrophe; still, the rationale that underlies his least successful adaptation retains its relevance as an experiment. I shall go through the different stages of his ideological development and focus on his attitudes towards the 'classics,' which are pivotal for the understanding of his adaptation of Sophocles' tragedy.

From the Expressionistic plays of the early Twenties, Brecht moved on to plays of Marxist didacticism. His *Lehrstücke* (Learning plays, 1929-33) – short parables written for worker and youths' theatre groups – are practical lessons in activist political conduct for those who participate in the performance since, as Brecht claimed, they do not necessarily demand the presence of an audience.[10] According to Reiner Steinweg, the *Lehrstücke* is Brecht's most revolutionary kind of play, more radical than that of the Epic Theatre.[11] In view of the discussion on Heiner Müller later in this chapter and of the affinities of the *Lehrstücke* form with the avant-garde experiments of post-war years in Europe, it is worth noting their basic characteristics: the participants exchange roles throughout the performance in an effort to share the experience; music is used to make learning pleasurable; collective art-making is defined as an ultimate goal; the process of collective creation is more important than the end-product and, therefore, the making of a *Lehrstücke* is an experimentation where form and content could remain unfinished.[12] The *Lehrstücke* represent Brecht's experiments with a revolutionary theatre circa 1929-1933 within the cultural milieu of

Neue Sachlichkeit, which propagated the idea of art emulating the efficiency of machines.

Brecht's theoretical texts during those years attack the bourgeois theatre establishment, the 'classics' and Aristotle, who is identified as a source of cultural evils. In 1930 and 1931 respectively, Brecht published the notes to his operas *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and *The Threepenny Opera*. Although there are references in his previous texts, the *Mahagonny Notes* offer the first systematic description of what he means by 'epic' theatre. Brecht draws the now famous distinctions between the 'epic' theatre he was aiming at, and the Aristotelian model of 'dramatic' theatre he was rejecting. The Brechtian epic theatre puts emphasis: on reason as a means of distancing the spectator emotionally and turning him/her into an observer; on the process of narrative enactment and not on its denouement; on fragmentation and the technique of montage as alternatives to Aristotelian continuity and growth.[13] Following Ervin Piscator, Brecht used captions to announce each episode, as well as film, songs, choruses and various means of literisation as elements that supplement the narrative structure of the plays. The technique of montage, which is materialised in 'curves and jumps'[14] as Brecht describes in the *Mahagonny Notes*, disrupts the linear development of plot. He explicitly speaks for a rational, anti-realistic theatre based on popular and rough forms of entertainment that could address the mind and not the emotions. In addition, he defines elements of acting and performing style suitable for his epic theatre by introducing the term 'gestus' (i.e. the essentialising through gesture of the social implications of situations, actions, etc.) as a basic acting principle that enables the actors to perform anti-naturalistically.[15]

In his *Notes* to *The Mother* (1933) he seems even more persuaded that emotional distancing is a necessary aspect of epic theatre. This led him to adopt the term *Verfremdung* (estrangement) as an alternative to epic theatre, which he now considered as imprecise.[16] During his second visit to Moscow, in 1935, he became acquainted with the pioneering work of the Russian formalists who had first applied techniques of defamiliarisation. The term *Verfremdungsseffekt*, which Brecht introduced in 1936 and refers to the use of various techniques that create estrangement, probably derives from the term *Priem Östrannenija* (technique of defamiliarisation) the Russian formalists were using.[17] *Gestus, Verfremdung* and *Verfremdungseffekt* are principles Brecht retained and elaborated throughout his continuing development of theory. It is also significant that, from the very beginning,

Brecht saw theory, playwriting and performance as utterly inter-related – the sum total which could generate a new theatre based on Marxist dialectics.

Brecht's attitude to the 'classics' during those years (1924-1939) is both contradictory and aggressive.[18] In the essay, *Should We Not Abolish Aesthetics?* (1927), the young playwright rejects the validity of old forms and maintains that the classics (Shakespeare, in particular) 'are no longer effective' and that the new playwrights 'are not going to satisfy the old aesthetics; they are going to destroy it.'[19] During this period, Becht maintained that there was plenty of material with which to write new plays and no need to succumb to the classical repertoire, which, he admitted, offered rich resources one could explore. He declared that he had no intention of accepting the classics blindly because the conventional, respectful attitude had transformed them into sacred artefacts. Nevertheless, Brecht claimed it was 'bourgeois escapism' not to produce the classical repertoire as some critics were demanding. At this stage, Brecht was unsure how he should handle classical plays; it is possible, he said, to apply a political point of view to such plays while elsewhere he stated that they should not be used to convey a message.[20]

Speaking of Shakespeare in 1928, he remarked that Shakespeare's dramas are permeated with a naked individualism; they are centered on a noble hero who is isolated from his social environment and led to unexplained catastrophes. He concluded: 'Later times will call this drama a drama for cannibals.'[21] Shakespeare was, of course, Brecht's lifelong problem. There are over two hundred references scattered in his writings that reflect his admiration as well as his uneasiness towards the Bard. Although critical of the outdated aspects of the plays and annoyed by the academic style of the performances, Shakespeare's contradictory, dialectical element that is well grounded in everyday life appealed to Brecht, whose aim had always been to lay bare the social, political, and personal contradictions that originate in the inadequacies of the capitalist system. He commented on Shakespeare's ability 'to shovel a lot of raw material on to the stage, unvarnished representations of what he has seen' so that his dramas unfold not according to a preconceived idea but with the irregularity and all the contradictions of history itself.[22]

Problems of content, ideology and performing style concerning Shakespeare and the Renaissance classics preoccupied Brecht throughout his career: Are they relevant today? How can we make the classics meaningful to a contemporary audience? He knew that the answers would not be simple. Like T. S. Eliot, but from a

different perspective, he saw the classics as an imperative and dynamic component of a living tradition. As a Marxist, he could only handle tradition within the historical context of his own times. We should not forget that his early phases as playwright coincided with the rise of fascism. After the First World War, with its consequent inflation, unemployment, and the failure of the Left to prevent Hitler's seizure of power, Brecht came to see the classics as 'irrelevant', as 'war casualties'.[23] In 1929, Brecht conceived the idea of the nationalisation of classical texts. They should be embedded in the national consciousness as part of a nation's heritage thus facilitating the working out of its gestic content as a collective phenomenon. This would help to define the function of the phenomenon (heritage) and create new approaches to the classics that would disengage spectators from their role as consumers.[24] In the early Thirties, he announced that he had given up doing productions of the classics because their usefulness was too limited – that theatre practitioners and audiences had nothing to gain from them in times when political activism was a necessity. The gross distortions of history systematically promoted by fascist propaganda seriously disturbed him and were not irrelevant to his own biased and polemical stance. He frequently spoke of the 'dark times' in Hitler's Germany when 'a word without anger is stupid; a smooth forehead is a sign of insensitivity; a conversation about trees is almost a crime because it involves silence about so many horrors'[25]

His hostility towards the identification and empathy that Aristotle supposedly propagated in the *Poetics* are grounded on political rather than purely aesthetic criteria. In the first plays – *Baal, Drums in the Night* (1922), *In the Jungle of the Cities,* (1923) – Brecht adopted elements from the anti-realistic techniques of German Expressionism. He soon distanced himself as he realised that Expressionist drama was degenerating into an uncritical emotionalism and subjectivism – elements that more than anything formed the aesthetics of fascist mass rallies and performing arts in Germany. Brecht was persuaded that the strategic policy of the fascists to stir emotion and empathy was based on the conventions of theatrical identification. Empathy diverts attention from the significant aspects of a performance and prevents the spectator from comprehending in full the conceptual norms of a play. For him, identification with the suffering hero/ine derived from the categories of 'mimesis' and 'catharsis' as delineated by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. However, in 1940, Brecht placed his former attitudes into the proper historical context: 'already in the last years of the Weimar Republic, the German drama took a decisively rationalistic turn...Fascism's

grotesque emphasizing of the emotions, and perhaps no less a certain decline of the rational element in Marxist teaching, led me personally to lay particular stress on the rational.'[26]

It is, indeed, difficult to assess some of Brecht's comments on the classics critically without taking into consideration the prevailing social and political realities that led him to favour activist and agitprop theatre during those years. Since the focus will be on his adaptation of a Greek tragedy, it is useful to clarify that when Brecht invariably speaks of the 'classics,' he is primarily referring to Shakespeare and less to other Renaissance or German neo-classical dramatists. His knowledge of Greek tragedy and culture was limited. There are almost no references to classical drama except in the *Antigone* Model-Books and the *Journals* and, even there, Brecht's comments are intentionally misleading and ideologically biased.[27] Jean-Paul Sartre rightly points out that Brecht was hardly influenced by the great French classical writers nor by the Greek tragedians and that his plays recall the Elizabethan drama rather than the classical tragedies.[28] His knowledge of how the categories of 'mimesis' and 'catharsis' function, came from Elizabethan, Renaissance and German neo-classical drama where we have already traced transpositions in concept and usage. Shakespeare and the Elizabethans received Greek tragedy through Seneca and Greek New Comedy (Menander) through Plautus, Terence, and the Italian Renaissance dramatists. They did not know Aristophanes. Elizabethan drama is basically a drama of the Christian era retaining elements from the medieval Mystery Cycles. It uses comedy and various forms of popular entertainment while there is frequently a mixture of comic and tragic plots – elements that certainly appealed to Brecht. Shakespeare's tragedies, despite blood, vengeance, and horror, retain a sense of irreparable catastrophe that the Greeks had. The absence of a chorus – which represents the collective of the polis within which human deeds are enacted – inevitably brings the central character/s into focus and, in Brecht's view, encourages the hero-cult. Interestingly, Brecht is reticent on the co-existence of communality and individual plight in Greek tragedy as well as on its narrative aspects.

Inter-war drama, despite its attachment to some of the conventions of the well-made play, includes the pioneering work of the Expressionists, Reinhardt, Piscator, Meyerhold and the avant-garde movements, of which Brecht was well aware. It is an almost deliberate fallacy to identify the whole drama of this era with the products of the established theatre and the conventional performances of the

classics; neither was Aristotle considered an absolute standard of theatre aesthetics. Brecht's idea of identification misinterprets that of Aristotle, whose supplementary notion of catharsis offers spectators the capacity for critical detachment. Brecht invariably attacks both 'mimesis' and 'catharsis' as if they were identical concepts and not supplementary to each other. The kind of identification he describes most certainly is not germane to Greek tragedy and Elizabethan drama, not even to French or German neo-classical drama. Was Brecht simply ignoring or distorting whatever was unsuitable to his political and aesthetic objectives? As a politicised playwright who wanted to revolutionise theatre – as he later did – he saw Aristotle and his enormous influence on Western culture as a practical point of departure for the construction of his own theory rooted in a deeply anti-teleological notion of human identity and its role in the historical process. It should be emphasized that despite his use of the montage technique to avoid a traditional development of plot, the story (plot) remained the kernel of his dramaturgy. This is perhaps the only Aristotelian element to which Brecht adhered consistently throughout his career.

During his exile in the United States, Brecht returned to the study of the classics once again. Although he did not publish theoretical texts during that time, he was more than ever preoccupied with problems of tradition as the unfinished *Messingkauf Dialogues*, his *Journals*, and notes suggest. Struggling towards the perfection of a performing style that would test and validate his aesthetic theories and political beliefs, Brecht published his modified views in 'A Short Organum for the Theatre.' According to John Willett, 'A Short Organum' is Brecht's most important theoretical work. It is structured in numbered paragraphs and modeled on Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum,* a treatise on art written as an attack on Aristotle's *Organum.*[29] It is the text of Brecht's maturity, where he explains how he now sees theatre within a modern progressive society. It is, Brecht states, 'a description of a theatre of the scientific age', a new term he employs to label what he had in the past called 'epic theatre' and 'didactic theatre' and later was to call 'dialectic' theatre. (*SO179*)

Brecht knew that the new political realities in post-fascist Europe demanded more flexible approaches than those he had adopted in the past. His 'Foreword to *Antigone*' and 'A Short Organum', both written in 1948, are important documents for his changing attitude towards the classics. For the first time, he makes the concession of acknowledging the contribution of his forerunners in theory, particularly of

Aristotle, Shakespeare, Schiller and Goethe. In 'Foreword to *Antigone*', he accepts the existence of 'certain forms of alienation' in Greek dramaturgy and refers to Schiller as the one whose comments on the issue anticipate some of his own theories on narrative and epic drama.[30]

In 'A Short Organum', Brecht attempts to pin down a theory that can balance political expediency and aesthetic pleasure. In the Prologue, he emphasizes the political nature of his work; without rejecting former ideas, he altogether suppresses the terms 'epic' and 'didactic' theatre he had used in the past. Priority is given to 'pleasure' and 'entertainment'. Brecht writes: 'And yet, what we have achieved in the way of theatre for a scientific age was not science but theatre, and the accumulated innovations worked out during the Nazi period and the war – when practical demonstration was impossible – compel some attempt to set this species of theatre in its aesthetic background, or anyhow to sketch for it the outlines of a conceivable aesthetic.' He further explains that his previous attacks on established aesthetic principles were informed by the urgency of opposing a reactionary enemy and with a disarming honesty he revokes 'our [previous] intention to emigrate from the realm of the pleasurable, and we hereby announce, to [our enemies'] even greater dismay, our intention to taking up residence there.' (*SO179-80*) In section 3 he claims that: 'From the first it has been the theatre's business to entertain people, as it also has of all the other arts. It is this business which always gives it its particular dignity.' (*SO180*) In section 4 he comments favourably on Aristotle's catharsis – a constant target of his early texts – as a notion that offers 'purification which is performed not only in a pleasurable way, but precisely for the purpose of pleasure.' (*SO181*) In section 9 he asserts: 'and we must always remember that the pleasure given by representations of such different sorts hardly ever depended on the representation's likeness to the thing portrayed. Incorrectness, or considerable improbability even, was hardly or not at all disturbing, so long as the incorrectness had a certain consistency and the improbability remained of a constant kind.' (*SO182*) Subsequently in section 12, he refers to Shakespeare and proclaims a retrospective agreement with Aristotle in that the 'narrative [plot] is the soul of drama'. (*SO183*) Later in section 35, he notes that: 'We need a type of theatre which not only releases the feelings, insights and impulses possible within the particular historical field of human relations in which the action takes place, but employs and encourages those thoughts and feelings which help transform the field itself.' (*SO190*) And ultimately in section 73, he concludes: 'If Art

reflects life, it does so with special mirrors. Art does not become unrealistic by changing the proportions but by changing them in such a way that if the audience took its representations as a practical guide to insights and impulses, it would go astray in real life.'(*SO204*)

Willett believes that with 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', Brecht reached a 'compromise between the old didactic aims for which the theory was first evolved, and a more orthodox (but by no means wholly undidactic) theatre of Brecht's middle age.'[31] Martin Esslin agrees that by 1948, Brecht had 'mellowed' the severity of his earlier approaches.[32] Similarly, Ronald Gray sees 'a significant reversal...since here...Brecht deliberately recalls his earlier writings only in order to reject them.'[33] Referring to 'A Short Organum', John Fuegi recalls Brecht's earlier 'fighting pronouncements' on the classics and comments: 'Brecht in 1948, self-consciously on the brink of becoming a classic himself, had began to treat his great forerunners in dramaturgy and stage theory (particularly Aristotle and Shakespeare) with considerable respect.' Speaking of *Antigone* he remarks: 'it represents on the practical plane the rapprochement between Brecht and Aristotle that is worked out (albeit very deviously) in Brecht's post-1947 theoretical pronouncements.'[34]

By simply spotting existing contradictions, such criticism fails to see the evolution of Brecht's thought and understand its individual character. That Brecht had a remarkably cynical spirit of utilitarianism in distorting others' ideas to serve his own, that he often subjected his own views to politically expedient modifications, and that he had a notorious 'laxity in matters of intellectual property' is quite true.[35] Nevertheless, his aesthetic theory – alongside Artaud's – proved to be the most influential in twentieth-century theatre and, therefore, should be treated as such. His writings must be read in chronological order and in close relation to the political and social upheavals that occurred during the creative years of his career, so that the evolution of his thought can be placed in the proper context. Behind Esslin's, Gray's, and particularly Fuegi's comments, we trace what Peter Brooker calls 'a damaging yet most common error', namely, to judge Brecht's theory as a fixed system of dogmatic nature.[36] Brecht's was a dialectical theory – a theory in progress. He was developing and re-evaluating his theories struggling to respond to social and political realities. It was a process that ended only with his death.

Dealing with the classical heritage was an issue of ideological and aesthetic priority. The role of literary tradition, its subsequent effects on and the reaction of readers/spectators to it lies at the centre of Brecht's writings. Arrigo Subiotto writes:

> Brecht's lifelong efforts to produce a new approach for the theatre seem to have created the erroneous impression that he was a contemptuous arch-enemy of the classics, especially the German classical plays. But it is wrong to see Brecht as a gratuitous literary firebrand and revolutionary iconoclast of the popular image.... Many of his dramas are stimulated by existing models or are counterparts to them.... Brecht's quarrel is seldom with his literary ancestors...but he does not spare his scorn for the traditional ways of performing the classics and makes virulent attacks on the misappropriation of past drama by society.[37]

Subiotto states only part of the problem. Brecht's relation to the classical tradition was complicated; his objections were not simply directed towards the dominant performing style but sprang from crucial ideological issues. Apart from his proper adaptations of the plays of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Lenz, Sophocles and Faquhar, he has drawn extensively from John Gay (*Beggar's Opera* for *The Threepenny Opera*), François Villon (songs for the *Threepenny Opera*), Shakespeare (scenes from *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* as a basis for his *Übungsstücke für Schauspieler* and from *Measure for Measure* for his *Round Heads and Pointed Heads* while he parodies *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar* in *Arturo Ui*), Bernard Shaw (*Major Barbara* and *Saint Joan* for his *St. Joan of the Stockyards*), Kipling (*Mann ist Mann*), J. M. Synge (*Riders to the Sea* for his *Senora Carrar's Rifles*) and other, less known writers, for the plot of his plays. Brecht agreed with Georg Lukàcs' idea that classical texts are homologous to historical documents – rich material to exploit.[38] He considered any published work as material anyone could legitimately use. Often accused of plagiarism and lack of originality in the plot of his plays, he counter-argued that the bourgeois mania of possession prevents people from seeing that the effects of a text and not its originality count.[39] He never concealed the origins of his borrowings; on the contrary, he provocatively pointed to the iconoclastic methods he employed in re-working these borrowings.

Brecht's habit of appropriating substantial material from other writers is suggestive of his constant preoccupation with literary tradition, of re-evaluating and re-interpreting it. That he has done a number of proper adaptations of classical texts that critics are obliged to examine as such obscures the fact that practically all the rest of his plays are manifestations of a critical re-working of existing material, of de-constructing it and re-forming it in Marxist terms. It was Brecht, after all, who often quoted Marx's remark inscribed on the philosopher's tomb at Highgate Cemetery: 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.' As Marxism was not an alternative to the existing philosophical systems of the Western world but its materialism entailed a thoroughly new reading of reality and history, so Brecht as a Marxist attempted a radically new aesthetic theory based on a Marxist interpretation of history.

According to the Marxist view, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Marx states: 'History is the activity of man in pursuit of his ends.'[40] The realization of this objective is central for understanding Brecht. Marx placed absolute value on the necessity of understanding the dialectical nature of the historical process. An insight into the social mechanisms of history leads people to the realisation that social change is imperative. Man is the producer and the product of his social environment from which he is alienated by the conditions prevailing in capitalist societies. Emancipation comes through revolutionary change, and revolution is feasible when the dialectical mechanisms of history are analysed and understood. The reconstruction of society places the environment under human control, which means that the existence of the individual is entirely determined by his/her relations to other human beings within a given political/economic system. In the case that these relations change, people would change as well. As a consequence, human character is not something fixed and unalterable but is subjected to economic and social circumstances.

As a Marxist, Brecht saw art as a co-ordinate of the ideological superstructure and understood its potential role in transforming the ideological and political status quo. Theatre had to acquire a political function. It was not simply a matter of freeing theatre from the clichés of the well-made play and identification, naturalistic depiction and illusionism – conventions that were unacceptable even for the pre-Marxist Brecht. He was equally sceptical of pseudo-innovative performances, of sensational and hypnotic effects sought as ends in themselves; he believed that they

neutralised the meaning of classical texts. In Brecht, we cannot separate theory and practice from their social and political objectives. His attitude towards the great German directors was indicative. He collaborated with Max Reinhardt and was influenced by his anti-realistic approaches. Gradually, he began to see Reinhardt as somehow a peripheral innovator who perpetuated bourgeois aesthetics. He distanced himself even from Erwin Piscator, who deeply influenced him but whose proletariat ideals and 'epic' theatre were not in tune with Brecht's. Piscator was interested in the immediate effects of his theatre on audiences as a means of advancing class struggle. Brecht informed his plays with a historical perspective amounting to a philosophical commentary on tradition and its function. Influenced by Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, Chinese theatre, Büchner, Wedekind and the German music hall performer Karl Valentin, the Expressionists, Charlie Chaplin and American silent movies as well as the Russian avant-garde, he was, nevertheless, selective and critical; whatever borrowings he made are filtered through his creative personality and the needs of his own Marxist approach. His aim was to transform theatre, to revolutionize it, both in content and form.

Brecht's treatment of the classics was informed by the Marxist axiom that denies the existence of permanent values and eternal truths. Everything is subjected to the continuous flux of history. Truth is not absolute. No theory or artefact can be evaluated outside its historical context. Every work of art is subjected to new approaches and readings. Political pragmatism and bourgeois aesthetics were two aspects of his difficulties with the classics. The third was purely ideological. The whole of Marxist theory is characterized by ambivalence towards classical tradition, especially the Greek. It is an ambivalence already traced in the primary texts of Marx and Engels. Brecht's lifelong, love/hate relationship with the classics exemplifies the ambivalent, often contradictory, stance of Marxist thought to classical tradition: its contribution to the Western world can hardly be ignored – Marx was the first to acknowledge it – yet it represents a system of values directly opposed to his philosophical materialism.[41]

The idea of the tragic and the meaning of tragedy with the concomitant notions of Moira (Fate), Dike (Justice, Retribution), Ananke (Necessity) and Catastrophe are not compatible with Marxist materialism. In Marxism, reason can master nature and solve human and social impasses; therefore, catastrophe and tragedy can be prophesied and ultimately avoided. Tragedy is envisaged as the

product of a pre-rational world which functions on the acceptance of *evil* and envisages human life as being at the mercy of absurd forces. Catastrophe is fated. For a Marxist, the tragic is almost inexplicable. Brecht's references to this issue are many and persistent since he understood its significance. Referring to Shakespeare he states:

> The question is posed by "fate", it only releases the trigger, it is not subject to human activity; it is an "eternal" question…The people act under compulsion, according to their "character", their character is "eternal", it has no causes that human beings can understand.[42]

Marxism, on the other hand, is informed by a historical optimism. Its ultimate goals – equality and justice – are achieved through class struggle; despite setbacks, victory will always be the outcome. These are two distinctly different visions. Understandably, a classical text itself posed ideological problems. It is indicative that even in *Antigone's* Model-Book compiled as late as 1948, Brecht uses the words 'barbaric' and 'barbarism' to characterise some aspects of Sophocles' tragedy. (*MB61*) This means that in matters of ideology Brecht was quite consistent. Whatever changes of attitude he displayed, they have to be seen as part of political expediency and of his efforts to work out an approach that could balance his respect for the classics and his Marxist stance.

His aim was to impose a dialectical function on classical texts so that audiences would be forced to think about and not identify with characters and events irrelevant to their present conditions. By triggering a continuous feedback between the historical periods in which they were written and the historical moment in which they were performed, he hoped to convey a strong sense of historical perspective to the audience. Therefore, he considered historical authenticity and depiction of epoch as disorientating. Already in his adaptation of Marlowe's *Edward II* (1924), the dates are fictitious, historical authenticity is ignored, while elements of pacifism and social criticism are added; furthermore, Brecht inserted a motif from the Trojan War in his play – a technique Heiner Müller was to perfect decades later. The performance itself was a comment on the then prevailing, theatrical aesthetics.

Performing the classics was a pretext for activating the audience through the dialectical analysis of history, which leads to an understanding of the present in terms

of the past and vice versa. The Marxist concept that views man as a variable of the environment and vice versa is, according to Brecht, the product of a new mode of thinking: historical thinking. Historical thinking refers to the consciousness of historical perspective that should inform any attempt to interpret old texts in terms constructive to the present. Thus, the centre of interest is shifted from the sufferings of the hero/ine to present social realities. 'A Short Organum' and the *Messingkauf Dialogues* promote the idea that theatre should make spectators see their condition as improvable within the context of the current historical circumstances. Brecht explains the term *Historisierung* (Historicisation) in *The Messingkauf Dialogues*:

> In the process of historicisation one particular social system is examined from another social system's point of view...The development of history provides the perspective...The present day becomes history.[43]

An important factor of historicisation then is historical transposition in time and place because through it the present is brought into a sharper focus. Consequently, the spectator is not offered the chance to escape from the present to a picturesque revival of historical decorum, time and locale; through the understanding of the present s/he realizes the potential of changing history itself. Identification and empathy are avoided through the historicisation process. The Marxist point of view provides the ideological background in which the adapted classic work acquires perspective and relevance. Historicisation is Brecht's main tool for shaping the classics towards the objectives of a Marxist historical perspective.

In the *Messingkauf*, he writes that the old works should be staged historically, which means 'setting them in powerful contrast to our own time. For it is only against the background of our time that their shape emerges as an old shape, and without this background I doubt if they could have any shape at all.'[44] Brecht was against the modernisation of the classics and criticised the habit of directors to strip classical plays of everything that makes them different so that they look as if they were contemporary. Classical plays must retain, Brecht says, 'their distinguishing marks and keep their impermanence before our eyes, so that our own period can be seen to be impermanent too.' (*SO190*)

In view of what has already been discussed, it is understandable that Brecht's primary task with a classical text was its adaptation, that is, intervention within its ideological structures. His method betrays intentions of correcting and rectifying an existing text. Writing a new version of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* or of Sophocles' *Antigone* would not be equally effective. On the contrary, using the original text itself as well as changing motivation would subvert myth and the classical vision from within. The French dramatists, in a more erratic manner, attempted something similar with myth, albeit not with the texts themselves. When referring to the French playwrights, I spoke of adaptations but whereas Anouilh, Giraudoux, Cocteau, Sartre, and many others take a myth and freely adapt its predominant narrative pattern to a modern context, with Brecht's *Antigone* we have the whole of Sophocles' text adapted or, rather, revised.

Brecht knew the plays of the French playwrights, Giraudoux's in particular, and had been 'seriously preoccupied' with their handling of myth.[45] His method of systematically dismantling the conceptual integrity of myth and of the tragic stands in sharp contrast to the a-historical and ideologically unfocused attitude of Cocteau and Anouilh. While the French as well as O' Neill dealt with what could be the essence of the tragic in a contemporary context, Brecht rejected both the idea of myth and tragedy. In dealing with Sophocles' tragedy, he set out to revise the original in his own terms of historicisation. Historicisation is a flexible method of handling classical plays within the present (and each time that present could be different) historical context. In our own historical context, before beginning the examination of Brecht's adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone* in Hölderlin's translation/adaptation, I feel it is appropriate to make the now necessary distinction between historicisation as a technique of adapting texts and as a technique of directing plays – a distinction Brecht was never happy about.

Sophocles' tragedy, within the basic conflict of the individual and the organic whole of the Athenian polis, introduces religious, political and existential issues. Written around 441 BC, *Antigone* had already become a classic by the time of Sophocles' death. In the fourth century BC, it was well known for its political content, which concerns the problems of the city-state and the dangers it entails, of individual freedom and ethical duty. Aristotle repeatedly refers to *Antigone* in his *Poetics*. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, scholars and artists considered *Antigone* as the finest of Greek tragedies, a work near perfection.[46]

The technique of adapting a classical play is not original. In the Model-Book, Brecht claims that the kind of adaptation he attempted with *Antigone* is not something unusual in literature and gives Goethe's *Iphigenia* after Euripides and Kleist's *Amphitryon* after Molière as examples. (*MB66*) Brecht is not wrong but not quite accurate either since both writers attempted a 're-working' of the original and not a proper adaptation. Brecht's method originates in the technique that appeared mostly in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. It consists of deliberate (slight or more serious) mistranslation and misreading of various passages of the original. Through this procedure, the translator-adaptor moulds characters and ideas towards a particular interpretation, by stressing aspects of the text that are sublime, or changing the primary nature of its discourse. We are not speaking here of the translator's usual initiatives towards modification and invention dictated by various problems inherent in the translation procedure, nor of the classicist's task in dealing with lost or with extant but mutilated texts, cultural differences and time distance. Mistranslation and transposition of meaning serve the translator's wish to promote a point of view of his own.[47]

Hölderlin employed such a technique with Sophocles' *Antigone* (1804). His *Antigone* is thought to be an extraordinary text, composed of a highly poetic and idiosyncratic language, appreciated only a century later for its unconventionality and radicalism. George Steiner speaks of Hölderlin's notion of translation which is 'itself, an intense, "uncovering" and breaking of surfaces' while Tom Kuhn and David Constantine point out that 'it goes to the roots of language, word by word, phrase by phrase, cleaving close. And in so doing it defamiliarises the mother tongue.'[48] It is not only that Hölderlin's translation-adaptation offered a level of estrangement that suited Brecht; his incomprehensible comment that it was chosen 'because it is considered so obscure' (*MB61*) testifies to his conviction that regardless of their primary conceptual output or the clarity of it, there are no permanent interpretations; he held that classical texts should be furnished with a new 'meaning' and that 'meaning' is a relevant notion dependant on the interpreter and subjected to the fluctuations of the historical and social processes.

Hölderlin saw Sophocles' text as a 'theological-political'[49] document. He shifts emphasis towards a rather metaphysical-theological interpretation according to which the heroine's opposition to the law takes on a new meaning. Through her union with Zeus, 'Father of Time', Antigone passes into a state of timelessness[50] and her

deed of rebellion is seen as one of holy transgression. It is what Hölderlin calls Antigone's 'holy insanity'. According to George Steiner, the German poet sees both the 'public man [Creon] and the ostracized rebel [Antigone] coming to ruin in the hour of man's unguarded excess.'[51] Gary Chancellor draws attention to the fact that Hölderlin makes two significant changes to Sophocles' text. Opposition to the law is seen as a trait of Antigone's character and her assertion that she follows 'a higher law' is presented as 'a threat to the existence of human law as such'. Chancellor continues: 'this is stressed by his [Hölderlin's] second change: rather than simply breaking the law, Antigone "makes it unclear," muddy or questionable, no longer untouchable. This general implication of her action is certainly present in the original, but Hölderlin gives it a more prominent place in his work.'[52] Hölderlin states in the *Anmerkungen* that his intention was to present both Antigone and Creon as 'formalized portraits embodying two opposite poles: that which is totally formless and that which is nothing but form'[53] thus suggesting that both Antigone and Creon are guilty of excess.

Hölderlin's *Antigone* was one of Hegel's favourite plays. The implications of Hegel's approach to tragedy in general and to *Antigone* in particular are those of a legitimate friction between the state and the private being. When this collision is brought to violent extremes and the individual is punished severely by the law, then law becomes a formality and the individual is forced into a self-destructive autonomy, an imperative self-realisation.[54] Hegel saw the dialectical process of history exemplified in the conflict between Creon and Antigone. Creon is right in defending the interests of the state and Antigone is equally right in her demand for personal self-realisation. Antigone and Creon are victims of historical necessity.

In Brecht's adaptation of *Antigone,* the basic process is one of cutting, shifting emphasis, reading scenes anew, changing motivation and substantially re-writing the choral parts. The structural conventions of the original are retained. There remain approximately four hundred lines unchanged from Hölderlin in Brecht's one thousand and four hundred-line adaptation. The rest are subjected to various degrees of adaptation.[55] Strict rhyming couplets ending in a final triplet were used to give the text a fast pace. Despite the play's flaws, the process of historicisation, the argumentation aiming at the Marxist objective supplemented by estrangement and other performance techniques construct a well thought out system for handling classical texts. Brecht introduces a method of treating mythological material based

exclusively on a political ideology. One can oppose its logic; still, it offers a model of application to writers, directors and dramaturges who are engaged in the process of staging a classical text.

In the Model-Book, Brecht makes a number of references to Hegel, although there is not much of the sophisticated Hegelian analysis in his own adaptation. Brecht notes that Hölderlin's translation is 'somewhat Hegelian', that it is seldom or never used and that he chose it 'because it is considered so obscure'. Elsewhere, he remarks that it is 'remarkably radical'. (*MB61*) His aim is not to recreate the spirit of antiquity but to 'give the classical piece more stage-worthy language' by eliminating the Greek Moira (Fate) so that the 'underlying folk legend emerges from the ideological mist'. (*MB61-2*) The question posed by Sophocles' tragedy, Brecht explains, is whether today's public, with their different concepts, can understand it. The ancient idea was that man was handed over, more or less blindly, to Fate over which he has no power; therefore, Brecht continues, this version replaces Fate with the idea of Man as his own destiny. (*MB64*) Of course, things in Greek tragedy hardly happen in the mechanistic way Brecht describes, certainly not in *Antigone,* which is the one of the most dialectically structured texts in literary history. In Brecht, the gods are absent while, from the deities, only Bacchus, the 'local peace god is left because he is sacred to the people themselves.' (*MB61*)

In his Foreword, section 5, Brecht expresses his agreement with Aristotle in that the story is the kernel of the tragedy, even if one disagrees about the purpose for which it should be performed. Great attention must be paid to the presentation of the story so that once narrated the whole thing is concluded. Section 5 ends with the remark: 'the so-called "poet's own world" must not be treated arbitrarily, cut off and obeying its own logic; instead whatever it contains of the real world must be brought out and made effective. The "poet's words" are only sacred in so far as they are true; the theatre is the handmaiden not of the poet but of society.'[56]

Brecht refers to the topicality of *Antigone's* subject matter and the play creates the image of what he would have liked to happen: a resistance of the German people against Hitler – something that never actually happened.[57] Brecht seems carried away by his wish to pay homage to those who resisted Hitler. In this respect, *Antigone's* adaptation is a genuine product of the aftermath of World War II, displaying a degree of empathy – a word Brecht would abhor – in the delineation and the theatrical presentation of certain aspects of his material, as we shall see. The play starts with a

Prologue in rhymed doggerel and a placard announcing the date: March 1945 in Berlin. Two sisters live in Berlin just before the end of the war. The Russians are outside the city. Their brother is a deserter of the army hanged by the Nazi S.S. One of the sisters goes out to demand his corpse, risking arrest for complicity. The sound of a gong is heard and the actresses who play the sisters hand their coats to a stage assistant and assume their roles as Antigone and Ismene.

In contrast to the original, where the action is placed in the aftermath of a victorious war, Brecht's play begins when a little more is needed to win the victory. The war of Thebes against Argos is not defensive; it grows out of economic and political mismanagement within Thebes although neither the political nor the economic motivation is substantiated in the play. Creon needs the Argive mines to invigorate his deteriorating economy while the war helps to divert attention from the policies of his regime. (*MB61-2*) As Antigone, Haemon and the chorus of elders repeatedly point out, it is Creon's personal war. The parallelism with Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, the identification of Thebes with Berlin, and Argos' battle against Thebes with the battle of Stalingrand are quite obvious.

From Sophocles' characters, Eurydice, the wife of Creon, is omitted either because Brecht saw her presence as unnecessary to the development of the story or because her death would direct the audiences' pity towards Creon. The latter is presented as 'a flatly rapacious caricature of Hitler.'[58] Tiresias is a good observer and this enables him to make predictions. Polyneikes has not defected to the enemy neither is he killed by his brother Eteocles in the battle. The brothers fight unwillingly for their city by the side of Creon, who seizes power after murdering Polyneikes with his own hands. Polyneikes' burial takes the form of a political demonstration against Creon's regime. Haemon, in love with Antigone, gradually turns against his father and finally kills himself. Brecht writes: 'the tyrant (that is to say, the ruler) is in the process of getting even with those personal enemies who had hindered victory. The actions of the tyrant bring him in conflict with the human custom and, as a result, he suffers the destruction of his family.' (*MB62*) Argos wins the war. Creon is left childless with no hope of recruiting his army to defend the city against the approaching Argives. In his final speech, he predicts the destruction of Thebes.

Brecht's Creon has the characteristics of a Hitler (the guards frequently address him as *fuehrer*) in sharp contrast to Sophocles' hero, who is destroyed through an error of ethical judgment. Sophocles' Creon is a leader who places the

199

state above his personal interest. Sophocles significantly imbued his hero with the prestige of a serious leader when, in the opening speech, Creon echoes Pericles' Funeral Speech – the exemplary declaration of Athenian democratic principles at the time (*SA180-235*). In the Sophoclean tragedy the balance is split between Antigone and Creon, whose final collapse dominates the stage. The whole of Sophocles' tragedy gradually swings the audience's sympathy from Creon to Antigone.

The famous passage in which Antigone refers to the 'unwritten laws' that dictate her decision to bury the corpse is omitted. The Model-Book states that: 'Antigone's deed merely consists in helping the enemy, who are aware of the moral situation.' (*MB62*) Her treatment is typical of Brecht's method to reveal the contradictions within the hero/ine but also of a more general problem deriving from when one chooses to affront a powerful mythological figure so directly. Brecht did not want to present Antigone as a cult- heroine of the Resistance. Brecht is split between his wish to pay homage to the few who resisted Hitler and the fact that Antigone is herself a member of the ruling classes; like the Elders of the chorus, she herself is complicit in Creon's seizure of power. Antigone, it is implied, opposes the war only when the destruction of her city is imminent and her own interests threatened: she does not represent the people's interests nor is she part of an opposition against the tyrant. That hardly makes her a model in Brecht's own terms; still, at the crucial moment, she is able to articulate a coherent discourse of resistance and proves an efficient opponent to Creon. In her *agon* with Creon, Antigone expresses a view far from the traditional idea of patriotism:

> And we would all be better off and safer
> Amid our city's ruins
> Than living on as conquerors in a foreign
> Land
> With you. (*BA503-507*)

On the other hand, when leaving to be immured, Antigone makes a thoroughly heroic exit with the chorus – who had sided with Creon for financial profit and has just realized the true situation of the city – paying tribute to her:

> She turns and goes, long stride, as though

She was leading her guards. (*BA927-928*)

Perhaps against Brecht's own intentions, the final image of his heroine is rather dim and muddled. As the play stands, the focus is transferred more to Creon and his brutal display of violence. But Creon's depiction is the central problem. A fanatic and monomaniac, he is an obvious caricature of Hitler. Brecht explained that the actor who portrayed Creon should avoid the danger of drawing compassion, even at the moment of the hero's final destruction. (*MB54*) The depiction of Creon brings the play very close to melodrama. Later Brecht tried to deny that his Creon was modelled on Hitler and was very defensive about criticisms that regarded *Antigone* as a morality play. (*MB62*)

To Sophocles' chorus that comments and participates by offering advice, Brecht juxtaposes a chorus consisting of middle class Elders. John Fuegi compares the vivacity of the opening scene in which the chorus speaks ecstatically of Creon's arrival from the battlefield to 'announce the booty' to the chorus' subsequent comments, when they reflect on man's inhumanity to man which is obviously incompatible with the supposed immorality of the bourgeoisie. Noting the highly effective language Brecht uses in these contemplative passages, Fuegi remarks: 'The result is a complete break of character between the different parts of the chorus' role.'[59] One would expect that the choral parts, which represent the collective and which Brecht extensively rewrote, would be normally those Brecht could handle and shape according to his ideological prerogatives, so as to form the other pole against both Antigone and Creon. Brecht revels in displaying a magnificent linguistic capacity but fails to endow them with the dialectic element one would expect. Delineating the petty bourgeoisie and their shifts of attitude according to personal interest hardly compares with the dialectical processes of the Sophoclean chorus that shifts attitudes in its effort to persuade Antigone not to sacrifice herself and, then, make Creon change his decision.

Criticism on the adaptation of *Antigone* focuses on two issues: the elimination of the scale of values of the original and the inadequacy of events and characters to sustain a discourse that could justify the necessity of this kind of adaptation. Dickson notes that Creon's motives for declaring war are personal while, in Sophocles, Polyneikes is a traitor who joined the enemy thus provoking the attack against his own country. Dickson further indicates that Creon rightly gives priority to the affairs

of the state while Antigone's opposition to the edict might have initially seemed unfounded to Greek audiences. Therefore, Dickson concludes, Creon's tragic insight in the end is 'moving' and that such situations were acceptable to the Athenians, who were encouraged 'to identify' with the character. He adds: 'Brecht's rationalized *Antigone* is an evisceration of Sophocles' myth.'[60] Fuegi agrees that Creon's personal motivation for the war is not persuasive and points out that Antigone's triumphant exit makes her seem 'an almost classical heroine'.[61]

Brecht, of course, did not want his spectators to 'identify' themselves with anyone, nor did he wish to present a 'moving' Creon or a 'moving' Antigone, as Dickson suggests. It is pointless to criticise Brecht's adaptation in such terms. One of his objectives was, indeed, 'to eviscerate' the myth. Brecht tried to create an 'alternative text' that fails to fit his own idea of a dialectical play. The ambivalent depiction of the heroine, the extreme maliciousness of Creon, and the inconsistencies of the chorus contradict his own aims. The play conveys a sense of contrived abstractions. Brecht's rationale that 'Crime does not pay' and that 'political enterprises demanding excessive violence are likely to founder' (*MB62*) proved an ideologically inadequate basis for adapting *Antigone* – something not in tune with Brecht's own complex patterns of thinking.

Brecht's statement that the ancient play was chosen because of a 'certain topicality' has to be noted: 'As to the political aspects of the original, the present-day analogies came out astonishingly powerfully as a result of the rationalization process, but on the whole they were a handicap; the great character of the resister in the old play does not represent the German resistance fighters who necessarily seem most important to us.' Brecht goes on to say that his adaptation 'unfolds the incidents objectively, on the unfamiliar level of the rulers'. This objective presentation of a 'major state operation' was made possible by the fact that 'the old play was historically so remote as to tempt nobody to identify with the principle figure.'[62] According to Caspar Neher, Brecht's aim was to rid the play of its extraneous mythological and cult elements, offering no clues as to what these 'extraneous' elements were. (*MB68*) In the Model-Book and the *Journals* the words 'myth' or 'tragedy' are missing. Reference is made to the 'Greek dramaturgy' and its use of certain forms of alienation, 'notably interventions by the chorus' without further explanation.[63]

Following the lines of Brecht's thinking in the Model-Book and his sparing references in the *Journals*, we can describe his efforts with the Sophoclean play as a process of historicising myth and rationalising tragedy. Substituting the tragic vision was a persistently pursued objective in inter-war drama; it is experienced as an absence in the work of O'Neill and the French playwrights and is, more often than not, aligned with the recourse to myth. In Brecht, it acquires a different significance since it is placed on a Marxist/political basis. In the context of Brecht's *Antigone*, myth is seen as narrative material, in the playwright's words, as a 'folk legend'. Ostensibly its mythic quality is negated while at the same time being exploited for its enormous authority. Brecht was perfectly aware that the anti-realistic nature of myth and the exemplary patterns of conduct it offers are of (and could be used to) great parabolic effectiveness. His objections concern the irrational element in both myth and tragedy (or the irrationality of catastrophe in Marxist terms) although in Sophocles' *Antigone* the workings of the irrational are eliminated in the face of the conflicts of the personal and the collective, the existential and the numinous, and of the deeply dialectical processes through which these conflicts materialise. Is Antigone 'handed over to Fate blindly' as Brecht claims? Is the tragedy apolitical as he is suggesting? His rationalisation process works arbitrarily on a text whose political content and dialectical structures are consciously ignored while the utopian effort of correcting it and dissolving its supposed 'ideological mist' becomes self-negating. Is Brecht referring to Sophocles' or to Hölderlin's mist? One could gather that Brecht chose it because he could better attack Hölderlin's theological and politically liberal orientation than Sophocles' complexity, although the title does refer to Sophocles' *Antigone*; or simply because rationalisation and historicisation can be applied to any text irrespective of its idiosyncratic qualities. In Greek tragedy there is narrative and reported action; especially, in *Antigone*, we have three deaths (Eurydice, Haemon, Antigone's) reported; adding the dialectics of chorus-protagonists one would have thought that it was almost an ideal text for Brecht to deal with. His difficulties with the ideological nature of what constitutes the tragic seem insuperable.

Significant for the purposes of this thesis is that Brecht is constantly reading against the text in order to soften the impact of both myth and tragic element. Brecht reads anti-tragically. In his view, myth is a powerful, usable narrative. As always, his method is one of producing a practical criticism of the original that undermines the idealism of the hero. Most of all, he erodes the primacy of human identity by placing

the protagonist/s within a specific political, social and economic context, thus revealing their own contradictory conduct in circumstances of crisis, as in the case of Antigone and the Elders, or objectifying the role of the tyrant – any tyrant – in depicting Creon as a clown. Everything has to be relative. He takes the ambiguities out of Sophocles'/Hölderlin's texts, tearing apart their conceptual coherence. Such objectives proved more feasible with Shakespeare and Farquhar, Lenz and Molière – products of a historicity and cultural continuity that have more in common with the twentieth century than with the fifth century B. C., when the domain of the mythic past was still interwoven with that of thought and literary creation. *Antigone* is the least successful of Brecht's adaptations because he does not seem to have found a way of dealing with the specific problems deriving from what he called 'Greek dramaturgy'. Historicising and topicalising the a-chronic myth and substituting tragedy with historical optimism proved an almost dead-end enterprise. Brecht, who was always self-critical, refrained from involving himself in similar projects.

Regretting the shortness of time within which *Antigone's* adaptation was prepared and accepting that Hölderlin's text deserved a closer study than he was able to give it, Brecht states in his Foreword that *Antigone* 'is not so much a new school of playwriting as a new way of performance being tried out on an old *play*.'[64] Accounts of the performance at Chur suggest that it was a recapitulation of former techniques he had used in his pre-exile years, especially in *Edward II*. The actors and actresses addressed the audience rather than speaking to each other. Benches were placed between the entrances where performers sat before assuming their roles; a gong announced the entrances, the performers themselves handled a gramophone in front of their audience, props were placed on a table while a rack contained the masks for the chorus. Neher's set, nearly colourless, spare and functional, consisted of a semicircular stage and backdrop while the four posts at the top of which hung the skulls of horses marked the square of the acting area.[65] The stage was curtainless and brightly lit. Neher's simple costumes bore no trace of epoch or locality. The acting was quite stylised, especially that of Creon. When reciting their parts, the members of the chorus held masks in front of their faces that were then replaced on the rack. The tempo was very fast while the style of the production was highly distancing and cool.

Reviewers praised Brecht's setting of the Prologue in Berlin in the last days of the war, the updating of the myth, and the style of acting – of showing rather than impersonating. Brecht's efforts to interpret myth outside its familiar moral context

(individual consciousness versus the expediencies of the state) confused critics and received less positive reactions.[66] Nevertheless, Brecht had the opportunity to prove his ingenuity as theatre director managing to transform a poor text into a powerful performance.

Brecht's lifelong efforts to establish a new approach to the theatre are epitomised in his performances with the Berliner Ensemble, where he would always act in his capacity as playwright/director/theoretician. 'Without trying it out in production, no play can be completed.' he would say, towards the end of his life.[67] The mature Brecht was careful about what kind of plays he would choose for adaptation, insisting that they fit integrally into the pattern of the Hegelian historical dialectic. This can certainly serve as an indirect comment on his handling of Sophocles' tragedy. As an ingenious director, he made significant alterations to his own, original texts when he was about to direct them. Always deeply conscious of the mutability of social/historical realities as well as of the advances of science and technology, he came to realise that an informed directorial approach was a more malleable and perhaps safer way to deal with the ideological and conceptual content of a classical text than its adaptation.

His absorption in directing and staging the great plays of his exile was also due to political reasons. In the GDR, Brecht had to deal with the realities attached to a new communist state of which he approved and was involved in the development of its cultural policies as a member of the establishment, yet frequently disagreeing with decisions made by the state. He was against the new nationalism promoted by the party and had serious objections on matters of aesthetics and policies concerning cultural heritage.[68] Once more, Brecht had to keep balances and compromise, not without cost as the case of *Turandot* reveals.[69] It is not a coincidence that he now dealt exclusively with the adaptation of classical texts and wrote no new plays. Neither was it coincidental his somehow modified method with the classics in his subsequent productions of the plays of Shakespeare, Molière, Lenz, and Farquhar. He approached texts more cautiously and with greater respect as to their conceptual content. Historicisation remained the pivotal requisite of his approach to the classics as it was for any contemporary play; rather than imposing a Marxist ideological superstructure, he now exploited elements latent in the original. Political circumstances and the experience of *Antigone* explain why Brecht was now focusing

much more on performance and less on the written text and seemed to place more trust in the means of performance through which his message was to be conveyed.

Changing and re-evaluating remained an essential aspect of his methodology especially then, when performance was taking pre-eminence over the written text. This was clearly manifested when Brecht tested *Antigone* for a second time at Greiz in 1951. He re-wrote the Prologue, which was not placed in 1945 Berlin and erased the identification of Creon with Hitler. In the new Prologue, the actor playing Tiresias addressed the audience saying: 'Search in your hearts and minds for similar deeds / In the recent past or for the absence / Of any such deeds.'[70] To put it more accurately, Brecht re-historicised the Prologue in the context of a more contemporary relevance, although with hardly more success than in the Chur production.

The case of *Antigone* illustrates Brecht's conviction that breaking grounds means emphasis on the process of experimentation and not on the results; that new readings and approaches can change the whole impression a text conveys. *Antigone*, like all of his adaptations, has to be considered as work-in-progress. Be it poor or full of contradictions, one can hardly miss the rationale behind: whether one attacks or venerates the 'classics', one has to make them relevant, to see their texts as solid entities that should incessantly provoke interpretation and re-assessment. While working for more than two years on the adaptation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (1951-3), which remained unfinished, Brecht emphasised his own politically shrewd albeit ambiguous stance towards adaptation. He regretted 'the lack of artistry involved' in the adapting procedures and predicted that 'the time would come when the feeling for history of the class-conscious masses would be so well developed that the original text could be left to speak its own dialectical message without the mediation of an adapter.'[71] Adaptation then is a tool to de-construct and then reconstruct a text according to new ideological norms; depending on the historical momentum, it permits a different modification and re-adjustment of the original.

In one of the various appendices to 'A Short Organum', added during his last years, Brecht singled out the historical sense as the element that is most compatible with contemporary aesthetics, the one that stimulates the awareness of change and our understanding of the dialectical nature of reality. It should be developed 'into a real sensual delight'.[72] Subbiotto remarks that 'the clash between empathy and alienation which many regard as a rejection of so-called Aristotelian principles by Brecht is, looked at in other terms, a conflict of claims between the subjective individualizing

approach that seeks its justification solely within the compass of the play, and the historicizing sense that casts its anchors in other waters than apparently purely aesthetic ones.'[73] Indeed, the addition of elements which are generally considered as Aristotelian should not divert attention from the fact that they are meant to function alongside their opposites – and here Brecht is anticipating developments in the post-1950 theatre, where the mingling of heterogeneous performance elements eventually became a common practice. His increasing concern for a theatre that would be both entertaining and thought-provoking led to the integration of diverse elements that Brecht selectively incorporated in the performances with the Berliner Ensemble.

Brecht's theory and practice illustrate his tireless efforts to set forth the conceptual and aesthetic principles for the construction of a political theatre. The various aspects of his theory – estrangement, historisation, rationalisation, pleasure, sensuousness, entertainment – were initially conceived as self-inclusive notions useful for the creation of an anti-naturalistic/political theatre; through development, modification, and the working out of their inter-relations, the formation of a 'conceivable aesthetic' was finally achieved.

When post-modern criticism considers the re-examination of Brecht through the artistic tradition of the absurd, it seems to overlook the fact that theatre directors have incessantly mingled Brechtian and Artaudian elements even since Brecht's own time. Joan Littlewood is perhaps the more eloquent example. Reviewing her performance in *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1963), Charles Marowitz paid tribute to her unprecedented attempts to mix the Artaudian with the Brechtian.[74] Although Marowitz was perhaps exaggerating the Artaudian aspects of Littlewood's performance, her physical, visceral, and emotionally engaged theatre was suggestive of a personal approach to Brechtian techniques that pointed to the mixture Marowitz was referring to. Shortly after the performance of *Oh, What a Lovely War*, Peter Brook and Charles Marowitz worked with actors and actresses on experimental approaches to various texts through the Artaudian idea of physicality in the LAMDA Theatre of Cruelty Season.[75] Brook's subsequent production of *Marat/Sade* was the most fully achieved mingling of the Artaudian and the Brechtian at the time, initiating new acting and directorial approaches.[76]

Brecht's influence on political theatre was immense, especially on playwrights such as Peter Weiss, Rolf Hochhuth, Max Frisch, Friedrich Dürrenmattt,

207

and Edward Bond as well as on directors such as William Gaskill, Peter Stein, and Ariana Mnouchkine – to mention a few. Although one could mention the names of many directors who have flexibly applied the Brechtian method, I would limit my own reference to the Living Theatre's production of Brecht's *Antigone* and Peter Stein's performance of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.

The Living Theatre's performance of Brecht's *Antigone*, translated and directed by Judith Malina with Julian Beck as Creon in 1967, is a seminal production in the history of twentieth-century performing arts. In Malina's sagacious translation, *Antigone* was conceived in complex terms that aimed at illuminating its poetic, political and theatrical aspects.[77] The following quotation from Julian Beck on the performance of *Antigone* offers an example of how inspired artists, already in the Sixties, read his plays, free from the ideological constraints that Marxist and non-Marxist criticism, sometimes Brecht himself, imposed. Beck and Malina took into account aspects that had been rather neglected up to then: the visceral vitality, the amazing richness of language, the poetic, and the political. According to Beck:

> The Living Theatre began as poetic theatre, developed through classic technique, classic theatre, and arrived in *Antigone* at the combination of poetic, classic, and political – which is what we are... The theatre of Brecht is the theatre of a highly rational civilization, and our production of *In the Jungle of Cities* dealt with all the beauty that the rational comprehends. No matter how radical the message, it was presented in terms of the rational intelligence... Meanwhile, the audience was perfectly capable of comprehending and enjoying whatever happened on stage *without absorbing the political statement.* (my italics)...But all these experiments were still bound inside the theatre of intellect....With *Antigone* we have found voices for the words, the movements for the body, that differ from voice and movement as practiced in most civilized theatre. If we want to change the world politically, culturally, economically, socially, psychologically or even poetically, everything has to change. When you mix the body and the mind you get a new kind of social behavior. [Brecht's] purpose was to make people look at circumstances objectively. Brecht used the practice known as alienation because he

had faith in cool reason. In spite of the delights of cool reason, we realize it is not enough, and without the verification of the body nothing is really reasonable. We use alienation with the kinetic pattern in the hopes that the rhythmic leaps will put a strain on rationality and let blood flow in the brain... In *Antigone* we are using the speaking legends from the Model-Book to excite rapid changes, to cool the action, to shift the audience and ourselves from hot to cold, with the hope that each temperature will agitate the other. It comes out as a form of alienation, but its real purpose is involvement of the audience in the play. Brecht's alienation was only slightly like ours, but Brecht, Artaud and the *Living Theatre* are strongly united in the search of anything that will make the audience revolt... We did *Antigone* to see if it was possible to do a play 2,500 years old with a strong, modern political interpretation, to see if we could relate the poetry and wisdom of the Greeks, of Marx, of Brecht, of the madness force that is Artaud. We feel that it is possible to revolutionize ourselves without burning the past. ...When we completed *Antigone* it was with a great feeling of relief – now we know we can do any play.[78]

More on the 'rational' side of the Brecht legacy, Stein created a memorable sample of political theatre. He worked on the preparation of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* for five years, first, on a large number of German translations, finally limiting himself to five out of which he compiled the performance text. He flexibly appropriated the Brechtian model, integrating selectively expressionistic and other elements of theatrical grammar. As the text itself cut through various levels of its own history through translation, so the imagery of the performance was an amazing voyage through Western cultural history, past and present. The triumphant return of Agamemnon to Mycenae on the chariot was reminiscent of nineteenth- century paintings depicting Napoleon after his victorious battles. In immediate contrast, Clytaemnestra welcomed Agamemnon; instead of spreading purple cloth for him to walk upon as he made his entrance into the palace – as Aeschylus prescribes according to the ancient custom – women threw innumerable rags and clothes torn to shreds, forming a path that led to the palace where Agamemnon would subsequently

be murdered by Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus – a reminder of the carnage involved in any war.

The male chorus of *Agamemnon,* functioning collectively and at times individually, was strategically positioned on the orchestra within the Petroupolis' mine where the performance took place upon Stein's demand. Stein refused to perform in an open ancient amphitheatre, particularly in Epidaurus, where reminiscences of classical spirit and traditionally staged performances of Greek tragedy would have hindered the effect of his directorial approach.[79] At crucial moments of the action, the chorus occupied both orchestra and the amphitheatric rakes where the audience was sitting and from there addressed the actors on the orchestra. Such was the moment following Agamemnon's murder, when the movements of the chorus divided between amphitheatre and orchestra progressively became more aggressive, clearly indicating a tendency for revolt, and the exchanges between the chorus and Aegisthus created an electric immediacy.

Another notable feature was the movement of the female chorus in the *Choephoroi.* Structured on an endlessly circular movement that gradually wove a net around Orestes and Electra, it illustrated the chain of crime and revenge, of divine and human impasse. Especially towards the end, the accelerated rhythm of the chorus' movement in combination with vocal patterns anticipated the pursuit of Orestes by the Furies. The *Eumenides* was a dialectical piece, a debate, where the argument between the judges and the Eumenides was manifested with the utmost clarity. Athena was an earthly goddess, who analytically exposed the reasons for her intervention that put an end to the long series of blood and vengeance.

Addressing young students in Leipzig in 1948, Brecht said: 'What this land needs is twenty years of ideology-destruction...a theatre of a scientific generation of scandals,'[80] thus re-affirming his belief in the pre-eminence of creative imagination over stale ideological norms and its subversive ability to mould ideas and forms. Perhaps the most insightful comment on Brecht was made by the great epigone, Heiner Müller, who in 1990 stated: 'What interests me in Brecht is the evil, which he himself very much concealed in his last years...evil is the substance of Brecht.'[81] Müller points to his precursor's protean ability to recoil and compromise without selling out, his passion for provocation, the obsessive urge to destroy without necessarily bothering to re-build on stable grounds, his unpredictability, the cynical

acceptance of unjustified murder, and the recognition of the evil dimension of human beings that erupts in many of his plays.

Brecht's contribution to the staging of the classics is to be found in the bold and irreverent ways in which he invaded the sacred texts in order to make them relevant; it is also evident in his belief that the ideological output of a text is contingent and, therefore, malleable towards new ideological directions. In Brecht's theatre a classical text is 'material' to be explored and exploited. And though others before him had promoted similar ideas, Brecht's persistent and systematic experimentations offered the tools for a practical application of such ideas. It is interesting to note that the kind of interventions Brecht introduced when adapting classical texts are today undertaken by directors (sometimes in collaborations with dramaturges) as the freedom with the written text, and the shaping of its ideological/conceptual output (whatever that might be) have become part of a common process when staging the 'classics'. In fact, Brecht's directorial/adapting approach survives as a widely used method of directing both the classical *and* contemporary repertoire.

Brecht's conviction in the contingency and impermanence of an artefact was grounded on the permanence of powerful texts – whether classical or modern –, their resistance to appropriation or misappropriation, finally the permanence of art itself, which endlessly renews and transforms itself. Brecht knew this only too well. With such a rationale, he composed his 'transparent adaptation of *Antigone*'[82], where he laid bare the difficulties and the contradictions of the project itself, leaving unresolved the interrelation of myth and rationality, of tragedy and historicity; he self-consciously cut through the history of Sophocles' text itself and of myth itself by 'using' such a seminal work as Hölderlin's adaptation and derailing Hegel's dialectic interpretation of it, with the aim of opening possibilities of dealing with it in the future. For Brecht, there is no final text: a text can be constantly re-written, depending on the context of a particular historical moment. This is the enduring quality of his preoccupations with tradition and his beloved 'classics'.

It is only in this context of Brecht's contribution that one can view and appreciate the creative appropriations and transformations of his model by artists like Pina Bausch and Heiner Müller.[83] Müller, in particular, profoundly understood the unsettling quality of his predecessor's oeuvre and his famous dictum: 'Using Brecht

without being critical of him is a form of betrayal'[84] should be noted. He dealt with the legacy iconoclastically. His innovative usages of mythology in recent world drama would need a great deal of space to be discussed. I shall briefly delineate his Brechtian aspects as well as his deviations from the model, in an effort to show the implications of Brecht's approach to the classics in the post-modern era.

In the Sixties, Müller exploited the Brechtian techniques in adapting and re-working Greek myths and tragedies: *Philoctetes* (1958-65) is an adaptation of Sophocles's tragedy; *Hercules 5* (1966) is a satiric drama meant to be performed alongside *Philoctetes*; there is also a re-writing of Hölderlin's translation of *Oedipus Rex* (1965-67). Even in *The Construction Site* (1963-64), which refers to the building of a socialist society, there are references to heroes of Greek mythology and to Homer's epics. The use of myths served to satirise the communist bureaucracy and to conceal criticism of current political realities or attacks against the Stalinist period in GDR as well as aspects of the capitalist world. Gradually he distanced himself from the Brechtian idea of the 'dialectical play', which uncovers the contradictions of a capitalist or socialist society and which, in one or the other way, manipulates audiences towards a prescribed response.

In his later pieces, Brechtian influences are echoed in Müller's efforts to articulate the collective experience albeit in terms radically deviating from those of Brecht: it is one of devastation and alienation, destruction of the contemporary landscape, and the absurdity of history. In the mid-Seventies, he altogether dispensed with the traditional grammar of theatre texts by intensifying the thematic content, grotesque imagery and fragmentary structure of his pieces; he appropriates or falsifies myths, motifs, or heroes from Greek mythology and combines them with motifs, themes, or fragments borrowed from other European poets, writers, and thinkers, thus initiating a confrontation of theatre and literature.

Cement (1972), an adaptation of Fyodor Gladkov's classic novel of Soviet socialist realism, was the crucial point of transition between his earlier, more Brechtian work, and his later texts. Within *Cement*, myths intrude all of a sudden as reflections, comments, or captions announcing scenes, as tales narrated by the characters – intercalary elements directly or indirectly related to what is enacted on the stage. *Hercules 2* or *Hydra* and a text on Achilles are autonomous prose texts inserted into *Cement*. Other texts are also included: the first entitled *Seven at the Gates*, the second *The Return of Odysseus* while in a third, under the title *Medea*

Commentary, one of the characters, Ivagin, narrates to Dasha how Medea slaughtered her children and threw their members at Jason so that he could see the face of Woman for the first time.[85]

References to Electra are encountered in *Hamletmachine* (1977) and in the poem *Projections 1975. Waterfront Wasteland, Medea Material, Landscape with Argonauts* (1983) is a triptych – one of Müller's most remarkable texts. *Waterfront Wasteland* is a description of a deteriorating, industrial landscape, a paradigm for a polluted environment and alienated mankind. One is immediately aware of rhythms and an atmosphere that bring to mind Eliot's *The Waste Land.* In a short note, included in the published text of the second piece of the triptych, *Medea Material,* Müller writes:

> The material, apart from being extracted from my life with women, came from Euripides, Hans Henny Jahnn and, above all, Seneca. I could not have written the third part, *Landscape with Argonauts,* without T. S Eliot's *The Waste Land* and also not without Ezra Pound.[86]

Explosion of a Memory (1984) describes a landscape 'beyond death' and the author proposes that it 'may be seen as a painting, a veil across Euripides' *Alcestis,* quoting the Noh play *Kumasaka,* the Eleventh Canto of the *Odyssey* and Hitchcock's *The Birds*... The action is optional as its consequence lies in the past, an explosion of a memory in an extinct dramatic structure.'[87] In the Nineties, *Hercules 13* and the monologue *Ajax* (1993-94) suggest a renewed interest with Greek mythology. Such an extended use makes one wonder about the significance of the mythological heroes Müller implicates in the flux of his pieces, all the more because their function is quite cut off from previous didactic or other formulas.

Müller approaches history through mythological figures. The mythological personae introduced do not exemplify the usual Marxist/Brechtian historical approach, where the pattern is one of the transgression of pre-Marxist history by history, i.e. by the socialist vision of society; neither does Müller equate history to fable since he places his heroes at the very centre of historical processes. In addition, he refuses to attribute responsibility; victims and perpetrators are entrapped in an endless chain of terror, blood and violence which is communicated through a

language of sensual and brutal images, fragments of great textual density and spatio-temporal transpositions: 'the brutality of history in the moment of its happening'.[88] In Müller, Greek myths are pre-eminent material in and through which collective experience has been crystallised; they are figures that participate in the process of composing the collective, paradigms for the collective experience. In *Medea Material,* for example, the heroine is 'material' for a meditation on betrayal and revolution. His Medea is a primitive woman seduced and oppressed by the conqueror, whose murderous revolt amounts to a self-destructive urge that cannot lead to emancipation.

In this context, mythological heroes are equated to myths in the sense that they bear the myth themselves; consequently there is no need of implicating or explaining the whole story. Their presence carries the sum total of their story (myth), individual personalities, and deeds. The emancipation of contemporary drama from the omnipotence of plot and character motivation permits an encasement of mythological personae within the flux of a play, where the mythological figure by right of what s/he represents speaks of the absurdity of history, a devastated world in a state of collapse. Müller uses Greek myths as paradigms and models in order to weave a discourse on the mechanisms of power and authority.

Throughout his life, Müller turned to Brecht, either by using the *Lehrstücke* (in *The Horatian, Philoctetes, Mauser, Gundling's Life*) as an operative framework or by deepening his understanding of his precursor's oeuvre. It would be disorientating, however, to align Müller exclusively with Brecht. The tradition of the Absurd shares almost equal part in his oeuvre and Artaud's major influence has been duly noted. Müller described his work as 'the language of pain... His texts blossom under the sun of torture that shines on all continents of this planet at once. Read among the ruins of Europe, they will be classics.'[89] The influence of Beckett, Eliot, Ezra Pound, Kafka, Shakespeare, Lessing, Dostoevsky, Mayakovski, Kleist, is more than recognisable. Müller consistently rejected the labels of the avant-garde, the post-modernist or deconstructionist artist that were frequently ascribed to him. His texts are constructed from the most diverse material taken from Greek mythology to television video clips; his work is characterised by a mixture of heterogeneous forms and styles, complicated systems of references, allusions and quotations, different kinds of verse and metre taken from classical, lyrical or contemporary poetry. Müller refuses stylistic homogeneity. And yet – and this is one of his deeply challenging aspects –

Müller (in contrast to Brecht) never seems to lose sight of the tragic vision as one would expect but rather is inspired by it. The broadness of vision, ideological openness of his pieces and centrality of mythological figures speak of a post-Brecht era, where the legacy forms only part of the writer's personal artistic achievement. Müller occupies a most outstanding position among the twentieth-century artists who attempted to re-write myths and reconstruct a notion of the tragic and as such, he is the proper figure to complete the argument of the entire thesis in the Conclusion.

7. Conclusion

The most appropriate way to conclude a discussion on a recurrent literary phenomenon such as the dramaturgical use of myth/s would be to consider how its extensive use in the inter-war years has developed in the post-modern era. Inter-war drama displayed strong tendencies towards the transcendence of naturalism and its 'closed' forms. In the cases of Eliot's *Sweeney Agonistes*, Anouilh's *Antigone* or O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, new perspectives of form and its interrelation with content, i.e. of myth in relation to dramatic structure, were opened. Narrativity was another pioneering aspect of the era. It featured dynamically in Brecht's epic theatre and in O'Neill's work; it implied that myth is not meant to be directly enacted on stage as a passionate or tragic event but rather to be viewed from a more distanced and critical perspective. Modernist artists initiated methods of handling myths and new approaches to myth, which were successfully exploited in the post-modern era.

Due to the ubiquity of myth/s in the literature and theatre of the twentieth century, one should reconsider the significance of its re-appearances and disappearances. By the Fifties, myths had practically disappeared from drama and the European 'absurdists' occupied the stage almost up the Seventies. The fantasies of the mind, the processes of inner consciousness, physical cruelty, and linguistic violence are directly articulated or enacted, not necessarily as part of a story, nor with any logical motivation. Realities and the workings of the psyche are reproduced through a mingling of realistic, existential, absurdist and poetic elements. In the late Sixties, a politically engaged theatre, parabolic if not didactic, surfaced overtly. Whether or not it was based on the Brechtian model, the need to communicate a message accounted for a more structured plot although this was materialised through 'curves and jumps' as Brecht prescribed. Physicality, spontaneity, music, narrative and shock techniques were employed to this end. In both absurdist and political drama, myths formed no part of the material playwrights used or the problems or the experiences they wanted to convey.

Nevertheless, up to the Eighties political theatre made limited use of myths, historical figures or legends. Edward Bond created political theatre based on a basically orthodox Brechtian concept. He consistently followed the Marxist model of historical analysis and spoke of 'a rational theatre' or a 'theatre of history' that 'has

no need of mythology.'[1] Myth or legend and history are juxtaposed as, respectively, poles of fable and truth, irrationality and rationality in both *Lear* (after Shakespeare's play) and *Bingo* (on Shakespeare). In *The Woman* (1978), the myth of the Trojan War is used to exemplify the distortions of Western culture and the danger of mythicising the past.[2]

By the mid-Eighties and especially in the Nineties, an increasing interest in myth/s emerged. Whenever playwrights turn to myth, the ideological approach, form, tone and the discourse are remarkably different. Howard Barker (*The Bite of the Night*), Timberlake Wertenbaker (*The Love of the Nightingale*), Caryl Churchill (*A Mouthful of Birds*), Sarah Kane (*Phaedra's Love*), and a number of Irish playwrights form a sum total of attitudes at the fin de siècle. Post-Brechtian and post-absurdist in their approach, they more or less view myth/s within a political, albeit not necessarily politically engaged, context. Employing myths almost invariably involves genre and sexual politics, politics of specific topical interest (Irish), and discourses on myth and history. In Barker's *The Bite of the Night*[3] (Trojan War, Homeric epics) the interaction of history and myth occurs through fragmentation, interaction of narrative and dialogue, and startlingly powerful images.

Wertenbaker's *The Love of the Nightingale*[4] involves three different myths: Procne and Philomela, Phaedra, and the Bacchae. The play is a meditation on gender differences, sexuality, lust, and violence. Wertenbaker challenges Euripides' idea of female sexuality as destructive and morally dangerous and identifies the socially destabilising forces as the consequences of male violence and abusive male sexuality. She uses two modes of intertextuality: the play within the play device, where reference to *Hippolytus* are direct; at the same time, more subtle methods of references to Euripides' tragedies are initiated, most notably a displacement of shameful lust and abuse from the female to the male characters. Even more significant, are Wertenbaker's meditations on the nature of myth itself. Especially, in Scene 8 (*LN19*), the male chorus contemplates on the meaning of myth and its relevance today: 'What is a myth? The oblique image of an unwanted truth, reverberating through time.' Another member of the chorus replies: 'And yet, the first, the Greek meaning of myth, is simply what is delivered by word of mouth, a myth is speech, public speech' while another reminds us that 'myth also means the matter itself, the content of the speech.' And another asks: 'Has the content become increasingly unacceptable and therefore the speech more indirect?' Through a series

217

of questions Wertenbaker speaks of 'the noise of myth' as she puts it, which, when hystoricised, becomes language and ideological message. Wertenbaker engages in a continuous process of deconstructing and reconstructing the myths cited and leaves everything open: myth is neither denied nor verified. Both her approach to and her handling of myth make *The Love of the Nightingale* an intriguing and fascinating play.

Müller, of course, remains the most challenging and steady point of reference because of his incessant preoccupation with personae from Greek mythology. In Müller, various approaches and methods of handling myth converge; they are filtered and reproduced in new, highly original forms. In this respect, Müller is of particular interest because he takes off from both Brecht and Eliot, aligning the origins of modernism with the post-modern era. Eliot is always mentioned as an influence –by Müller's own admission in his note for *Landscape for Argonauts* – but the crucial nature of this contribution in the domain of structure and the use of mythological material has not been adequately acknowledged.

The evocation of other texts through quotations and allusions in the *Waste Land,* its fragmentary form, the co-existence of the poetic and literate with the hideous and the colloquial, as well as the exchange of myth and fact renders the poem a direct prototype for Müller's 'synthetic fragments.' It is not simply the similarities in atmosphere and rhythm between Eliot's poem, the *Waterfront Wasteland* and *Landscape with Argonauts* or other pieces that are unmistakable. It is the structure and the thematic evolution of the pieces that almost seems to follow those of the *Waste Land,* as if Müller were subjecting himself to a creative experiment in re-writing Eliot's poem or parts of it in his own, utterly personal idiom.

If we recall the function of the various voices/personae in the *Waste Land,* particularly that of Tiresias, who constitutes the symbolic meeting point of the various disjointed, fragmented stories and metamorphoses that occur in the poem, then we realise that the insertion of mythological heroes in Müller's post-1970 pieces accomplishes a similar role. Müller is going back to the early modernist period of Joyce, Eliot and Pound, in fact, to the roots of post-modernism, to conduct a deconstruction of the dialectics of history. Eliot's ideas, according to which fragmented form, lack of a clear-cut plot, and chaotic reality acquire significance through the function of myths as co-ordinate principles controlling and shaping the

panorama of futility that is the modern world, lie behind Müller's fragments, whatever the differences.

Müller, of course, defies any idea of using myths as co-ordinate structural principles; in fact, the admission and not the transgression of the 'panorama of futility' (as was Eliot's aim) seems to be the driving force behind the construction of his provocative pieces. He also differs radically from Eliot in the dynamic involvement of history and his vigorous confrontation of myth and history. Myths, however, are stable points of reference and unifying principles on the conceptual level, subversive paradigms for a number of historical and contemporary issues where the versions of the Müllerian/mythological personae collide with the archetypal versions. In his own terms, Müller exemplifies the intersection of what Eliot called the 'now' and the 'then.' In challenging theatre with literature and by obsessively digging up history through mythological paradigms, Müller seems to re-allocate the Eliotian definition but, most importantly, to have found a significant theatrical medium – his 'synthetic fragments' – to accomplish Eliot's early and frustrated goals.

In Chapters 2 and 3, especially when speaking of Joyce and Eliot, I have repeatedly emphasised the attempts of the inter-war playwrights to adopt modes and techniques of writing that had revolutionised poetry and the novel, namely disruption of the traditional story, discontinuity and fragmentation. What Eliot describes as 'mythical method' necessarily pre-supposes a fragmented form similar to that of the *Waste Land*, where myth/s *can* function as co-ordinate principles and points of reference for the understanding of the text. With this in mind, Eliot proceeded to his first theatrical experiment and wrote the 'fragments' of *Sweeney Agonistes*, an avant-garde piece that remained unfinished. He subsequently abandoned the fragmented form and the jazzy, syncopated rhythms of *Sweeney* and retreated to more conventional forms because he felt that the bold experiment had nowhere to go. The conventional 'closed' forms and linear development of plot he adopted did not need to be co-ordinated and shaped by the existence of a mythological scaffold. The emergence of Müller from the Brechtian model alongside the integration and appropriation of other influences and models renders his oeuvre the melting pot of past and present literary and theatrical practices. It is interesting to note that it took more than fifty years for the theatre to assimilate such experimentations and to be able to reproduce a significant form that could communicate a fusion of primitive myths and contemporary experience.

With the arrival of the new century and the 'brave new world' of globalisation, cumulative events of terrorism, war, atrocities in the Balkans, Middle East and Iraq, environmental destruction and the impact of images of apocalyptic catastrophe, there seems to be a resurgence of interest in reworking myth and performing Greek tragedy – whether a trend or a genuine movement, it is premature to say. Writers and theatre directors or groups turned to myth and classical tragedy in the aftermath of the first Iraq War. Within months London saw Martin Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* fashioned after Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, (*Young Vic*, 2004), Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats* recalling Euripides' *Medea* (*Wyndhams*, 2004) and performances of Euripides' *Bacchae* (Kneehigh, 2004), *Iphigeneia in Aulis* (*Royal National Theatre*, 2004), and *Hecuba* (*Donmar Warehouse*, 2004 and RSC 2005).[5] All offered opportunities for reflection on dramatising structured myth-plots (Crimp, Carr) and reviving tragedy at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Cruel and Tender is a new play by Martin Crimp based on Sophocles' *Trachiniae*. Crimp closely follows the plot of Sophocles and transfers events to present time. Hercules becomes The General (Joe Dixon), a fierce warrior against terrorism, who has overstepped the limits and is now accused of war crimes. He sends his mistress (Kerry Fox) – for whom he has slaughtered the natives of a village – home. Out of jealousy, his wife Amelia (Deianira) sends a phial of weapons-grade toxin that ruins him physically and mentally. The General is the perpetrator and victim of his own villainy. An intelligent transplanting of the other mythological personae to the present concludes the cast of Crimp's version of *Trachiniae*, where a housekeeper, a beautician and a physiotherapist are the equivalents of the chorus. Dialogues and monologues reveal Crimp's great gifts as a playwright.

Directed by Luc Bondie, both performance and play received mixed reviews. Victoria Segal observed that:

> the time will soon come when the desperate need to make everything resonate with the war on terror will become insufferable... "Sophocles claimed he depicted men as they ought to be, Euripides as they are" wrote Aristotle, but despite its pedigree, *Cruel and Tender* largely depicts men as no man has ever really been. It speaks volumes that the

220

original play's central device of a shirt soaked in centaur's blood seems more realistic than its painfully topical modern counterpart – a phial of weapons-grade toxin. For, despite some vivid writing and the ingenious modern twists, Crimp cannot disguise the uneasy grafting of new material onto an ancient plot.[6]

Nicholas de Jongh noted that 'Crimp's *Cruel and Tender* is a faithful though less subtle rendering of Sophocles' original with Amelia (Deianira) a simplified, vengeful figure.'[7] Charles Spencer found it 'a shattering drama...a work that is up-to date, and as harrowing, as today's newspaper headlines' and praised 'the "witty" equivalents of a Greek chorus.'[8]

In *By the Bog of Cats*, Marina Carr transferred the *Medea* to Irish rural surroundings perhaps as a locale bearing strong echoes of legend and passion that could suit the myth. With minimal changes, she straightforwardly dramatised the story. Despite some excellent scenes (the wedding party), the text is often pretentious and overwritten. The performance, directed by Dominic Cook, was a faithful staging of the text with designer Hildegard Bechtler and light designer Jean Kalman creating some striking images. Carr seems to struggle between her wish to create a poetic tragedy about Irish experience and Euripides' structured plot. She probably wanted to create a self-contained story focusing on trans-historical continuities between Greek and modern cultural ethics. She did not seem though to have a concept of what could constitute a strong base for such continuities to be revealed; neither is her text underlined by a conceptual or ideological objective. As Michael Billington wrote 'I felt that Hester (Medea) could have made different choices. The result is a case-history rather than a poetic tragedy'[9] while Quentin Letts thought that 'the finale's cruelty was not justified. There had been too little build-up. There is a difference between tragedy and horror, and this distressing play falls on the wrong side.'[10] Of course, there's the question on what to 'build-up.' Carr's Medea is an exotic creature, a 'jezebel witch' as Billington put it, in contrast to her conventional, economically and socially superior rival. Carr's rationale is rather simplistic. As, in fact, many reviewers seem to suggest, she fails to answer the crucial question: *why* has she chosen to adapt the Medea plot? What is her objective in re-working the myth? To write a new *Medea* in order to emphasise aspects already prominent in the original and which could have been equally revealed through translation and directorial

approach is a self-defeating enterprise. Carr seems to overlook the dangers that loom behind such projects, amply manifested in recent theatre history and handled more successfully by others. To adapt or re-write a myth or a classical play involves much more than a mere transplantation of the plot to a new scenic context. This was highlighted by the fact that both Crimp and Carr's plays almost coincided with the performance of Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Aulis* (470 BC) at the National Theatre.

Director Katie Mitchell achieved a remarkably effective, informed, and well-sustained version of the Euripidean play, which was transferred to the Thirties/Forties, within the dilapidated headquarters of the Greek army. Don Taylor's translation, colloquial but not intimately everyday, made a strong point by modernising yet remaining quite faithful to the original. It was supplemented by 'additional words and scenes improvised by the company' as noted in the program of the performance. Through translating-adapting-directing, Mitchell wove a resonant discourse on war, fate, deceit, vanity, and political manoeuvering – the overlapping of the public and the personal – that is, human lives caught in the net of political absurdity.

Mitchell retained the chorus as a pivotal co-ordinate of her performance although she reduced almost all of its speeches. Omitting the chorus is a preferable choice for many contemporary directors or adapters; dealing with its absence (or presence) is the crucial issue. This became quite evident in Jonathan Kent's *Hecuba*, reviewed favourably by the London press. There was no chorus but rather a woman elevated on a small scaffold attached to the backdrop, writing names of dead soldiers on the wall and singing every now and then. Apart from the power of her initial image, it was a device hardly incorporated into the overall synthesis. Once the dialectics of protagonist-chorus were abolished, the performance brought Hecuba's pain and revengeful anger into absolute focus. Unavoidably, the performance limited itself on the level of unfolding the story through the endless reciting and lamentation of the eponymous heroine (Claire Higgins) and her exchanges with the other characters; it became a sort of prolonged, at times monotonous, even, melodramatic monologue-lamentation bereft of the pauses, the 'breaths' and the dialectical quality the choral parts of the original provide.

Mitchell tried to cope with the issue. To the music and sound of a loudspeaker, the seven chorus women – dressed in black cocktail frocks - moved in patterned, fox-trot dance steps and developed a non-verbal discourse by smoothing

back their hair, dropping their handbags, powdering their faces, squawking out the names of famous Greek heroes, producing autograph books; mostly by conveying uneasiness, fear and anxiety as harsh light suddenly flashes on them. Loudspeaker music or abrupt sounds triggered or froze their movements, at times acquiring the significance of a threat or impending catastrophe. It was an effective and highly sardonic representation of unsuspecting bourgeois women in search of their idols abruptly caught up in an unexpected tragedy.

Rachel Halliburton of the *Spectator* noted that Mitchell's production 'engages mesmerizingly with a text that – despite its overt topicality – is also highly difficult. A plot that focuses on the whims of the gods and ends with a girl miraculously transforming into a deer is not the most accessible for a contemporary audience, and grippingly makes this drama as direct as a howl from the heart.'[11] Benedict Nightingale of the *Times* remarked that 'everything in these drab, thinly lit headquarters is natural, normal. Everything is deeply unnatural, horribly abnormal.'[12] Indeed, the combination of intimacy and distancing accounted for emotional effectiveness, an ironic feel, satiric touches, and a constant shifting of focus on different personae and thematic issues. Whatever objections one might have about the handling of the chorus (more spoken text might have been welcomed) or the treatment of the various personae, Mitchell's performance managed to create a subtle interpretation of Euripides' themes and made a serious attempt to solve the problem of handling the chorus.

The performance of *Iphigeneia at Aulis* compellingly calls into question whether a return to a straightforward dramatisation or adaptation of classical myth-plots (Crimp and Carr) is necessary today, since an informed staging of the original can achieve better results; or whether the rearrangement of incidents, the process of adding, omitting, and transplanting to the present is not a worn-out method already exhausted since the mid-Forties by the French and others and should be better undertaken by a director. Unless a textual or formal concept can justify the use of myth/s or classical texts as is the case with Müller, Barker or Wertenbaker, it seems that an informed directorial reading is capable of producing more accomplished results; it can selectively choose material and retain conventions without diminishing or debasing the complexity and multi-faceted whole of the original.

Brecht paved the way for directors to adapt and confront classical plays through the awareness of their formal, ideological and cultural differences. His approach to adapting the classics (or ideologically revising them) might be outdated but the method is valid. Brecht is instructive because he brutally demonstrates the innate difficulties of reconstructing or transvaluating an original work of enduring influence. Joyce in *Ulysses* and Eliot in *The Waste Land* and *Sweeney Agonistes* illustrate the problem of employing myths from the opposite perspective. Their aim was to avoid confrontation with myth; they declined direct dramatisation; they created artefacts that resonate discontinuities and continuities of a mythical and cultural past. Myths function as deep structures; they are material for transmutation and scaffolds to arrange and master the heterogeneity of the material included in their narratives thus rendering myth an important constituent in the overall synthesis of an artefact. Müller, mingling the Brechtian and the Eliotian model, offers new formal and conceptual approaches to myth, in fact, a new model of mythological paradigms. Joyce, Eliot, Anouilh, Brecht and Müller's approach assists in re-inventing myths in terms of relevancy to the present and structural and allusive significance. It is profoundly significant that all these authors display a highly self-conscious, coherent methodological or dramaturgical approach to myth. Hence my notion of the method or model is crucial because it springs from the actual conceptual, ideological, and formal problems involved in the re-working of myth-material as explored in this thesis. It is the awareness of such issues that has informed and engaged playwrights in the creative use of myth/s.

Notes

1. INTRODUCTION

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3. Richard Ellman, *James Joyce* 1959, (Oxford: Oxford University Press Paperback with corrections, New and Revised Edition, 1983) p. 490.

4. Thomas Mann and Karl Kerényi, *Gespräch in Briefen*, Zürich, 1960, p. 42, quoted in John White's *Mythology in the Modern Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) p. 6 ff.

5. Richard Chase, *Quest for Myth* (Baton Rouge, LA; Louisiana State University Press, 1949) Introduction, p. v.; Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, 'The Name of Modernism', *Modernism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1976, rpt. Penguin Books, 1983) pp. 72-93; Walton Litz, 'Pound and Eliot on *Ulysses*: The Critical Tradition', *James Joyce Quarterly* 10.1 (Fall 1972) p. 11.

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12. Müller, *La science de langage*, quoted in Detienne, op. cit. p. 10.

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2. JOYCE, ELIOT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 'MYTHICAL METHOD'

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3. A. Walton Litz, 'Pound and Eliot on *Ulysses*: The Critical Tradition', *James Joyce Quarterly* 10.1 (Fall 1972) pp. 5-6. On the relationships of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot with Joyce and *Ulysses*, see also Richard Ellmann ed. *The Letters of James Joyce*, Vol. III (London: Faber and Faber, 1996); Also see Robert Adams Day's study of the relationship between Joyce and Eliot in 'Joyce's Waste Land and Eliot's Unknown God', *Literary Monographs*, Vol. 4, ed. Eric Rothstein (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971) pp. 139-210.

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5. Litz, 'Pound and Eliot', p. 16.

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8. Pound, 'James Joyce et Pécuchet' [*Mercure de France*, Paris CLVI, 575, 1st June 1922, pp.307-320]; reprinted in French in Pound's *Polite Essays* (Northfolf Conn: New Directions, 1940) and in *Shenandoah* trans. into English by F. Bornhauser Vol. III, No. 3 (Autumn 1952), pp. 9-20.

9. Litz, 'Pound and Eliot', p. 9.

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11. J. Joyce on *Ulysses* in an interview with Jacques Benôist-Méchin quoted in Ellman, *James Joyce*, p. 521.

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15. W. Y. Tindall, *James Joyce, His Way of Interpreting the Modern World* (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1950) pp. 28, 35.

16. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, p. 153.

17. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 177.

18. Ezra Pound in 'Ulysses' *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 407

19. Joyce to Frank Budgen, in Ellman, *James Joyce*, p. 435.

20. Joyce to Frank Budgen, in Ellman, *James Joyce*, pp. 361 and 359.

21. Michael Hollington, 'Svevo, Joyce and the Modernist Time', *Modernism*, Brandbury and McFarlane, p. 440; Rudolf Von Abele, '*Ulysses*: The Myth of Myths', *PMLA*, LXIX (1954) p. 358.

22. Von Abele, p. 364.

23. See Patrick Parrinder, *James Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) pp. 115-126; Litz, *The Art of James Joyce*; S. L. Goldberg, *The Classical Temper: A Study of James Joyce's Ulysses* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961) pp. 146-152, 198-204.

24. Litz, 'Pound and Eliot', p. 17.

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26. See David Wykes, 'The *Odyssey* in *Ulysses*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 10 (1968) p. 306.

27. Hugh Kenner, *Ulysses* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1980) p. 24.

28. Hugh Kenner, *Dublin's Joyce* (New York: Columbia University Press-Morningside edition, 1987) p. 180. See Chapter 14 on 'The Plan of *Ulysses*'.

29. Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses: A Study*, 1930 (London: Penguin, 1963).

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33. Ellmann, *James Joyce*, 521fn.

34. Hugh Kenner. *Ulysses*, pp.22-23.

35. Charles Lamb, *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1908). Joyce in a letter to his aunt Josephine (10 November 1922) quoted in Litz, *The Art of James Joyce*, p. 1 where Joyce recommends Lamb's book as a guide to the novel. On Lamb's influence, also see Wykes, pp. 301-316 and Kenner *Ulysses*, pp. 23-24.

36. Joyce, in a letter to Harriet Weaver, dd. Feb. 6, 1923, (Letters I, 200), refers to Larbaud's article published in *The Nouvelle Revue Française*, April 1922 and translated in *The Criterion* (October 1923) pp. 94-103.

37. Letter to Weaver on Pound (Letters I, 128) and on Eliot respectively (Letters III, 83), Ellman, *James Joyce*, pp. 527-28.

38. Joyce to Budgen in Ellman, *James Joyce*, p. 359.

39. Harry Levin, *James Joyce: A Critical Introduction* (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1960) p. 53.

40. S. L. Goldberg, p. 201.

41. David Wykes, p. 9.

42. Litz, *The Art of James Joyce,* p. 21.

43. Barbara Hardy, 'Joyce and Homer: Seeing Double', *The Artist and the Labyrinth*, ed. Augustine Martin (London: Ryan Publishing Co., 1990) p. 176.

44. White, *Mythology* p. 115.

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46. White, 'Myths', p. 44.

47. White, 'Myths', pp. 45-48.

48. Wayne Booth, *The Rhetorics of Fiction* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1063), p. 197. White, 45.

49. White, 'Myths', p. 46.

50. White, *Mythology*, p. 10.

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53. J. L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice*, Vol. I, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981, 1983) p. 39.

54. Maxwell Anderson, 'The Wingless Victory', *Eleven Verse Plays 1929-1939* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1965); H. R. Lenormand, *Asie, Théâtre Complet*, IX (Paris: Albin Michel, 1938).

3. T. S. ELIOT'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE 'MYTHICAL METHOD'

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2. Eliot, 'London Letter', *The Dial*, 71, (Oct 1921) p. 453.

3. Eliot, 'London Letter' p. 453.

4. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, p. 38.

5. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, pp. 38-9.

6. Eliot, *Selected Prose*, p. 40.

7. Eliot, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*, The Page-Barbour lectures at the University of Virginia 1933 (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1934) p. 49.

8. Eliot, 'Hamlet and his Problems', *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen & Co., 1980) p. 100.

9. Denis Donoghue, 'Pound's Joyce, Eliot's Joyce', *James Joyce: The Artist and the Labyrinth*, ed. Augustine Martin (London: Ryan Publishing Co., Ltd., 1990) pp. 299-301.

10. Parrinder, pp. 120-1.

11. Eliot, 'The Waste Land', p. 72.

12. A. D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) pp. 80-81.

13. Howard Barker, *The Bite of the Night* (London: John Calder Ltd., 1988); Heiner Müller, 'Waterfront Wasteland', 'Medea Material', 'Landscape with Argonauts', *Heiner Müller Theatremachine*, trans. and ed. Marc von Henning (London: Faber and Faber, 1995) pp. 45-59.

14. T. S. Eliot, 'Sweeney Agonistes' *Collected Poems*, pp. 112-126.

15. Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Literature of 1870-1930* (New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1931) pp. 112-13.

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17. Carol H. Smith, *T. S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice, From Sweeney Agonistes to The Elder Statesman* (New York: Gordian Press, 1963, rpt., 1977) p. 4.

18. Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Year* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); *Eliot's New Life* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988).

19. Eliot, 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', *The Sacred Wood*, pp. 60-70; 'The Beating of a Drum', *The Nation and the Athenaeum* XXXIV (6 October, 1923) pp. 11-12.

20. Katharine Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre', *Eliot in Perspective: A Symposium*, ed. Graham Martin (London: Macmillan and Co., 1970) p. 154.

21. Worth, p. 152.

22. Cited in J. Isaacs, *An Assessment of Twentieth-Century Literature* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1951) p. 146.

23. Eliot, 'Dramatis Personae', *Criterion* I. iii (1923) p. 305.

24. Frazer *The Golden Bough*; Jessie Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920).

25. Gilbert Murray, 'Excursus on the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy', published as a special chapter in *Themis: A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion* by Jane Ellen Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912) pp. 341-63. Murray claims that these 'fixed forms' are: 1) The Agon or Contest described as the struggle of opposite forces. 2) A Pathos – a ritual or sacrificial death during which a god is slaughtered. 3) A Messenger who announces the slaughter, since in Greek tragedy it is never or rarely enacted in front of the audience but rather announced through the dead body of the god, which is carried onto the stage. 4) A Threnos or Lamentation that follows the slaughter. 5) An Anagnorisis – the recognition of the slain or mutilated and his subsequent 6) Apotheosis or Epiphany in glory.

26. Francis M. Cornford, *The Origins of Attic Comedy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914) p. 103-4.

27. Eliot, 'The Beating of the Drum', p. 11-12.

28. Eliot, 'Poetry and Drama', *Selected Prose*, pp. 132-149.

29. Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot* (London: Abacus by Sphere Books Ltd., 1985) p. 145.

30. 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', *Selected Prose*, p. 70.

31. 'The Possibility of a Poetic Drama', *Selected Prose*, p. 68.

32. Ackroyd, p. 145.

33. Carol Smith, p.57.

34. T. S. Eliot, *The Family Reunion*, 1939, (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1963).

35. Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1977) pp. 197, 202; Andrew Kennedy, *Six Dramatists in Search of a Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) pp. 100-1.

36. Muriel Bradbrook, 'Eliot as Dramatist', *T. S. Eliot: Plays*, Casebook Series, ed. Arnold P. Hinchliffe (London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1985) p. 33. Referred to as 'Casebook'.

37. Carol Smith, pp. 70-1.

38. Cited in Smith, p. 72fn

39. Cornford, pp. 105-31. Smith, p. 72.

40. Carol Smith, p. 72.

41. T. S. Eliot, *Shakespearian Criticism: I From Dryden to Coleridge, A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. by Harley Granville-Barker and G. B. Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934) pp. 287-99.

42. Ackroyd, p. 146.

43. Arnold Bennett, *The Journals of Arnold Bennett* III 1923-28, ed. Newman Flower (London, Cassell and Co., 1933) p. 52.

44. Hallie Flannagan, *Dynamo* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943) p. 82 quoted in Carol Smith, p. 62n.

45. Carol Smith, 49n.

46. *Sweeney* influenced writers such as E. E. Cummings, Auden, Isherwood, and especially John Arden. See Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre' p. 155.

47. Helen Gardner, *The Art of T. S. Eliot* (London: Cresset Press, 1949) p. 132.

48. Bradbrook, p. 31. Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre', p.146.

49. Robin Grove 'Pereira and After: The Cures of Eliot's Theater', *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) p. 172.

50. Ackroyd, p. 146.

51. Isaacs, p. 147.

52. This production has been recorded in 'Homage to T. S. Eliot' (E.M.I. Records, producer Vera Lindsax). Reviews on *Sweeney's* performance at the *Globe* in *The Guardian* and *The Times*, 14, June 1965.

53. Kenner, *The Invisible Poet*, p. 186.

54. Ackroyd, p. 147.

55. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years*, p. 120.

56. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928), in a fn to the essay on 'Baudelaire' p. ix and pp. 33-66, 97-99, 126-40. See also Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1939), where Eliot exposes his ideas of how society can be organised on purely religious and doctrinal principles.

57. Eliot, interview with Donald Hall, published as 'The Art of Poetry' in *Paris Review* XXI (Spring-Summer 1959) p.61.

58. Eliot, *The Cocktail Party* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965); Eliot, *The Confidential Clerk* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979; Eliot, *The Elder Statesman* (London: Faber and Faber, 1979).

59. Dickinson, pp. 207-8.

60. Carol Smith, pp. 39-45.

61. Belli, viii.

62. Dickinson, pp. 208, 215. Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theatre, A Study of Ten Plays*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949) p. 198.

63. Ernest Griffin, 'Sweeney, Beckett and the "Marina Figure", Eliot's Modern Plays' *Modern Drama* XXXVI. (4 Dec. 1993); Laura Severin, 'Cutting Philomela's Tongue: *The Cocktail Party's* Cure for a Disorderly World', *Modern Drama* XXXVI.3 (Sept. 1993); Grove, pp. 158-176.

64. Virginia Phelan, *Two Ways of Life and Death: Alcestis and The Cocktail Party* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).

65. T. S. Eliot, 'The Rock: A Pageant Play' and 'Murder in the Cathedral', *Complete Poems and Plays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969).

66. Eliot, *Selected Prose,* p. 138-9.

67. Eliot, *Selected Prose,* p.141.

68. Eliot, *Selected Prose,* p. 141

69. E. Martin Browne, *The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969) p. 146.

70. W. B. Yeats, *Collected Plays,* (London: Macmillan & Co Limited 1934, by Papermac 1982) pp. 681-9.

71. Vladimir Propp, *La Morphologie du Conte* (Paris: Edition du Seuil. 1965 and 1970) pp. 35-80 in particular.

72. D. E. Jones, *The Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960) p. 90.

73. Muriel Bradbrook and John Peter [*Scrutiny*, XVI, 3 (1949)] in 'Casebook' pp. 36 and 131-2 respectively.

74. D. E. Jones, p. 118. Eliot knew O'Neill's plays fairly well and had reviewed *All God's Chillun Got Wings* in the *Criterion*, April 1926.

75. Browne, p. 148.

76. Browne, p. 151. Also pp. 148-150 present a more detailed account of various reviews on the first performance of *The Family Reunion*.

77. See Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre', p. 158.

78. Browne, p. 136; also in Michael Redgrave, *Actor* (London: Heinemann, 1956) p. 49, 50.

79. Kennedy, p. 97.

80. Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre', p. 159. Worth refers to Elliott's production, which was given on the floor of the rehearsal room at the Central School of Speech and Drama, Swiss Cottage in 1966.

81. Ronald Peacock, *The Poet in the Theatre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1946) p. 13.

82. Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre' p. 160 and *Revolutions in Modern English Drama* (London: G. Bell & Sons,Ltd., 1972) p. 57; also Bradbrook, pp. 37, 39.

83. Eliot, 'The Art of Poetry' p. 61.

84. Carol H. Smith, pp. 116-7

85. Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre', p. 165.

86. Bradbrook, pp. 37, 39. Worth, *Revolutions*, pp. 57-59, and 'Eliot and the Living Theatre', pp. 149, 152, 160nn.

87. Euripides, 'Alcestis', *Alcestis/Hippolytus/Iphigeneia in Tauris* (1953), trans. Philip Vellacott (London: Penguin Books Ltd., rev. 1974) pp.43-80.

88. Eliot, 'The Art of Poetry' p. 61. Eliot's wife, Vivienne, died hospitalised in 1947, just a year before Eliot started working on *The Cocktail Party*.

89. *Alcestis* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936); Stanley Rice, 'Alcestis and Savitri in *Alcestis*', *The Criterion* (July 1923) pp. 385-401. F. McEacran, 'A Pattern for Reality', *The Criterion* (January 1938) pp. 218-34.

90. See Phelan pp. 24-31, where she refers in detail to Eliot's sources and influences.

91. Carol H. Smith, p. 157-8.

92. A detailed account of the similarities/differences between Euripides' treatment of myth and Eliot's in Phelan, p. 9-10. See D. E. Jones, on the role of Reilly as psychiatrist in the play, pp. 144-5.

93. About the Guardians as a possible chorus, see Phelan, p. 20. D. E. Jones sees Reilly, Julia and Alex as 'a mysterious organization, who move almost in the atmosphere of a secret society, and they indulge in ritual somewhat resembling as esoteric cult.' p. 152 and pp. 150, 153. According to Grover Smith the Guardians are perhaps the Christian counterparts of the rulers of Plato's ideal Republic', Grover Smith, Jr. *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974) p. 149n.

94. Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes: la literature au second degré.* (Paris: Editions du Seil, 1982.) *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. by Jane E. Levin (Berkley, Oxford: University of California Press, Ltd., 1992). According to Genette the text 'in the second degree' is the text that derives from 'a pre-existing text.' The older work ('the one underneath') is called the 'hypotext' while the new text that derives from the older ('the one on top of the other') is called 'hypertext.' The relation of the new to the older text is 'transtextuality.'

95. Dickinson, p. 208.

96. Dickinson, p. 215; Worth, 'Eliot and the Living Theatre', p. 164; Gabriel Pearson, 'Eliot: An American Use of Symbolism', *Eliot in Perspective: A Symposium*, ed. Graham Martin (London: Macmillan and Co., 1970) pp. 96, 100.

97. 'The Art of Poetry', p. 62.

98. Pearson, p. 97.

99. Ackroyd, p. 146

100. Giorgio Melchiori, *The Tightrope Walkers* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 136.

101. D. E. Jones, p. 88.

102. 'I could not have written the third part, *Landscape with Argonauts*, without T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land", and also not without Ezra Pound' in Müller, *Theatremachine*, p. 46.

4. O'NEILL AND THE MYTHICAL METHOD

1. Eugene O'Neill, *Mourning Becomes Electra,* 1931, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973). Page references are in parentheses in the text.

2. Eugene O'Neill, *The Iceman Cometh,* 1939, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947, rpt., 1980). Page references are in parentheses in the text.

3. Norman Berlin, 'Introduction', *Eugene O'Neill: Three Plays,* Casebook Series, ed. Norman Berlin (London: Macmillan, Education Ltd., 1989) p. 11. Referred to as 'Casebook'.

4. John Mason Brown, review of opening performance of 26 October 1931, in *New York Post* (27 Oct. 1931) in Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 41; W. E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Drama,* Vol. I (London: Cambridge University Press, 1982) p.86; Norman Berlin, *Eugene O'Neill,* Macmillan Modern Dramatists, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982) p. 117. O'Neill himself, in a letter to Joseph Wood Krutch on 27 July 1929, admitted: 'Oh, for a language to write drama in! For a speech that is dramatic and isn't just conversation! I'm so straight-jacketed by writing in terms of talk! I'm so fed up with the dodge-question of dialect! But where to find that language?' Quoted in Arthur Gelb & Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962) p.698.

5. Steiner, *The Death,* p.327.

6. Reviews for the recent production at the National Theatre in London (Lyttelton Theatre, 27/11/2003-31/1/2004) were revealing. Kate Bassett noted, 'Yet for all its flaws, this piece is still impressively strong' in the Independent on Sunday (30 November 2003, p. 1625); Nicholas de Jongh commented, 'The impact of this wordy, four-and-a-half hour epic...is wild, windy, weird, but compelling too' in the Evening Standard (28 November 2003, p. 1624); John Gross conceded in the Sunday Telegraph that '[i]n the new production at the Lyttelton Theatre...it stands revealed as a masterpiece. A flawed one, let it be said. It often spells out what ought to be left implicit; ...language quite often falls short of the effects he [O'Neill] seeks. But in a world where there are more flaws than masterpieces, we should be ready to make allowances' (30 November 2003), in *Theatre Record* (19 November-2 December 2003): p. 1624.

7. Jean Chothia, *Forging a Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1979); John Chioles, 'Aeschylus and O'Neill: A Phenomenological View',

Comparative Drama, 14.2 (Summer 1980) p.15; Michael Manheim, *Eugene O'Neill's New Language of Kinship* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1982); Norman Berlin, 'O'Neill the "Novelist"', *Modern Drama*, XXXIV. I, (March 1991) pp. 49-55; Bigsby, pp. 36-119.

8. Peter Egri, *The Birth of American Tragedy* (Budapest: Tonkonyukiado, 1988) Section V. See also 'The Electra Complex of Puritan Morality and the Epic Ambition of O'Neillian Tragedy', *Perspectives on O'Neill: New Essays*, ed. Shymal Bagchee, Monograph Series (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1988).

9. Kurt Eisen, "The Writing on the Wall": Novelization and Critique of History in *The Iceman Cometh'*, *Modern Drama* XXXIV. 1 (March 1991) pp. 59-7 and his *The Inner Strength of Opposites: O'Neill's Novelistic Drama and the Melodramatic Imagination* (Athens, GA: Athens University Press, 1994); Ernest G. Griffin, 'O'Neill and the Tragedy of Culture', *Modern Drama* XXXI.I (March 1988) pp 1-15; Stephen A. Black, 'Tragic Anagnorisis in *The Iceman Cometh'*, Bagchee (ed.), pp. 17-32; Joel Pfister, *Staging Depth: Eugene O'Neill and the Politics of Psychological Discourse* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Anne Fleche, *Mimetic Disillusion, Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and U.S. Dramatic Realism* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 1997).

10. Gelb and Gelb, Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Playwright* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Limited, 1968) and *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1973). There is also a more recent biography by Stephen A. Black, *Beyond Mourning and Tragedy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999).

11. Berlin, 'Introduction', p. 16; Black, 'Tragic Anagnorisis' p. 30.

12. Eugene O'Neill, *The Great God Brown*, 1925, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926).

13. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist,* p.167.

14. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist,* p. 171.

15. Eugene O'Neill, 'Memoranda on Masks' *American Spectator* (November 1932), *O'Neill: Four Decades of Criticism*, eds. Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion, William Fischer (New York: New York University Press, 1961) p. 116.

16. Eugene O'Neill, *Desire Under The Elms*, 1925, (London: Nick Hern Books, 1995).

17. Edgar F. Racey, Jr., 'Myth as Tragic Structure in *Desire Under the Elms*' in *O'Neill, A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. John Gassner (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc- A Spectrum Book, 1964) p. 57.

18. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, p. 127.

19. Joseph Wood Krutch, *Nation* CXXII (1926), p. 549 and *Modernity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1953) pp. 158–9.

20. Racey, pp. 57, 61.

21. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, pp. 441-2.

22. Letter to Arthur Holson Quinn in 1925, Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 125.

23. On the influence of Nietzsche on O'Neill see Egil Törnqvist's 'Nietzsche and O'Neill: A Study in Affinities', *Orbis Litterarum*, 23 (1968), p. 99 and 'O'Neill's Philosophical and Literary Paragons', *The Cambridge Companion to Eugene O'Neill*, Michael Manheim (ed.), (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp.18-32. Influences from German Expressionism, especially from Kaiser, are discussed in Mardi Valgenae, 'O'Neill and German Expressionism', *Modern Drama* (Sept. 1967) pp 111-123.

24. Frederik Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, (London: Harmondsworth, 1961) pp 141. Frederik Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Geneology of Morals,* trans. Francis Golffing, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956) pp. 1-15, 51-2.

25. Quoted in Egil Törnqvist's *A Drama of Souls: Studies in O'Neill's Super-Naturalistic Techniques* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968) pp. 13-14.

26. 'Letter to George Jean Nathan,' *O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism*, eds. Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion, William Fischer (New York: New York University Press, 1961) p. 115.

27. *Four Decades of Criticism*, 'Letter to George Jean Nathan', p. 111.

28. C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 44, also on O'Neill's ambivalence and the influence of Schopenhauer and Freud, pp. 42-43.

29. Roger Assilineau, '*Mourning Becomes Electra* as a Tragedy', *Modern Drama* 3 (December 1958) p. 147.

30. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus* trans. Justin O'Brien (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., Modern Classics, 1979). Camus and Existentialism will be examined in relation to the French playwrights in the next chapter.

31. Lionel Abel, *MetaTheatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963) pp. 107-113. Georg Lukàcs in Abel, p. 113. See also, Georg Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1962 rpt., 1969) pp. 101-300.

32. Among them Doris Alexander, 'Psychological Fate in *Mourning Becomes Electra*' *PMLA*, LXVIII, (Dec. 1953); also in *The Tempering of Eugene O'Neil*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962). Francis Fergusson 'A Month in the Theatre' *Bookman* LXXIV (Dec. 1931), p. 445. Doris Falk, *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1958.) John Henry Raleigh, *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965).

33. In 1922, commenting on a critic who wrote that tragedy is alien to the American character, O'Neill said: 'Suppose some day we should suddenly see with the clear eye of the soul the true valuation of all our triumphant brass band materialism; should see the cost – and the result in terms of eternal verities; what a colossal, one hundred percent American tragedy that would be...Tragedy not native to our soil? Why, we are tragedy, the most appalling yet written or unwritten.' Quoted in Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, pp. 441-2.

34. Eugene O'Neill, 'Letter from O'Neill', *New York Times* (II April 1920) sec. 6, p. 2; an interview, Eugene O'Neill, 'On Man and God', *O'Neill: Four Decades of Criticism*, p. 111.

35. Martin Lamm, *Modern Drama* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953) p. 325.

36. Peter Egri, 'The Use of the Short Story in O'Neill's and Checkov's One-Act Plays', *Eugene O'Neill, A World View*, ed. Virginia Floyd (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1979) p. 133.

37. Peter Egri, 'O'Neill's Genres: Early Performance and Late Achievement', *The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter*, 8 (Summer/Fall 1984) p. 9.

38. Peter Egri, 'The Use', p. 35.

39. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, p. 199.

40. Berlin, 'O'Neill the Novelist" p. 55.

41. Virginia Floyd, *Eugene O'Neill at Work, Newly Released Ideas for Plays*, ed. and annotated V. Floyd (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1981) p. 185.

42. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, p. 199.

43. Ruby Cohn, 'Absurdity in English: Joyce and O'Neill', *Comparative Drama* III, (1969) pp. 156-161.

44. Floyd, p. 185.

45. Sheaffer *Son and Artist*, p. 199.

46. Sheaffer *Son and Artist*, pp. 244 and 174.

47. O'Neill's letter to De Casseres quoted in Gelb and Gelb, p. 726.

48. Floyd, pp. 381, 384.

49. Robinson Jeffers, 'The Tower Beyond Tragedy', *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (New York: Random House, 1937) pp. 89-140; Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1941) p. 714; Belli, p. 32; Dickinson, p. 118.

50. Dickinson, p. 118.

51. Floyd, p. 185.

52. Gelb and Gelb, p. 721, Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, p. 372.

53. Letter to Quin II, quoted in Leonard Chabrowe, *Ritual and Pathos: The Theatre of Eugene O'Neill* (Lewisburg, PA; Bucknell University Press; London; Associated University Press, 1976) p. 211.

54. Floyd, pp. 185, 204. In The Notes and Extracts from a Work Diary dd. May 29, 1929, O'Neill also explained the significance of the title: 'Mourning Becomes Electra' – that is, in old sense of word – it befits – it becomes Electra to mourn – it is her fate, – also, in usual sense (made ironical here), mourning (black) is becoming her – it is the only color that becomes her destiny.'

55. Working Notes and Extracts from a Work Diary, Spring 1926, Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, p. 336.

56. 'Working Notes' April 1929 (Cap d'Ail); Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 22.

57. 'Working Notes', 21 September 1930. Also dd. 27 March 1930, quoted in Barrett H. Clark, ed. *European Theories of the Drama*, New York, 1947, pp. 530ff.

58. Dickinson, p. 157.

59. Diary, April 1929 (Cap d'Ail), Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 22.

60. Diary, April 1929 (Cap d'Ail) Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 22.

61. 'Working Notes', 21 September 1930, 'Casebook', p. 28.

62. Frederick Carpenter, *Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1963) p. 66.

63. 'Working Notes', 27 March 1930, Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 26.

64. 'Working Notes', 27 March 1930, Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 23.

65. Chabrowe, pp.154-5. See also pp. 158-61 where the Jungian concept of death and re-birth is extensively discussed.

66. On the significance of the islands as part of the mask in C. W. E. Bigsby, p. 81.

67. 'Working Notes', April 1929, (Cap d'Ail), Berlin, *Casebook*, p. 23.

68. Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy*, (London: Verso Editions, 1966, rev. 1979) p. 118.

69. Dickinson, p. 157.

70. Bigsby, p. 87.

71. 'Dramatic recall has a peculiarly gratifying emotional result; it furnishes on the affective level instances of expectations gratified, and goals achieved, which the denouement as a whole exhibits on the sides of plot and characterisation... Like the device of foreshadowing it is a...device of coherence, serving to tie up neatly ends of motifs that otherwise might seem untidy and frayed; it assists in making the play seem an efficient structural unity.' Fred B. Millet and Gerald E. Bentley, *The Art of Drama* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1935) p. 154.

72. Chioles, p. 161.

73. Dickinson, p. 152.

74. Törnqvist, *Drama of Souls*, p. 62–3.

75. Dickinson, p. 150-1.

76. 'Working Notes', April 1929 Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 22.

77. 'Working Notes', April 1929 Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 22.

78. Egri, 'The Electra Complex' p. 46.

79. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, 1930, (London: Routledge Classics 2001).

80. Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself' in 'Leaves of Grass', 1855, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1982) p. 197.

81. Egri, 'The Electra Complex', p. 46.

82. Egri, 'The Electra Complex', pp. 46-47.

83. Egri, 'The Electra Complex', pp. 48, 51.

84. Egri, 'The Electra Complex', p. 51.

85. 'Working Notes', Berlin, 'Casebook', pp.27–8.

86. Egri, 'The Electra Complex', p. 46.

87. Egri, 'The Electra Complex', p. 49; Chioles, p. 167.

88. In Euripides' *Orestes*, we have the first portrait of a psychologically unstable man in the history of drama. Orestes is prosecuted by the citizens of Argos for the murder of Agamemnon; he is thoroughly dependent upon Electra. The epilogue of the Deus-ex-Machina – recited by Apollo – is extraordinary in its cynicism and cruelty: the Gods engineered the Trojan War so that the surplus of living souls inhabiting the earth could be disposed of!

89. C. J. Herington, *The Author of Prometheus Bound* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1970) p. 87.

90. Chioles, p. 166.

91. Chioles, p. 164.

92. Chioles, p. 167.

93. Chioles, p. 162.

94. 'Working Notes', 21 September 1930, Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 28.

95. 'Working Notes', 21 September 1930, Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 29.

96. Dickinson discusses in detail repetition, reversal, and dramatic recall, pp. 161-166, 179, 180-181.

97. Chabrowe and Chioles emphasise that O'Neill successfully achieves 'unreality' of atmosphere and language p. 161 and p. 174–5 respectively.

98. Quoted in Dickinson, p. 161.

99. 'Working Notes', 21 September 1930, Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 28.

100. Dickinson, p. 147.

101. Chioles, p. 168.

102. 'Working Notes', quoted in Chabrowe, *Ritual and Pathos*, p. 212.

103. Gelb and Gelb, p. 748.

104. Cargill, pp.716-7; Belli, p. 31.

105. Floyd, p. xix.

106. Floyd, pp. xix, xx.

107. Griffin, p. 8.

108. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents,* 1930, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Books–Great Ideas, 2004). See Griffin, pp. 9-10.

109. Griffin, p. 4.

110. Mary McCarthy, 'A Moon for the Misbegotten', *O'Neil and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism*, eds. Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion, William Fischer (New York: New York University Press, 1961) p. 211.

111. Griffin, p. 2.

112. Griffin, pp. 7, 6.

113. The performance of the *Iceman* took place at Circle-in-the-Square, New York, 1956. See also Jose Quintero's 'Postscript to a Journey', *Theatre Arts* 41 (April 1957) pp 27-9, 88. Reprinted in Berlin, 'Casebook', pp. 95-96.

114. Bonamy Dombrée, 'Mr O'Neill's Latest Play', *The Sewanee Review* 56 (1948) p. 124.

115. Letter to Kenneth Macgowan (30 Dec. 1940) in Jackson R. Bryer ed., *The Theatre We Worked For: The Letters of Eugene O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982) pp. 256-7.

116. Chothia, pp. 115-8.

117. Eisen, 'The Writing', p. 60.

118. 'Interview with O'Neill' *New York Times* ('Sunday Drama Section', 6. Oct. 1946) pp. 1, 3 in Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 86.

119. Cyrus Day, 'The Iceman and the Bridegroom: Some Observations on the Death of O'Neill's Salesman', *Modern Drama* Vol. I, (May 1958) p. 5

120. Cyrus Day, p. 6. See also Bigsby, p. 87. Eisen, p. 67.

121. Day, p. 7.

122. Day, p.7.

123. W. David Sievers, *Freud on Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama* (New York: Hermitage House, 1955), quoted in Griffin, 'O'Neill and the Tragedy of Culture,' p. 9.

124. Eisen, 'Writing on the Wall' p. 69.

125. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, p. 577-8.

126. Griffin, p. 11.

127. Eisen, 'The Writing' p. 68.

128. Berlin, *Eugene O'Neill*, p. 134.

129. Sheaffer, *Son and Artist*, pp. 577-8.

130. Eisen, 'The Writing' p. 63.

131. Judith Barlow, *Final Acts, The Creation of Three Late O'Neill's Plays* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1985) p. 9.

132. Manheim, *Eugene O'Neill's New Language,* pp. 152-6; in Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 131; Black, 'Tragic Anagnorisis', 26.

133. Black, 'Tragic Anagnorisis' pp. 19-26.

134. Tragic Anagnorisis' p.30.

135. 'Tragic Anagnorisis' pp. 19, 28, 29.

136. Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 87.

137. Griffin, p. 11.

138. Berlin, 'Casebook', p. 87.

139. Black, 'Tragic Anagnorisis' p. 31

140. Susan L. Cole, *The Absent One: Mourning, Ritual, Tragedy and Performance of Ambivalence* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985) pp.160-65; Barlow, pp. 62.

141. Eisen, 'The Writing' p. 70.

142. Bigsby, p. 41. *The Iceman Cometh* (1999) at the Almeida. Directed by Howard Davies with Kevin Speicey (Hickey) and Tim Piggot-Smith (Larry).

143. Berlin, *Eugene O'Neill*, p. 141; Black 'Tragic Anagnorisis', p. 27.

5. MYTH AS PLOT: FRENCH PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE INTER-WAR YEARS

1. Jean Cocteau, 'The Infernal Machine, A Play in Four Acts', 1950, trans. Carl Wildman, *International Modern Plays* (London: Everyman's Library, Dent, 1975), pp. 159-241; Jean Cocteau, *Orpheus,* trans. John Savacool, *Infernal Machine and Other Plays by Jean Cocteau* (New York: A New Directions Book, 1963, ND paperback 1967), pp. 100-150; Jean Giraudoux, *The Trojan War Will not Take Place* (as *Tiger at the Gates*), trans. Christopher Fry (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955); Jean Giraudoux, *Electra,* trans. Phyllis La Farge with Peter H. Judd, *Jean Giraudoux: Three Plays*, Volume 2 (New York: Hill and Wang-A Mermaid Drama Book, 1964), pp. 157-247; Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, 1951, trans. Lewis Gallantiére (London: Methuen, 1982); Jean Paul Sartre, 'The Flies', 1946, trans. Stuart Gilbert, *Jean Paul Sartre, Three Plays*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., in association with Hamish Hamilton, 1981), pp. 231-316. Page references are in parentheses in the text.

2. Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans* (London: Phoenix, 2000) p. 232.

3.   Jacques Offenbach, *Orpheus aux Enfers*. 21, October, 1858, Théâtre Bouffes Parisiens, Paris. *La Belle Hélène*. December 17, 1864, Théâtre Des Variétès, Paris.

4.   André Gide, *My Theatre: Five Plays and an Essay*, trans. Jackson Mathews (New: Knopf, 1952).

5.   'Thoughts on Greek Mythology,' trans. Jeffrey J. Carr, André Gide, *Pretexts: Reflections on Literature and Morality*, ed. Justin O'Brien (New York: Greenwich Editions-Meridian Books, 1959) pp. 227-33, quoted in Dickinson, *Myth on the Modern Stage*, p. 34-35.

6.   Dickinson, p. 31-71 on Gide's ideas and myth-plays.

7.   Guillaume Apollinaire, 'The Breasts of Tiresias', *Modern French Plays: An Anthology of Plays*, eds. Michael Benedict and George E. Wellwarth (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966).

8.   Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) p. 4.

9.   Antonin Artaud, 'The Theatre and its Double', *The Theatre and its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958) pp. 33-47.

10. Michel Vais, *L' Ecrivain scénique,* Québec, Presses Universitaire, 1978, p. 35, quoted in David Bradby, *Modern French Stage 1940-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) p. 9.

11. Bradby, p. 1.

12. Material taken in this paragraph from Bradby's *Modern French Stage*. He offers an excellent account of pre-war and Occupation years, pp. 1-33.

13. André Gide quoted in Dickinson, p. 60.

14. *Le Petit Journal*, 22 Nov. 1935.

15. Bradby, pp. 9-10.

16. Marc Eli Blanchard, 'The Reverse View: Greece and Greek Myths on Modern French Theatre' *Modern Drama* XXIX.I (March 1986) p.47.

17. Dickinson, pp. 213-218.

18. Claude Levi-Strauss, 'The Structural Study of Myth', p. 85.

19. Bettina Knapp, *French Theatre 1918-1939* (London: Macmillan Modern Dramatists, 1985) pp. 111, 113.

20. Jean Giradoux, *Elpenor*.

21. In Joyce's *Ulysses*, Elpenor is Paddy Dignam. Elpenor also appears in Pound's Cantos 1 and 39 and in George Seferis *Chilchi*.

22. John Fletcher, ed. *Forces in Modern French Drama*, (London: University of London Press, Ltd., 1972) p. 59.

23. Roland Barthes, *On Racine*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983) p. viii.

24. Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, p. 16.

25. Cocteau, quoted in Rene Dumesnil 'Phèdre à l' Opéra' in R. Supp. 3008, Fonds Auguste Rondle, Bibliotheque de l' Arsenal, quoted in Linda Crowson, *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1978) p. 128.

26. Crowson, p. 127.

27. Jean Cocteau, *Round the World Again in Eighty Days*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (London: Routledge, 1937) p. 19.

28. Jean Cocteau, *Call to Order* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1926) pp. 115.

29. Cocteau, *Round the World*, p. 19.

30. Jean-Jacques Khim, *Jean Cocteau,* in Dickinson, pp. 73-75.

31. Dickinson, p. 75.

32. Knapp, p. 116.

33. Jean Cocteau, *Antigone*, in Eric Bentley, ed., *The Play: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1951) p. 495.

34. Cocteau, *Antigone*, in Eric Bentley, pp. 495 and 501.

35. Cocteau, *Orpheus*, p. 101.

36. Claude Mauriac, *Jean Cocteau*, p.127, quoted in Dickinson, p. 84.

37. Cocteau in the Preface to his film *Orphée,* pages are unnumbered. Quoted in Dickinson, p. 87.

38. Dickinson, p. 80.

39. Jean Boorsch, 'The Use of Myths in Cocteau's Theatre', *Yale French Studies* III.1 (Fall 1949) p.80.

40. Crowson, pp. 126-7.

41. Crowson, p. 130.

42. Crowson, 129.

43. Cocteau, *Call to Order*, pp, 165-66.

44. Cocteau remarked that whereas the influence of a writer sometimes induces literary mannerisms, 'the amazing discipline of freedom enforced by Satie or Picasso militated against such effect.' In Dorothy Knowles, *French Drama of the Inter-War Years, 1918-3* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1950), p. 50.

45. Oedipus haunted Cocteau. He freely adapted Sophocles' tragedy in 1925; it was subsequently used as libretto for Stravinsky's opera-oratorio *Oedipus Rex* (1927). He re-worked the text in 1937 and presented it as a 'lyrical tragedy' on the musical score composed by Maurice Thiriet.

46. Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theatre, A Study of Ten Plays*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949) p. 199.

47. Lévi-Strauss, 'A Structural Study", p. 91

48. Knowles, p. 54.

49. Fergusson, p. 201. Also Dickinson, p. 197.

50. Dickinson, p. 111.

51. Fergusson uses the simile of Pirandello's six characters to show the opposite: that Cocteau's characters do enter the domain of myth. p. 198.

52. Dickinson, p. 204.

53. Jacques Guicharnaud and June Guicharnaud, *Modern French Drama, Modern French Theatre from Giraudoux to Genet* (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, rev. 1967) p. 29.

54. Gabriel Jacobs, 'Cassandre à la propagande', *Aspects of Twentieth Century Theatre in French,* ed., Michael Cardy and Derek Connon (Berne: Peter Lang AG, European Academic Publishers, 2000) p. 32.

55. Jacobs, pp. 24-26.

56. Henri J. G. Godin, 'Giraudoux' in Fletcher p. 57.

57. Guicharnaud and Guicharnaud, p. 32 and Dickinson p. 195.

58. Jacobs, p. 32.

59. Godin, p. 59.

60. Robert Cohen, *Giraudoux, Three Faces of Irony* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968) p. 108.

61. Godin, p. 51.

62. Giraudoux, speaking of *Electre* in *Les Nouvelles Littéraires,* (15 May 1937) p. 206.

63. Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht,* p. 253.

64. Jacobs, p. 27.

65. Jean Giraudoux,'L'avenir de France' in *Sans Pouvoirs,* pp. 132-134 quoted in Cohen, p 112.

66. Jacobs, pp. 31-35.

67. Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Jean Giraudoux et la Philosophie d'Aristote', *Nouvelle Revue Française* (March 1940) p. 353-4.

68. Donald Inskip, *Jean Giraudoux: The Making of a Dramatist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958) p.89.

69. Cohen, p. 111.

70. Godin, p. 60.

71. Williams, *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht,* p. 255.

72. Knowles, p. 107, 113-4; Dickinson, p. 204; Belli, p. 116.

73. 'Bellac et la Tragédie' in Jean Giraudoux, *Littérature* (Paris: Grasset, 1941) p. 292.

74. Hans Sorensen, *Le Théâtre de Jean Giraudoux. technique et style,* Acta Jutlantica, (Aarhus, Kobenhavn: Universitetsforlaget I Aarchus, E. Munksgaard, 1950), p. 120.

75. Guicharnaud and Guicharnaud, p. 20.

76. Rupert Crawshay-Williams, *The Comforts of Unreason* (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1947) p.45.

77. Bradby, p. 16-20.

78. Henry de Montherlant, *Théâtre* (Paris: Gallimard--Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1965).

79. Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus,* p.13.

80. Camus, 'Lecture Given in Athens on the Future of Tragedy', pp. 181.

81. Camus, 'Lecture Given in Athens on the Future of Tragedy', p. 182.

82. Germaine Brée and Margaret Guiton, *An Age of Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1957).

83. Guicharmand and Guicharmand, p. 136.

84. Edward Owen Marsh, *Jean Anouilh, Poet of Pierrot and Pantaloon* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., 1953) p.189.

85. McIntyre, p.30.

86. McIntyre, p. 43.

87. Philip Thody, *Anouilh* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968) pp. 35-6.

88. McIntyre, p.45.

89. W. D. Howarth, *Anouilh: Antigone* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983) p. 22.

90. Howarth pp. 24-5.

91. Howarth p. 37.

92. Howarth p. 40.

93. Bradby, p. 35. Howarth in Fletcher, p. 89.

94. Howarth in Fletcher, p. 86.

95. W. M. Landers, *Antigone* (London: Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1954) p. 22. In W. N. Ince, 'Prologue and Chorus in Anouilh's *Antigone*', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* IV (1968) p.278.

96. W. N. Ince, p. 278. Thody, p. 31, 33.

97. Dickinson, p. 249.

98. Murray Sacks, 'Notes on the Theatricality of Anouilh's *Antigone*', *The French Review* XXXVI (1962) pp. 4-5.

99. Grossvogel, *The Self-conscious Stage in Modern French Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958) p. 185.

100. Grossvogel, p. 181; Also Hubert Gignoux, *Jean Anouilh* (Paris: Editions du Temps Présent, 1946) p. 95; Thody, p. 34.

101. Howarth, in Fletcher, p. 90.

102. W. C. Ince, p 282.

103. Thody, p. 31.

104. Sacks, p. 9.

105. McIntyre, pp. 44, 53, 49-50.

106. S. John, 'Obsession and Technique in the Plays of Jean Anouilh', *French Studies* XI.2 (April 1957); Ince, p. 278; McIntyre, p. 54.

107. Guicharnaud and Guicharnaud, p.119-20.

108. Guicharnaud and Guicharnaud, p. 120.

109. Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Forgers of Myths', *Sartre on Theatre,* eds. Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976) pp.33-43. Page references are in parentheses in the text.

110. Sartre, 'The Flies' *Sartre on Theatre* p. 186.

111. Sartre, 'The Flies', p. 186-7.

112. Dorothy McCall, *The Theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969) p. 18.

113. Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd*, 1962, (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., rev. 1980) p. 24.

114. Bertolt Brecht, *Journals 1934-1955*, trans. Hugh Rorrison, ed. John Willet, (London: Methuen, 1993) entry dd. 1 Jan. 1948, p.381.

115. Sartre, *Sartre on Theatre*, pp. 54-58, 77-120.

116. Guicharnaud and Guicharnaud, p. 138.

117. Guicharnaud and Guicharnaud, p. 144-5; Odette de Mourgues, 'Avatars of Jupiter', *Myth and Its Making in the French Theatre*, eds E. Freeman, H. Mason, M. O'Regan, S W. Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 168.

118. Sartre, *Théâtre I*, 1947 Gallimard, Paris, 1974, pp. 33-4.

6. BRECHT'S HISTORICIST APPROACH TO MYTH AND TRAGEDY

1. Bertolt Brecht, *Sophocles' Antigone Adapted for the Stage by Bertolt Brecht*, 1947; Bertolt Brecht, *Antigone Model-Book*, trans. Robert Cannon (Copyright Bureau, 26 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0DG) unpublished; Friedrich Hölderlin, *Antigone*, 1804 *Werke and Briefe* II, ed. F. Beisser and J. Schmidt (Frankfurt am Main: Insel. 1969.); Sophocles, 'Antigone', *Three Theban Plays*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Classics 1984) pp. 59-128. In the recently published eighth volume of *Brecht Collected Plays*, ed. and trans. Tom Kuhn and David Constantine (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd., 2003), the texts of the Model-Book have been published for the first time in English. I am using Cannon's unpublished translation, as I consider it nearer to the original. Page references are in parentheses in the text.

2. Brecht adapted the following: Marlowe's *Edward II* in 1924 (Munich Kammerspiele); Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for the radio in 1927; with the Berliner Ensemble, *Der Hofmeister* after J. M. R. Lenz's *The Tutor* in 1950; Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* (unfinished 1951-3); Molière's *Don Juan* (1952); *Pauken und Tompeten* after Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* (1955).

3. On Brecht in Switzerland, see John Fuegi, *Bertolt Brecht: Chaos, According to Plan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 100-101.

4.   Bertolt Brecht, 'A Short Organum for the Theatre', 1964, *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett (London: Eyre Methuen, 1974) pp. 179-205. Page references are in parentheses in the text.

5.   John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, 1959, (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd.; rpt. Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1981) pp. 183-4.

6.   Pia Kleber and Colin Visser, eds., *Re-interpreting Brecht: His Influence on Contemporary Drama and Film* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 1; Loren Kruger, 'Dis-Play's the Thing: Gender and Public Sphere in Contemporary British Theatre', *Feminist Theatre and Theory*, ed. Helene Keyssar (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1996) pp. 49-77.

7.   Marc Silberman, 'The Politics of Representation: Brecht and the Media', *Theater Journal,* 39 (1987) pp. 448-60 and 'A Postmodernized Brecht?' *Theater Journal,* 45 (1993) pp. 1-19; Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method* (London: Verso 1998).

8.   Elizabeth Wright, *Postmodern Brecht: A Re-Presentation* (London: Routledge, 1989) opened a serious postmodernist discourse on Brecht.

9.   Herbert Blau, 'Among the Deepening Shades: The Beckettian Moment(um) and the Brechtian Arrest', *The Brecht Yearbook* 27 (2002) pp. 95-118; Anthony Tatlow, 'Ghosts in the House of Theory: Brecht and the Unconscious', *The Brecht Yearbook* 24 (1999) pp.1-13.

10.   'The Lehrstücke teaches by being played, not by being seen. In principle, spectators are not needed for the Lehrstücke, although they can of course be utilized. It is basic to the Lehrstücke that the people playing can be socially influenced by the execution of certain attitudes, the adoption of certain postures, the repetition of certain speeches and so forth. In this regard, the imitation of highly viable patterns plays a large role, as does the criticism of those patterns, which will be carried out through well-considered, altered modes of playing.' Bertolt Brecht, 'On the Theory of the Lehrstücke' was written circa 1937 but remained unpublished until 1967 in *Gesammelte Werke 17: Schriften zum Theater 3* quoted in Jonathan Kalb, *The Theater of Heiner Müller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) p. 26. On the Lehrstücke, see also Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 33 and Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht,* pp. 116-7.

11. Reiner Steinweg, *Das Lehrstücke: Brechts Theorie einer Politisch-Asthetischen Eryiehung*, 2nd ed. Stuttgart J. D. Metylersche Verlagsbuchhand, 1976, p. 123, quoted in Kalb, p. 27.

12. Kalb, p. 26-27.

13. 'Notes on the Opera' published after the text of *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Translated as 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre' in Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, pp. 37-42.

14. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p.37. Also see, Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht*, pp. 172-3, 186.

15. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 42.

16. 'Notes on Die Mutter', in Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, pp. 57-62.

17. Brecht introduced the term *Verfremdungseffekt* in 'Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting' (1936), Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, pp. 91-99.

18. Up to this point, I have put the word 'classics' within quotations because Brecht uses it indiscriminately and deliberately so, since its vagueness serves in his massive attack on any older form of drama.

19. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, pp.20, 21-22.

20. Bertolt Brecht, 'Wie soll man heute Klassiker spielen?' (1926) Gesammelte Werke, 15/178 quoted in Arrigo Subiotto's *Bertolt Brecht's Adaptations for the Berliner Ensemble* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1975) p. 3.

21. Cologne Radio Discussion, 15 April 1928, in Brecht, Gesammelte Werke, Frankfurt 1967, 15, p.149, quoted in Margot Heinemann, 'How Brecht Read Shakespeare' in *Political Shakespeare*, eds. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985) p. 205.

22. Bertolt Brecht, *The Messigkauf Dialogues*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen 1965, rpt. 1985) p. 63. A detailed account of Brecht's attitude to Shakespeare in Heinemann, pp.202-230.

23. Quoted in Heinemann, p.204.

24. Bertolt Brecht, 'Das Theater als öffentliche Angelegenheit: Funktionswechsel des Theaters' (1929) quoted in Subiotto, p. 4.

25. Brecht's poem 'To Posterity', trans. and ed. John Willett and R. Manheim, *Poems 1913-1956* (London: Methuen, 1979). For the social and political realities in Germany, see Eve Rosenhaft's 'Brecht's Germany: 1898-1933' in

The Cambridge Companion to Brecht, ed. by Peter Thomson and Glendyr Sacks, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 3-22.

26. *Brecht on Theatre,* p. 145.

27. 'It is no longer adequate just to hold up ancient Greek culture as the ultimate standard; the bourgeois classics were only interested in aesthetics (only took an aesthetic interest even in democracy.) *Antigone* in its entirety belongs with the barbaric horses' skulls. The play is not thoroughly thought through' (Bertolt Brecht, *Journals* [18 January 1948]) p. 386.

28. Sartre, *Sartre on Theatre,* p.56.

29. *Brecht on Theatre,* p.205.

30. 'Masterful Treatment of a Model', in *Brecht on Theatre,* pp. 210 Page references are in parentheses in the text.

31. Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht,* p. 182

32. Martin Esslin, *Bertolt Brecht: A Choice of Evils,* 1959, (London: Eyre Methuen, rev. 1980) pp. 110-11.

33. Ronald Gray, *Brecht the Dramatis,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1976) p. 85.

34. Fuegi, *The Essential Brecht* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1972) pp. 76, 65.

35. Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* (WG) 18, 100, quoted in Keith Dickson, *Towards Utopia* (Oxford: Clarenton Press, 1978) p. 193.

36. Peter Brooker, 'Key Words in Brecht's Theory and Practice of Theatre', in *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht,* p. 185.

37. Subiotto, p.1.

38. Georg Lukàcs in *Deutsche Realisten des 19. Jahrhunderts,* Berne, 1951. *German Realists in the Nineteenth Century,* trans. Jeremy Gaimes and Paul Keast (London: Libris, 1993) in his essay on Eichendorff (1940) pp. 50-68. See Dickson's *Towards Utopia,* p. 193.

39. Subiotto, p. 3.

40. Karl Marx in *The Holy Family:* 'History does nothing, it does not possess immense riches, it does not fight battles. It is man, alive and real, who does all this, possesses things and fights. It is not "history" that uses man as a means to an end, as if it were an individual in its own right. History is nothing but the

activity of man in pursuit of his ends' (Diez, vol. 2, p .98 quoted in Dickson, p. 63.

41. For the Marxist attitude towards classical texts, see Marx/Engels, *On Literature and Art* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976); Dickson, pp. 192-197; Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy*, pp. 3-10, 341, 344; and Georg Lukàcs treatise *German Realists in the Nineteenth Century*.

42. GW, 15, p. 332 quoted in Heinemann, p. 213.

43. *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, p.103, 76.

44. *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, p. 63-4.

45. Personal communication to me by the late theatre director Minos Volanakis, who had met Brecht in Paris in 1954. On the influences of French writers on Brecht in general, see Chetana Nagavajara, *Brecht and France* (Berne: Peter Lang, Inc. European Academic Publishers, 1994.

46. Bernard Knox, Introduction to *Sophocles, Three Theban Plays*, p. 35.

47. Similar techniques have been employed by W. B. Yeats in *King Oedipus* (1928) and *Oedipus at Colonus* (1934). Yeats practically wrote his own version by re-writing on Sophocles' original. He described both plays as 'versions for the Modern Stage.' I should also add Ezra Pound, who in his *Elektra* (in collaboration with Rudd Fleming, 1949) and later in *Trachiniae* (1954) makes an excellent use of this translating-adapting process. Jean-Paul Sartre as well in *The Trojan Women* (1964) underlines the political aspects of Euripides' tragedy with references to the Algerian War and Wole Soyinka in *The Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) transfers the action and the rationale within a Nigerian context (Yeats, pp. 475-575; Ezra Pound and Rudd Fleming, Sophocles' *Elektra* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989] and Sophocles' Trachiniae: *A Version by Ezra Pound* (London: N. Spearman, 1956); Brecht, *The Messingkauf Dialogues;* Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Trojan Women', *Jean Paul Sartre: Three Plays* (London: Penguin Books in association with Hamish Hamilton, 1969) pp. 283-347; Wole Soyinka, *Collected Plays*, I (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

48. George Steiner, *Antigone,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986) p. 86; Tom Kuhn and David Constantine (eds. and trans.), *Brecht Collected Plays*, Vol. 8 (London: Methuen, 2003) p. 220.

49. Steiner, *Antigones,* p. 81.

50. Gary Chancellor, 'Hölderlin, Brecht, Anouilh: Three Versions of *Antigone*', *Orbis Litterarum* 34 (1979) p. 90.

51. Steiner, *Antigones,* p. 91.

52. Chancellor, p. 91.

53. Friedrich Hölderlin, *Werke und Briefe,* p. 789, quoted in Chancellor, p. 94.

54. Steiner, *Antigones,* p. 30. See also pp. 25-36.

55. Steiner in his *Antigones*, pp. 173-4 shows how Brecht translates a single word of ambiguous meaning in Sophocles' tragedy and furnishes it with a new ambiguity of negative connotation thus changing the meaning of the whole phrase. Fuegi gives similar examples in *The Essential Brecht* (pp.71-74).

56. 'Foreword to *Antigone*', Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 213

57. For the programme of the Chur production, Brecht wrote a poem – an homage – to the heroes of the German Resistance against the Nazis: 'Friend, come out of the dark / and join us awhile, / with the easy step / of the firmly committed – the terror / of the terrifiers. / You turn away I know / because you feared death / but you feared unworthy life / far more. / And you stopped the powerful / succeeding / and refused to compromise / with those who made a chaos, you / would not forget their insults / and no grass grows / over their crimes. / Salut!' Cannon, p. 67.

58. Gray, *Brecht*, p. 95.

59. Fuegi, *The Essential Brecht,* p. 74.

60. Dickson, pp. 198, 203

61. Fuegi, *The Essential Brecht,* p. 70.

62. 'Foreword to *Antigone*', Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 210

63. 'Foreword to *Antigone*', Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 210. Also in Brecht, *Journals*, p. 386.

64. 'Foreword to *Antigone*', Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 211.

65. 'While planning the set, Gas and I hit upon an ideological point of the first importance. Should we stand the idol pillars with their horse skulls at the back between the actors' seats, thereby making it part of the play's barbaric world which the actors leave in order to perform this (un-idolatrous) version? We decided to do the play between the four pillars, because we are still in an idolatrous state of class war!' (*MB61-2*). For a detailed account of the Chur

performance, see Fuegi, *The Essential Brecht*, p. 75, and *Bertolt Brecht, Chaos according to Plan*, pp. 101-2.

66. Brecht, *Brecht, Collected Plays, Eight*, p. xii.

67. Bertolt Brecht, 'Materialen-Sezuan' p. 16, quoted in Fuegi, *The Essential Brecht*, p. 6.

68. Brecht, *Brecht, Collected Plays, Eight*, p. xx.

69. Brecht, *Brecht, Collected Plays, Eight*, p. xxi.

70. Brecht, *Brecht, Collected Plays, Eight*, p. 220.

71. From *Arbeitsjournal* entry 12 Dec. 1952, Suhrkamp ed., p. 1002, quoted in Dickson, p. 222.

72. Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 276.

73. Subiotto, p. 7.

74. Charles Marowitz, 'Littlewood Pays the Dividend', *The Encore Reader: A Chronicle of the new Drama*, eds., Charles Marowitz, Tom Milne, Owen Hale with a foreword by Richard Findlater (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1965) pp.230-234.

75. Charles Marowitz, *The Act of Being* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1978). Here Marowitz gives a fascinating account of the Theatre of Cruelty Season, replete with the exercises and improvisations he conducted with the participants.

76. Peter Brook spoke of a 'co-existence' of the Brechtian and the Artaudian. In Denis Babler, 'Rencontre avec Peter Brook', *Travail Théâtral* 10 (1973) p. 9.

77. Judith Malina (trans.), *Antigone, In a Version by Bertolt Brecht* (New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1984).

78. Lyon Phelps, 'Brecht's *Antigone* at the Living Theatre', *The Tulane Drama Review* 12.1 (Fall 1967) pp. 126, 128, 129, 130.

79. The account of Stein's *Oresteia* is based on my own recollections from the performance that took place within the Petroupolis Mine at the outskirts of Athens (Athens, Cultural Capital of Europe, 1985) and from various briefings in the Greek press at the time.

80. Kalb, p. 24.

81. Kalb, p. 24.

82. Brecht, *Brecht, Collected Plays, Eight*, p. xiii.

83. Heiner Müller's texts in English translation are as follows: *The Battle: Plays, Prose, Poems*, ed. nd trans. Carl Weber (New York: PAJ Publishers, 1989;

Cement', trans. Helen Fehervary, Sue-Ellen Case and Marc Silberman, *New German Critique* 16 (Winter 1979) pp. 7-64; *Hamletmachine and other Texts for the Stage*, ed. and trans. Carl Weber (New York: PAJ Publishers, 1984); *Explosion of a Memory: Writings by Heiner Müller*, ed. and trans. Carl Weber, (New York: PAJ Publishers, 1989; *The Horatian*, trans. Marc Silberman, Helen Fehervary and Guntram Weber, *The Minnesota Review* (Spring, 1976) pp. 40-50; 'Philoctetes', trans. Oscar Mandel in collaboration with Maria Kelsen Feder, in *Philoctetes and the Fall of Troy* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1981) pp. 215-50; *Theatremachine*, trans. and ed. Marc von Henning (London: Faber and Faber, 1995; 'The Slaughter', trans. Marc Silberman, Helen Fehervary and Guntram Weber, *Theater* (Spring, 1986) pp. 23-29; *A Heiner Müller Reader*, ed. and trans. by Carl Weber, foreword by Tony Kushner (New York: PAJ Books, 2001).

84. Kalb, p. 24.

85. Max Harris, 'Müller's *Cement:* Fragments of Heroic Myth', *Modern Drama*, 3, (September 1988) pp. 429-438.

86. Müller, *Theatremachine*, p. 46.

87. Müller, *Theatremachine*, p. 132.

88. Müller, *Theatremachine*, p. xi.

89. Müller, *Theatremachine*, xii.

7. CONCLUSION

1. Edward Bond, 'In Defense of Shakespeare' (London: R.S.C. Ware House Publication, 1979).

2. Edward Bond, *The Woman, Scenes of War and Freedom* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979.)

3. Howard Barker, *The Bite of the Night, An Education* (London: John Calder [Publishers] Limited, 1988.)

4. Timberlake Wertenbaker, *The Love of the Nightingale and The Grace of Mary Traverse.* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989), pp. 1-49.

5. Martin Crimp, *Cruel and Tender*, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 2004). Carr, Marina. *By the Bog of Cats.* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004.)

6. Victoria Segal, 'Sunday Times' 16.5.04. *Theatre Record* (6-19 May 2004): p. 632

7. Nicolas de Jongh, 'Evening Standard' 14.5.04. *Theatre Record* (6-19 May 2004): p. 632.

8. Charles Spencer, 'Daily Telegraph' 15.5.04. *Theatre Record* (6-19 May 2004): p. 633.

9. Michael Billington, 'The Guardian' 2.12.04. *Theatre Record* (18 November-1 December 2004): p. 1625.

10. Quentin Letts, 'Daily Mail' 24.11.04. *Theatre Record* (18 November-1 December 2004): 1625.

11. Rachel Halliburton, 'The Spectator' 10.7.04. *Theatre Record* (17-30 June 2004): p. 827.

12. Benedict Nightingale, 'The Times', 24.6.04. *Theatre Record* (17-30 June 2004): p. 822.

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