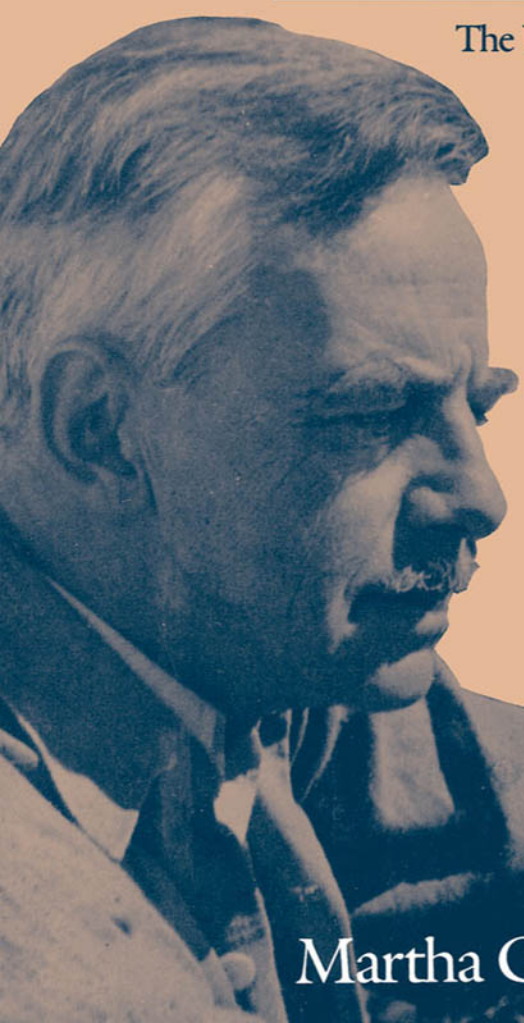
Eugene O'Neill

More Stately Mansions

The Unexpurgated Edition



Edited by
Martha Gilman Bower

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Martha Gilman Bower

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For Paul

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EDITORIAL NOTE

This complete edition of *More Stately Mansions* is based on the typed version of Eugene O'Neill's third longhand draft, finished, according to his *Work Diary,* on January 20, 1939. The latest date typed on the manuscript, however, is December 30, 1938, and there are several earlier dates typed on the script. It appears that Carlotta, his wife, typed material and revisions as O'Neill completed them and dated only certain sections, namely, the ones finished before January 1939. I have included these dates in the text. The typescript is also laced with O'Neill's handwritten revisions in blue ink and deletions made with a blue crayon. Some of these alterations were made after January 1939, at least as late as the fall of 1942. O'Neill made it very clear, as he edited his script, what he wanted added or omitted, and thus it was O'Neill's hand that directed me as I prepared this edition of the play. There were, however, editorial judgments that had to be made en route. I corrected all spelling and punctuation errors and obvious typographical slips. I retained O'Neill's idiosyncratic use of adverbs in stage directions and his unusual use of capital letters, hyphens, and commas except when they were inconsistent and/or blatantly incorrect. When other such inconsistencies occurred, I entered the "correct" choice. For instance, "summerhouse" is spelled both with and without a hyphen and even as two words, so I chose the one-word spelling, which is the correct one for the gazebo-like house in Deborah Hartford's garden. In at least one instance I emended O'Neill's use of archaic spellings ("courtesy" for "curtsy") and retained others (as "wile" and "smoulder"). In a few places I have bracketed words that I had to supply when they were missing from a sentence—words Carlotta failed to type in as she transcribed O'Neill's tiny handwriting. When there was no clue as to the word(s) left out, I suggested probable substitutes and referred to the text in question in a note. In some instances I used "[*sic*]" where O'Neill's syntax seemed unclear,

and in one place in act 4, scene 2 I inserted a bracketed space for words left out because the confusion of the syntax did not allow for an editorial suggestion.

There is one page missing from the typescript, which was missing when Carlotta gave it to Yale University. The page is from act 1, scene 1, and contains dialogue that breaks the continuity in the conversation between Nora and Sara. Rather than inventing dialogue to close this gap, I have inserted a note that provides the probable content of the missing lines.

I have kept my annotations of the text to a minimum, for I did not want to disturb the dramatic flow of the dialogue and thereby lessen the reader's enjoyment or understanding of the play. The notes I have included provide an index of historical and cultural references to the period—especially those pertinent to the action of the play—as they occur in the dialogue. Other notes point out similarities in dialogue or circumstance that occur between *More Stately Mansions* and O'Neill's late plays, while still others refer the reader to sources of quotations and factual data referred to in my introduction. I have also provided the meanings of Irish words used by the characters. Employing the aforementioned editorial apparatus, I strove to make this edition as faithful a reproduction of the original typescript as possible. All the transcriptions of O'Neill's handwritten insertions are a reflection of my own best reading of the playwright's words.

Contoocook, N.H. M.G.B.
January 1988

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the long process of preparing this edition of *More Stately Mansions,* there were many who assisted me along the way. I would like to extend my gratitude to the staff of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, especially Rick Hart, and to Patricia Willis and Donald Gallup, the present and past curators, respectively, of the Collection of American Literature. I am deeply grateful to David Schoonover, who was curator of the Collection of American Literature when I was engaged in research on the cycle plays and *More Stately Mansions.* He was extremely cooperative and helpful throughout and assisted me in the logistics of obtaining permission to prepare this edition. I would like to extend my gratitude to the Yale Committee on Literary Property, Office of the General Counsel, and William Stempel, Associate General Counsel, for their part in obtaining permission to publish the original typescript of the play; and to Henry Krawitz, my editor at Oxford Universi y Press. Finally, I am indebted to David Watters for his continued support of me and my work, to Philip Nicoloff for his editorial expertise, and to Robert Hapgood, who has been an ongoing source of encouragement and sound advice during the course of my research on the cycle plays and the preparation of this edition.

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Introduction

Although Eugene O'Neill's *More Stately Mansions* takes place between 1832 and 1842, there is little doubt that the characters and the action speak to contemporary audiences. It is a play that recalls our industrial past and catches up with our present by depicting America's unique and contradictory personality—a duality that merges innocence with evil, opportunity with greed. Central to the lasting value of *More Stately Mansions* is the American history O'Neill envisioned as drama: real people, living in small towns, neurotic, ambitious, jealous, grasping, accumulating possessions, and playing by the rules of survival. With this play O'Neill pointed the way to a contemporary materialism that both defines our strengths and exposes our weaknesses as a nation. Although composed by O'Neill in the late 1930s, the play strikes at the heart of the competitive and psychological pressures of the 1980s. O'Neill's plot is classic and powerful in its depiction of a bizarre love triangle consisting of mother, son, and wife. He was far ahead of his time in creating two female characters whose heroic stature remains unique in the history of American theater.

Sara Melody Harford is feminine but self-sufficient, strong, aggressive, and ambitious. In his initial description O'Neill gives her "a curious blending . . . of aristocratic and peasant characteristics" and she becomes at once emblematic of a major theme in the play and the embodiment of America's pioneer past and technological present, a woman who has "brains for more than just sleepin' with the man I love an' havin' his children an' keepin' his house." She represents those traits in the Harfords that O'Neill outlined in an interview with journalist Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant: "The family are people with guts. When they feel negative, they burn the building. They are the kind of people who go after success and succeed and fail but never stay fallen."[1] The

1. Donald Gallup showed me his copy of the interview and told me it probably took place in August 1945.

most contemporary of O'Neill's women, Sara is an androgynous character who typifies the best and the worst in Americans, men and women who will "never stay fallen" and will continue to build ever more stately mansions.

In his characterization of Deborah Harford, O'Neill had the courage to explore the forbidden regions of an implicit—if not explicit—incestuous mother/son bond, one that reduces Simon Harford to a fawning suppliant who, in the play's final scene, admits to his mother: "I am your Simon and my one longing is to forget she [Sara] is alive." And in the same scene Deborah passionately declares to her son: "Our love can make a heaven, even in hell if we are together—if we are one again!" At the core of the psychological intricacies of this mother/son entanglement are hints of O'Neill's unresolved feelings toward his own mother, Ella O'Neill. Deborah, another O'Neill New Woman, goes beyond *Strange Interlude*'s Nina Leeds in her ability to control and seduce, and she matches Sara's canny materialism with her eloquence and intellect, her astute commentaries on the meaning of life, love, and death.

This complete edition of *More Stately Mansions,* prepared from the original typescript, follows two other versions of the play. The first was the "performing" script shortened by Karl Ragnar Geirow from the same typescript. Directed by Geirow, the play was performed in Stockholm at the Swedish Royal Dramatic Theater in 1962. The other version was edited by Donald Gallup, former curator of the American collection at the Beinecke Library at Yale University. Gallup's "reading" version, published by Yale University Press in 1964, was prepared in accordance with Geirow's abbreviated acting version.[2] According to Gallup's prefatory note to the earlier edition, the script "represents less than half of O'Neill's complete typed script." Both Geirow's and Gal-

2. The Geirow version was based on the only extant script of the play, typed by Carlotta from O'Neill's handwritten third longhand draft and revisions of that draft, and completed on January 20, 1939. Jose Quintero directed *More Stately Mansions* (hereafter referred to in the notes as *MSM*) in Los Angeles. The play opened on September 12, 1967, and again in New York on November 11. Quintero retained the first scene of act 1 and the epilogue but shortened the original version to three hours' playing time. Ingrid Bergman and Colleen Dewhurst played the roles of Deborah and Sara, respectively. This version of the play is available on a recording of the New York production (New York: Caedmon Records TRS 331).

lup's shortened editions of the play were welcomed at a time when Carlotta O'Neill was protective of her late husband's unpublished manuscripts and allowed only trusted friends to work with the material. But now, thirty-five years after O'Neill's death and almost a quarter of a century after the 1964 edition, Yale has wisely deemed it appropriate to make the play available in its complete form.

Included in this unabridged version of *More Stately Mansions* are act 1, scene 1, the beginning of act 3, scene 2, and the epilogue. These sections of the play provide not only continuity but also elements that are essential to the development of character, theme, and plot. In addition to the large sections just mentioned, there are hundreds of words, lines, and phrases from other scenes—now included in this edition—that retain O'Neill's poetic diction and his intended dramatic impact, pointing up the nuances of character and scene.

For example, without act 1, scene 1, transitional material that links *A Touch of the Poet* with *More Stately Mansions* and motivates the three main characters in the remainder of the play is lost. As in *A Touch of the Poet,* Maloy and Cregan open the play and once again are the expositional characters who close the four-year gap between the two plays. Cornelius Melody lies dead in an upstairs room as barkeep and barfly rehearse his exploits and his career as an officer in Wellington's army—some of the same history that they relate in *A Touch of the Poet.* It is important to O'Neill that this be repeated, not only because it joins the later play with the previous one but also because it enables audiences to read and view the two plays separately. O'Neill was aware that he might not live to finish the entire cycle.

No less important are Sara's scenes with Cregan and Nora. In her scene with Cregan she reviews Con's nonfunctional retreat from life, and the debts he has amassed. In her scene with Nora we learn that Sara and Simon are going to buy out their partner's share of the mill business and that they are happy, if not rich—a fact that intensifies the effects of the destruction that ensues after they move in with Deborah. Sara also articulates her disappointment in her father, her bitterness over his treatment of her mother, and Con's loss of pride in himself and the vestiges of his patrician past. More important, Sara, although pregnant and the mother of three other children, reaffirms her deter-

mination to "rise to the top." Another key element that only becomes evident in the complete version is the renewal of the mother/daughter bond that was apparent at the end of *A Touch of the Poet,* a bond that is placed in sharp contrast to Sara and Deborah's intense rivalry.

In this first scene there is also the reiteration of the theme of acquisition expressed by Deborah in act 2 of *A Touch of the Poet,* when she refers to Sara's kinship to the three Harford sisters: "They would approve of you, I think. They would see that you were strong and ambitious and determined to take what you want." Sara confirms Deborah's observations in the earlier play when she tells Nora that Simon must not sell the land the cabin is on, "for this is America not poverty-stricken Ireland where you're a slave! Here you're free to take what you want, if you have the power in yourself." It is an essential theme, a form of the O'Neillean choric device, that is used to illuminate Sara's ruthless ambitious side—a metaphor for American greed.

In an effort to emphasize the importance of the tension that underlies much of the action, O'Neill highlights the contradictions in Sara's personality that inform her scenes with Cregan and Nora. In an argument with Cregan over her reluctance to pay her father's debts Sara "lapses unconsciously into peasant brogue." Later she reprimands Nora for allowing the women to "keen"[3] at the wake: "It's old ignorant superstition. It belongs back in Ireland, not here!" This speech, like the one cited earlier, is significant in that it shows Sara's determination to free herself from her innate Irishness and to merge with mainstream American culture and society. She is perhaps the only O'Neill character to break through the isolation barrier and diligently compete for the American Dream.[4]

One of the most compelling arguments for the retention of scene 1 again relates to O'Neill's penchant for opposites and contrasts. Act 1, scene 1, provides the only Irish setting and introduces the pervasive

3. The word "keen" comes from the Gaelic *caoinim.* It is an Irish lament for the dead, a dirge with a wailing sound produced by bagpipes.

4. John Raleigh discusses the alienation of the Tyrones and the Irish in general—their inability to meld with mainstream American society—in his essay "O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and New England Irish-Catholicism," in *O'Neill: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. John Gassner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 124–41.

theme of aristocrat versus peasant. It is the last time we see the Melodys interacting on their own turf and speaking their native brogue. At the end of the scene O'Neill has Cato, Deborah's black servant, enter with a message for Simon that he meet her alone at the cabin. It is a dramatic moment, one that prepares the audience for the conflicts to come, but it also signals the end of Con Melody's generation of Irish immigrants and the beginning of Sara's peasant intrusion upon Harford patrician territory. Although absent from the scene, the Melody Inn is suffused by Deborah Harford's presence; from now on all contests involving her will take place on Harford ground.

Among hundreds of restored phrases that modify character and add to the impact of O'Neill's poetic language is Deborah's speech in act 1, scene 2, in which she tells Simon that she is the victim of time. The entire speech that begins "While you are still beautiful and life woos you" is now included, together with lines that bring out Deborah's satanic side, the "morbid and diseased" influence described by O'Neill in early notes to the play, lines that provide motivation for her subsequent behavior in the garden. "Time," Deborah says, "lashes your face with wrinkles, or stamps your body into shapelessness or smears it with tallow-fat with malicious fingers. . . ." These lines are representative of many more now included in the script that underline Deborah's twisted imagination and obsession with growing old.

At the heart of this first scene between mother and son is their past life together, their intimacy, their fairy-tale world of kings and queens. But also added to this scene are lines that depict Deborah as more than a dreamer and an obsessed mother. She reads and she thinks. She has taught Simon much of what he knows about love, death, history, philosophy, and life. Deborah tells Simon how she lost her faith in the "Sacred Books," and how Brahma became "nothing at all but a foreign name for Death." Choosing words that Mary Tyrone or O'Neill himself might have used, she explains that her digression into oriental thought was like "the flight of one who, bored at home, blames the surroundings, and sails for far lands, only to find a welcoming figure there to greet one—oneself! . . . And straightaway the exotic palms turn into old familiar elms or maples, the houses are the same old houses, the gardens the same gardens. . . ." And in another burst of

poeticism in act 2, scene 1, she explains her existential views to Gadsby by claiming that life is "like an aimless improvisation on a far-off, out of tune piano that tinkles into silence." The omission of these lines and others not only deprives the audience of O'Neill's poetry but erodes the complex structure of character that O'Neill has carefully erected.

In this same scene lines have been restored which show Deborah as being less than patriotic: "I would like to have lived there [in France] when life was free and charming and fastidious, not vulgar and ignoble and greedy as it is in this country today." And, again, in the speech the following significant line has been retained: "I must find someone outside myself in whom I can confide and so escape myself. If I only had a close woman friend. . . ."; this line mimics Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey* and provides another link to O'Neill's past.[5] Also restored are three pages of dialogue that help to explain Deborah's abnormal personality, as well as recollections about her past with her father. Whereas Mary Tyrone loses touch with reality as a result of a morphine addiction, Deborah Harford's madness is innate and complicated. Her long monologues (e.g., the ones in act 2, scene 1) are Shakespearean in their perceptions and demonstrate O'Neill's genius for realizing the delicate balance between madness and brilliance. To omit a word is to upset that balance.

Act 3 of the play has been expanded from nineteen to thirty-two pages. At the beginning of the act, after Joel's exit, Simon has a monologue that is equal in significance and impact to Hickey's long sermons in *The Iceman Cometh,* reflecting a blend of truth and madness. The sixty-one lines deleted from Simon's speech in the Yale edition have been restored. Although laden with typical O'Neill-like repetition, Simon's monologue depicts more graphically and sensationally the full range of his split personality. When he says of Sara that "it has been a long time since I have slept with her—but at home her body has become repugnant, her beauty ugly," and expresses his desire to revenge

5. In *Long Day's Journey* (hereafter referred to in the notes as *LDJ*) Mary says, "If there was only some place I could go to get away for a day, or even an afternoon, some woman friend I could talk to—not about anything serious, simply laugh and gossip and forget for a while—someone besides the servants—that stupid Cathleen!" (Eugene O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey into Night* [New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1956], p. 46).

the wounds inflicted by both wife and mother, his ambivalent sexuality is fused with O'Neill's own. In fact, the whole monologue appears revelatory of much of O'Neill's most painful private experience.

The second scene of act 3, in which the Harford sons now appear with their grandmother, has been enlarged by approximately two thirds. Several lines are now included that are crucial to an accurate description of the garden—lines that exaggerate the monotonous green of the setting. The presence of the Harford sons allows Deborah to expose her grandmotherly side and adds an extra dimension to her character, injecting a note of sympathy. As she reads Byron to the boys, Deborah asserts her intellectual influence and identifies herself as the major opponent to the peasant Melody strain.

The introduction of the Harford sons in act 3 not only provides a transition between *More Stately Mansions* and subsequent cycle plays, in which each son will play a major role, but also supplies clues to their future behavior inherent in their dialogue and character descriptions. Wolfe doesn't "care what I grow up to be," and Honey wants "to be a gentleman and 'lected President of America." The aristocracy/peasant theme appears again in O'Neill's description of the boys: Jonathan bears a "striking" resemblance to his father, but Honey "takes after his mother's side of the family." The inclusion of their games and optimism temporarily softens the geometric, sterile, monochromatic garden setting. O'Neill interjects a bit of comic relief as the boys color the atmosphere with their laughter and light banter prior to the next scene, in which Deborah, Simon, and Sara engage in a grim confrontation.

In act 4, scene 1, this edition restores many lines that portray Sara as an object of sexual desire. Sara's portrait now includes a description in which she wears clothes that are "designed with the purpose of accentuating her large breasts, her slender waist, her heavy rounded thighs and buttocks, and revealing them as nakedly as the fashion will permit."

Again in act 4, scene 1, there are lines of dialogue which give definition to Sara's role as Simon's "mistress," such as her monologue to the mirror following Joel's exit. The complete monologue, increased by fifty-one lines, reveals the extent to which Sara believes herself a whore and sheds added light on her divided self and the ensuing conflicts

contingent upon this split. Her hatred of Deborah is never more apparent, and the speech exposes her as a woman of reason as well as stealth. Not to include the complete monologue is to lose essential clues to her character and drastically distort the tone of the scene. It is here that Sara shows not only her anger at Simon but her own guilt and self-flagellation. The sexual overtures she directs toward Joel are given more play in this complete version, and when she repeats her yearnings for wealth and power we hear reverberations of a theme that serves as an index to the essential message of the play and the cycle as a whole: the relentless pursuit of material gain.

O'Neill revised the play so that the conflict between Sara and Deborah would be more powerful, thus placing the women in the roles of mighty opposites in the drama. Simon's role, although central, becomes more passive, more malleable. The restoration of several speeches in the electric scene in act 4, scene 2, shows how far each woman is willing to go in the battle over Simon. One crucial speech reveals Deborah's extreme "unscrupulousness," her sick mind at work. She tells Sara that Simon has hinted that "I might find some subtle way . . . to poison you!" Then she explodes in a mad frenzy: "I could watch you lashed to death, with the blood running down your gross white back, and never raise a finger to save you!" Without lines such as these both Deborah's viciousness and aspects of O'Neill's "theatricality," however extravagant, are diminished.

In revisions recorded in January 1939, O'Neill contemplated merging acts 1 and 2, but he was by no means certain about such drastic changes. On the first leaf of these revisions O'Neill engaged in the following dialogue with himself: "Combine 4 scenes of present Acts I and II into one act. Time of this Act would be year of present Act II—but would be some months after Harford's death—." Further along in the revision notes he contemplates a different scenario: "Second scene—The Inn—as I–1 now, except Simon's financial & mental condition are those of II–2—his hidden conflict increased by memories dreams give him—. Or at opening condense so Simon and Sara already there, Joel and Abig. home—. Or omit Inn scene entirely—." Since there is strong evidence that O'Neill added to the typescript at least as late as 1942, and that in the passage just quoted he still refers to Deborah as Abi-

gail,[6] it would seem that his indecision ultimately translated into a decision *not* to combine acts 1 and 2.

What remains certain is that O'Neill had no plans to omit the epilogue. The Yale edition ends the play with act 4, scene 2, with Deborah's rejection of Simon and her retreat into the summerhouse. Sara has vowed to divest herself of the Harford Company and all its profits and return to the mothering posture of act 1, scene 1. This ending leaves Sara exclusively in the role of feminine protector and Simon in a state of breakdown, a mental invalid and lost cause. However, O'Neill did not intend his audience to leave the theater with this final impression. He felt the need to add a scene that would take Simon and Sara beyond the limits of their assigned roles at the end of act 4.

The epilogue is carefully designed to recapitulate for the audience the events of the past year. This time Jonathan and Honey, the Harford sons, replace Cregan and Maloy as the harbingers of exposition. Sara, Simon, and their sons have been dispossessed of the previous generation's materialistic trappings and, more important, are ready to begin life anew without the curse of the Harford money. We learn that Simon has been institutionalized for the past year and, now on the road to recovery, is freed from his mother's possessive clutches. These are events that are crucial to our ultimate assessment of the characters.

O'Neill has emphasized the roundness of Sara's character when he depicts her as both nurturer and worker. She typifies the American pioneer woman who—like the protagonist Alexandra in Willa Cather's *Oh Pioneers!*—returns to the land with the strength, initiative, and flexibility commonly ascribed to male American heroes. Simon has recovered, but Sara assures him he "needn't ever lift a hand," and he is free to live in his dreamworld and "write the books you planned here in the old days." This return to the farm allows Sara and Simon to shed the false personae of acts 1 through 4. Sara moves closer to her

6. The decision to change Abigail's name to Deborah came late in the creative process—the fall of 1942, when O'Neill was working on *A Touch of the Poet* (hereafter referred to in the notes as *TP*). O'Neill crossed out the name Abigail and wrote the name Deborah on the typescript of *MSM* in several places. The revision notes just quoted and all notes relevant to *MSM* are catalogued under Za O'Neill 108 in the Yale Beinecke Library. These notes and all handwritten material found in this edition were transcribed by me and quoted exactly as O'Neill wrote them.

peasant roots, her true self, and Simon discards the mask of big business and becomes once again a dreamer with "a touch of the poet." Now the tension that informed the aristocracy/peasant opposition is dispelled. Sara, the strong farmer/nurturer, and Simon, the frail gentleman/poet, merge in harmony, not in the home sphere of the Harford mansion but on Sara Melody's farm. Thus O'Neill ends the play with the gender role reversal that informs all of the cycle plays.

In a final scene that foreshadows the pietà in *A Moon for the Misbegotten,* Simon, like Jamie Tyrone, is enticed by Sara to "sleep on my breast." But O'Neill laces her maternal curtain speech with a "brooding" possessiveness. Sara cannot resist indulging in her recurring vision of the American Dream: "Ethan will have a fleet of ships! And Wolfe will have his banks. And Johnny his railroads! And Honey will be in the White House before he stops, maybe. And each of them will have wealth and power and a grand estate—." These are lines that we have heard before in acts 2 and 3, but O'Neill's obsession for refrain and a need to connect subsequent cycle plays with this one cause him to repeat them again. He has Sara say one more time: "Leave it to them to take what they want from life; once they're men!" O'Neill creates an element of unity through the repetition of the familiar "take what you want" motif, a phrase he places strategically throughout the play, one that brings the end of the action back to the beginning. Indeed, notes to succeeding plays confirm that Sara and her sons would have continued their pursuit of money and power, and that each son would, in his own play, assert himself in his chosen field of shipping, banking, politics, or railroads.

O'Neill grounded much of the fictional material in *More Stately Mansions* and the cycle plays in historical fact. Finally titled "A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed," the cycle was to trace the saga of the Harford-Melody family's pursuit of wealth and power from their arrival in the New World in 1755 to the year 1932.[7] O'Neill read widely in American, European, and Irish history before attempting the long

7. O'Neill planned to include eleven plays in the cycle. *TP* and *MSM* were the only cycle plays completed by O'Neill. *The Calms of Capricorn* was "developed" by Donald Gallup from O'Neill's 1935 scenario (New Haven, Conn.: Ticknor & Fields, 1982).

cycle, and when designing the sets he made sure they were exact reproductions of their respective periods. There is evidence based on notes he made before composing early versions of *A Touch of the Poet* and *More Stately Mansions* that O'Neill was inspired to create Sara's father, Con Melody, through his readings in Irish history and his fascination with the nationalist war heroes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[8]

Intrigued by Con and his family, O'Neill decided to write a separate play about them and then merge the Melodys and the Harfords. The merger of immigrant and patrician—Sara and Simon—in *More Stately Mansions* allowed O'Neill to return to his own, as well as America's, beginnings. The strong peasant roots of the Melodys integrated with the gentility and education of the Harfords reflected similar family mergers in American history. O'Neill concentrated the action in *More Stately Mansions* between 1832 and 1842—a period in American history rarely depicted in drama. According to notes to the play, the Simon Harfords live in a Massachusetts mill town modeled after Fall River. Before designing the Harford mansion, situated in a seaport town similar to Newburyport, Massachusetts, O'Neill researched the architecture and the social and cultural legends of the period. He was well enough versed in history to have the characters allude to current affairs of the day: President Andrew Jackson, the banking system, the tariff laws, and the cotton mill business. O'Neill's interest in the Transcendentalists and the Romantic period is reflected in the many references in his notes to Emerson, Whitman, and Thoreau. In fact, in notes to the play entitled "Thoreau in Simon," O'Neill recorded excerpts from Thoreau's and Emerson's journals. Simon's cabin, described at the beginning of act I, scene 2, is a replica of Thoreau's hut on Walden Pond.[9]

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8. These and all notes relevant to *TP* are catalogued under Za O'Neill 111 at the Beinecke Library.

9. In notes to the early versions of *MSM* and *TP*, O'Neill made several notations on the Transcendental period and described Thoreau's hut in detail (Za O'Neill 111). See also Van Wyck Brooks' *The Flowering of New England, 1815–1865* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1936), p. 359. O'Neill used this book, among others, as a historical source. See also Virginia Floyd's *O'Neill: A New Assessment* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1986) and Frederick Carpenter's *Eugene O'Neill,* rev. edn. (Boston: Twayne, 1979), p. 139.

In a letter to Leon Mirlos O'Neill expressed his rationale for accumulating so much factual data from each period in American history before composing his cycle plays: "As you can imagine it involves a tremendous amount of reading and note-taking—for even if I find it beside my point to use as much historical fact background, still I wish to live in the time of each play while writing it."[10]

Woven into the historical fabric of *More Stately Mansions* is O'Neill's own experience. Central to the action of the play is the tension between peasant and patrician—the same tension that dogged the O'Neill family in New London, the Tyrones versus the Harkers in *Long Day's Journey,* and the Hogans versus the Harders in *A Moon for the Misbegotten.* In *A Touch of the Poet,* the first play of the cycle to include the Irish Melody family, there are strong resemblances between Con Melody and James O'Neill. The conflicts between Sara and Con are more than reminiscent of the ones O'Neill experienced with his daughter, Oona. *Work Diary* entries recorded at a time when the tension between O'Neill and his daughter was most intense coincide with the dates of revision notes to scenes involving Con and Sara.[11]

But it is in *More Stately Mansions* that connections between the late plays and O'Neill's personal life abound. For instance, Sara Melody bears more than a coincidental likeness to O'Neill's wife, Carlotta. Louis Sheaffer has pointed to the obvious parallels between Sara and Carlotta, noting that both women were what O'Neill described as "a blend of what are commonly called aristocratic and peasant characteristics." According to Sheaffer, Carlotta's father, "the illegitimate son of a Danish nobleman and a servant girl," recollects Con Melody, whose parents were a mix of peasant and aristocrat. And Carlotta, like Sara Melody, "looked patrician from the waist up, but she had strong hands, short sturdy legs, and a peasantlike capacity for hard work."[12] The

10. The Mirlos letter is quoted in Virginia Floyd's *Eugene O'Neill at Work* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1981), p. 217.

11. Eugene O'Neill's *Work Diary* was transcribed and edited by Donald Gallup, prelim. edn. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Library, 1981). It consists of a daily record of composition data and brief entries describing what O'Neill did each day during his productive years. The first volume covers the years 1924–33, while the second spans the years 1934–43 and the 1925 "Scribbling Diary."

12. Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 482.

marriage between Simon and Sara recalls that of the O'Neills when Sara tells Deborah Harford, in *More Stately Mansions,* that Simon "has nothing left but me and my love. I'm mother, wife, and mistress in one." It is commonly known that O'Neill often said that Carlotta simultaneously fulfilled for him these three roles. Simon possesses the requisites of the poetic, frail O'Neill figure who accepts Sara's mothering. As Carlotta was for O'Neill, Sara is the power behind Simon's ego, taking charge of both domestic and business matters.

Not only do Simon and Sara Harford reflect Eugene and Carlotta O'Neill, but Deborah Harford finds her source in O'Neill's mother. Deborah's description is not far from Mary Tyrone's in *Long Day's Journey.* Although slightly different wording is used in the two descriptions, the women are unequivocal lookalikes: youthful, pretty, white-haired, full-lipped, with high foreheads, deep-set eyes, long fingers, nervous gestures, and so on. The mother/son tensions that pervade *More Stately Mansions* are the very ones that plague the Tyrones, and thus O'Neill himself.[13]

With the composition of this sixth cycle play O'Neill sharpened the contours of the ghosts that haunted his last plays: Deborah Harford, Mary Tyrone's double and shadow of Carlotta; Sara Melody Harford, Carlotta's twin; and Simon Harford, O'Neill himself. All confront one another in the garden—a tainted Eden, a metaphor for the O'Neill family life and the promise of America turned sour. But Deborah's garden differs from O'Neill's other locales of escape and torment: the Hogan farm, Harry Hope's bar, the New London summer cottage where the Tyrone men trim hedges and drink and Mary takes drugs in "the spare room." Deborah's garden is a type of the garden at Tao House, where *More Stately Mansions* and O'Neill's late plays were composed and where, according to her diary, Carlotta taught "Gene to

13. Several scholars have drawn comparisons between the Harford women and O'Neill's wife and mother. Travis Bogard, in *Contour in Time* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 387, cites several similarities between Deborah Harford and Mary Tyrone. Louis Sheaffer makes detailed comparisons between Sara and Carlotta and Deborah and Mary as they occur in *MSM* and *LDJ* and sees the author's resentment of his mother depicted "more bluntly, more violently" in the former play (pp. 481ff.). Michael Manheim also draws comparisons between Deborah and Mary in *Eugene O'Neill's New Language of Kinship* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1982).

prune things!" (4-14-39). There is the oriental formality, border hedges, and high wall with gate in both Deborah's and Carlotta's garden. The red-lacquered door that decorates the "Temple of Love" mirrors the Chinese interior doors at Tao House. Like Deborah, who sought to possess Simon's soul and his creative self, Carlotta was able to coax O'Neill away from the sea, to the high hills of Danville, California, behind the locked gate at the foot of the long drive, to ensure that he would not be distracted from writing his last great plays. There she served his genius, as mother, wife, mistress, nurse, and typist. Thus in this play the boundaries that separate mother from wife dissolve. Deborah becomes a projection of both Ella O'Neill and Carlotta Monterey, and Sara resembles Carlotta as well.

The 1939 revision notes to the play, mentioned earlier, demonstrate O'Neill's growing preoccupation with his mother/son demons. *More Stately Mansions,* begun as a simple struggle between spiritualism and materialism, grew to include not only the dimensions of a mother/son/wife rivalry but also a mother/son fixation. By means of his characters O'Neill psychoanalyzed his own neuroses in revision notes to the play, coming to the conclusion that "the underlying plot of this play is the duel to the death between mother and son."[14] In the two published plays about his family, *Long Day's Journey* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten,* O'Neill subverts this "duel" by assuming a passive role in one and absenting himself altogether in the other. Much of this confessional material is buried in the almost impenetrable writing found in the revisions to *More Stately Mansions.* However, in the typescript of the play O'Neill has camouflaged some of his most bitter resentments and secrets in the characters of Sara, Simon, and Deborah Harford.

This is O'Neill's longest play, one that contains expansive interior monologues, protracted set descriptions, and a myriad of interruptions in the form of stage directions. These elements seem to persuade the reader that he or she is experiencing a new genre—a novel-drama, perhaps. Deborah Harford's long soliloquy in act 1, scene 2, and Sara's soliloquy in act 4, scene 1, seem to enter the realm of Molly Bloom in

14. This comment is found in notes to *MSM.* See n. 6.

James Joyce's *Ulysses*. But part of the rationale for the play's overly long speeches, repetitions, and overstatements resides in O'Neill's return to the expressionistic style of his middle years, a compulsion to animate the setting—Simon's office is described as "a painted loud-mouthed bawd"—and to probe relentlessly beneath the surface to expose the multilayered human imagination, a technique that allowed O'Neill to explore his own psyche. However novelistic *More Stately Mansions* may appear in its interior probings and philosophical sermonizing, in the last analysis the play remains a document for the theater, one that can stand alone as an interesting self-sufficient vehicle or as an integral part of a far more complex structure.

I see *More Stately Mansions* not as an "unfinished work"[15] but as a play that O'Neill edited with a sense of artistry and logic. Doubtless O'Neill had more work to do and would have continued to revise the play, as he did all of his works, during its staging and production. But, with the exception of one missing page—absent when Carlotta sent the script to Yale—the play is complete and the action whole. And if it is to be published at all, perhaps O'Neill would rather we read the whole script than a fraction of it.

In this, the O'Neill centennial year and the bicentennial of the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, it seems most appropriate that we rediscover a play that was primarily shaped by events in O'Neill's own life as well as those belonging to history. O'Neill's analysis of the American industrial landscape of the 1830s and its obsessed inhabitants not only serves as a chronicle of that period but also encapsulates the future of America. Although far from being a model of Aristotelian unity, *More Stately Mansions* has passion and perception and contains scenes that excite us to pity and fear. Through O'Neill's tragic vision we are confronted with a very contemporary depiction of women, and of violence in the home as well as in the workplace. It is a vision that bares O'Neill's soul and reveals the truth about ourselves. The revelation is dark, yet it is penetrated by the occasional light of the American pioneer spirit.

15. O'Neill had slipped a piece of paper into the typescript that read "Unfinished Work. This script to be destroyed in case of my death!"

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SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene One Dining room of Melody's Tavern, an Inn in a Massachusetts village near a city—night in October 1832.

Scene Two A cabin on the shore of a small lake near the village—the following afternoon.

ACT TWO

Scene One Deborah's garden, Henry Harford's home in the city—a night in summer 1836.

Scene Two Sitting-room of Sara Harford's home in a neighboring textile mill town—the following night.

ACT THREE

Scene One Simon Harford's office at Simon Harford, Inc. in the city—a morning in Fall of 1840.

Scene Two Deborah's garden, the Harford home in the city—afternoon of the same day.

Scene Three The parlor of the Harford home—night of the same day.

ACT FOUR

Scene One Simon Harford's office again—morning in summer 1841.
Scene Two Deborah's garden—evening of the same night.

EPILOGUE

Same as Act One, Scene Two, the cabin on the lake—afternoon in Spring, 1842.

CHARACTERS

JAMIE CREGAN

MICKEY MALOY

NORA MELODY

SARA [Mrs. Simon Harford], her daughter

SIMON HARFORD, Sara's husband

JOEL HARFORD, his brother

DEBORAH [Mrs. Henry Harford], mother of Simon and Joel

ETHAN
WOLFE
JONATHAN
OWEN [Honey]
} children of Simon and Sara Harford

NICHOLAS GADSBY, an attorney

CATO, the Harford's coachman