

MARIA ASCENSIÓN JIMÉNEZ MARTIN ORMIANIN

THE THEME OF INFANTICIDE IN MODERN AMERICAN DRAMA

Dissertação para obtenção do grau de Mestre, Área de Concentração: Literaturas de Língua Inglesa, do Curso de Pós-Graduação em Letras, Setor de Ciências Humanas, Letras e Artes da Universidade Federal do Paraná.

CURITIBA
1983

To my husband and son.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincere
gratitude to my tutor,
Prof. Dr. SIGRID RENAUX,
for her overall guidance and
for her constant and valuable
assistance in the preparation
of this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	ABSTRACT	v
	RESUMO	viii
1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS	
2.1	<i>Desire Under the Elms</i>	23
2.2	<i>Strange Interlude</i>	41
2.3	<i>Sweet Bird of Youth</i>	51
2.4	<i>The American Dream</i>	63
2.5	<i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>	77
2.6	<i>Buried Child</i>	90
3	CONCLUSION	111
	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES	120

ABSTRACT

This study intends to examine the theme of infanticide in Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and *Strange Interlude*, Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Edward Albee's *The American Dream* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*. Through a textual approach, we shall examine all the plays, trying to give emphasis not only to each author's particular view of the theme of childmurder in different periods of literature, but also the recurrence in using mythological patterns that is apparent in these plays.

In the introduction, after defining infanticide and stating our aim, we start with a review of the theme of infanticide in World Literature and Drama, from the Bible onwards to the twentieth century. We also take a look backwards in History to explain the deep relationship of infanticide with ritual and myth.

Chapter One: *Desire Under the Elms* deals with the first of Eugene O'Neill's plays that depicts the theme of infanticide. We see that the child who has been sacrificed serves as a scapegoat so that the characters involved in the crime can reach spiritual rebirth and thus find love.

Chapter Two: In *Strange Interlude*, abortion, presented as a variant of infanticide, leads the main character,

through the scapegoat figure which the unborn child conveys, to project her aspirations into a better life.

Chapter Three: *Sweet Bird of Youth* places the theme of infanticide in a different perspective for it is the only play in which, through castration, the main characters embody the scapegoat figure, facing failure and regret.

Chapter Four: In *The American Dream*, although showing infanticide through a chaotic and absurd universe, Edward Albee also projects the murdered child as the mythological figure of the scapegoat. This figure will later reappear as a twin brother who then becomes a parody of the American Adam.

Chapter Five: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is also concerned with the same theme and with the same archetypal figure of *The American Dream*, though here the child is metaphorically created and killed. It is only after the destruction of the son that the parents are free from illusion and can face life together.

Chapter Six: In *Buried Child* Sam Shepard moves back to the traditional theme of infanticide, showing that the drowned child functioned as a scapegoat so that the people in the house can free themselves from the sinful atmosphere which enveloped them for so many years.

In the conclusion we show how the different aspects of the plays are brought together through a synchronical and diachronical comparison, and how the plays acquire a richer perspective if analysed not only through a textual approach but also through a mythological pattern. We finish by show-

ing how the different playwrights are actually all striving to bring infanticide to light, not only to express its hideousness, but also as a means of allowing the characters to look for redemption.

RESUMO

Este trabalho pretende examinar o tema do infanticídio em *Desire Under the Elms* e *Strange Interlude* de E. O'Neill, *Sweet Bird of Youth* de T. Williams, *The American Dream* e *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* de E. Albee e *Buried Child* de S. Shepard.

Através de uma abordagem textual, examinaremos todas as peças, tentando enfatizar não somente a visão particular de cada autor com relação ao tema do infanticídio nos diferentes períodos da literatura, mas também a recorrência no uso de modelos mitológicos aparente nas peças.

Na Introdução, depois de definir o infanticídio e estabelecer nosso objetivo, iniciamos com um exame do tema do infanticídio na literatura mundial, desde a Bíblia até o século XX. Também nos voltamos à história para explicar a profunda relação existente do infanticídio com o ritual e o mito.

Capítulo Primeiro: *Desire Under the Elms* é a primeira peça de E. O'Neill que mostra o tema do infanticídio. Vemos que a criança sacrificada serve de bode expiatório, a fim de que as personagens envolvidas no crime alcancem renascimento espiritual e dessa forma possam encontrar o amor.

Capítulo Segundo: Em *Strange Interlude*, o aborto, apresentado como uma variante do infanticídio, conduz a personagem principal, através da figura do bode expiatório que o

ser em formação representa, a projetar suas aspirações numa vida melhor.

Capítulo Terceiro: *Sweet Bird of Youth* coloca o tema do infanticídio numa perspectiva diferente, uma vez que é a única peça em que, por meio da castração, as próprias personagens incorporam a figura do bode expiatório e enfrentam o pesar e o fracasso.

Capítulo Quarto: Em *The American Dream*, apesar de mostrar o infanticídio através de um universo caótico e absurdo, E. Albee também projeta a criança assassinada como a figura mitológica do bode expiatório. Esta criança aparece mais tarde na pessoa de um irmão gêmeo que, por sua vez, representa a paródia do Adão americano.

Capítulo Quinto: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* também diz respeito à mesma temática e ao mesmo arquétipo do *The American Dream*, sendo que aqui a criança é criada e assassinada de modo metafórico. É somente depois da destruição do filho que os pais se sentem livres de toda a ilusão e enfrentam a vida juntos.

Capítulo Sexto: Em *Buried Child*, S. Shepard volta ao tema tradicional do infanticídio, mostrando que a criança afogada funcionou como bode expiatório para que as pessoas da casa se sentissem livres da atmosfera de pecado que as envolvera por tantos anos.

Na Conclusão, demonstramos, através de uma comparação sincrônica e diacrônica, como os diferentes aspectos das peças podem ser aproximados e também como as peças adquirem uma perspectiva mais rica se analisadas não somente sob uma

abordagem textual, mas usando modelos mitológicos. Terminamos mostrando como os diferentes escritores empenham-se em apresentar o infanticídio não somente como expressão do lado hediondo, mas também como meio de as personagens procurarem redenção.

1 INTRODUCTION

Infanticide has been one of the concerns of authors of different periods from the writing of the Bible onwards to twentieth century literature. The importance and recurrence of the theme seems therefore to justify our having selected, from American literature, four modern playwrights in whose works childmurder appears. The hideousness of this crime is what has spurred us to investigate into these plays, to see the vision of each playwright in relation to it. This hideousness makes us think of several different questions: Why has this theme become recurrent? What has taken the authors to exploit it? How does each one express it? Is it a warning to society? How can the power of destroying children be explained? What is the position of the different authors in relation to the theme? Can there still be redemption for the guilty ones? These are the questions that we shall try to answer in our analysis.

In legal terms, infanticide refers to the killing of a child by its own mother during or after the delivery. According to *Black's Law Dictionary* "the fact of the birth distinguishes this act from 'feticide' or 'procuring abortion', which terms denote the destruction of the fetus in the womb". This division of the subject into feticide and

infanticide is made only by jurists while the *Black's Law Dictionary* states that "in medical jurisprudence the word prolicide (a synonym for infanticide) is used to designate the destruction of the human offspring".¹

For the purpose of this thesis, infanticide, or prolicide as medical jurisprudence calls it, will be used to designate any kind of murder against the life of a small infant, even if committed by the father, in order to give cohesion of a recurrent theme in American drama. And when abortion of forced sterility appear, both will be considered as variants to the theme of childmurder.

The aim of this thesis is thus to analyze the theme of infanticide in Eugene O'NEILL's *Desire Under the Elms* and *Strange Interlude*, Tennessee WILLIAMS' *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Edward ALBEE's *The American Dream* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and finally Sam SHEPARD's *Buried Child*. Through a textual approach, we intend to establish the plays' parallelisms regarding each playwright's vision on the theme of infanticide. By textual approach we mean a concentration "on the work itself, on the text, and examine it as an aesthetic creation, that is, as art".² This textual approach will lead us then, to investigate into the mythical patterns which lie behind each author's view of childmurder. For, as we know, myth is "concerned with the motives underlying human behavior".³ But in order to understand this quotation better, it becomes necessary to define myth. According to Mark SCHORER,

Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations, upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend.⁴

Myths are said to be collective and communal, and, even though they take specific shapes in different literatures, they can be considered universal. There are certain images and patterns which recur in literature regardless of time or place and, because of this, these images are called archetypes or archetypal patterns. As a consequence, they are seen as universal symbols in literature. These universal symbols will be of primary importance to interpret the plays, to establish the main affinities within them and also to give cohesion to our work. As we shall see, some of these universal symbols are recurrent in all the plays, such as the sacrificial scapegoat motif or pattern. Actually, it will be shown that this motif is the one most directly related to infanticide in the plays to be examined. It is the touching stone that foregrounds the theme of childmurder and brings it out in all its dramaticity. W. GUERIN explains the function of the scapegoat in a chapter dedicated to Mythological and Archetypal Approaches:

(....) by transferring the corruptions of the tribe to a sacred animal or man, then by killing (and in some instances eating) this scapegoat, the tribe could achieve the cleansing and atonement thought necessary for natural and spiritual rebirth.⁵

Purification rites and customs, based on concepts of purity and pollution, are found in all known cultures and religions,

both ancient and modern, according to Sherry B. ORTNER.

Corroborating W. GUERIN, ORTNER further states that:

Closely connected with the practice of drawing pollution from a defiled person or object is the notion that pollution may be transferred from a person or community to another object that is either immune to pollution itself or that can be discarded or destroyed. The most dramatic rites embodying this principle are scapegoat ceremonies in which pollution is transferred to an animal or person by either touching, bathing with, or simply pronouncing the pollution transferred to the scapegoat. The scapegoat is then run out of town or killed, actually or symbolically. The victim may further be made into an offering or sacrifice to the gods on the general ritual principle of keeping the gods satisfied. In the classic scapegoat ceremony of the Old Testament, as noted in Leviticus, Chapter 16, the animal — called Azazel (a desert demon) — was simply released to wander the wilderness.⁶

The use of scapegoats has thus a long history which leads us back to ancient rites including animals as well as human beings. We could say that the scapegoat motif finds its climax in Christianity, which reflects the notion of an innocent person taking upon himself the penalty of a guilty person, in its belief that Jesus Christ was the God-man who died in atonement for the sins of mankind.

Minor symbols can also be found in some of the plays such as the indigenous myth called the American Dream, (the myth of Edenic Possibilities) or the mythic figure of the American Adam. As they are subordinated to the scapegoat motif, they will be given a definition in each particular play.

A complementary view of myth is still given by LEVI-STRAUSS. He says that "in every myth system we will find a

persistent sequence of binary discriminations as between human/superhuman, mortal/imortal, male/female, (...) followed by a mediation of the paired categories thus distinguished".⁷ J.D. CROSSAN goes even further and develops this idea, by stating that myth has also its opposite in parable. For him,

Parable is a story which is the polar, or binary, opposite of myth. Parable brings out not peace but the sword, and parable casts fire upon the earth which receives it (...). Myth has a double function; the reconciliation of an individual contradiction and more important, the creation of belief in the permanent possibility of reconciliation. Parable has also a double function which opposes that double function of the myth. The surface function of parable is to create contradiction within a given situation of complacent security but, even more unnervingly, to challenge the fundamental principle of reconciliation by making us aware of the fact that we made up the reconciliation. (...) parable is intrinsically negative.⁸

Thus, when dealing with myth in the different plays, we cannot neglect the other side of myth, we have to be aware that, behind myth, we might find its opposite which is parable.

Let us now present a historical background of infanticide in order to show its recurrence not only in Biblical texts, but also in mythology and anthropology, to then concentrate on some plays which deal with childmurder in World Literature.

The theme of infanticide has troubled people since before the coming of Christ as the Bible relates in two different passages in The Old Testament. Firstly in The

First Book of Kings, Chapter 4 § 19, "And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. "The prostitute the Bible refers to has committed an involuntary infanticide, yet the crime exists. Secondly, in The Second Book of Kings, Chapter 6 § 28-29, "And the king said unto her, what aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to day, and we will eat my son to morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and she hath hid her son". Here a quite different situation appears. It is time of starvation and murdering their own children was something people did in order not to die. Thus, this woman sees herself forced to kill her child in order to survive.

In The New Testament too, as Jesus is born, king Herod tries to kill the recently-born Messiah for he sees his kingdom threatened by the birth of the so-called king of the Jews. Matthew, 2 § 13, "And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him". Nevertheless, king Herod decides to kill all the children that were in Bethlehem, so that Jesus would be killed. Mathew 3 § 16, "Then Herod, when he saw he was mocked by the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men". In this way, Herod, because of a desperate wanting for power and as he sees it threatened by the coming of the Messiah, decides to kill all these innocent children so that he would not be dethroned.

Since the most remote periods, then, infanticide, for different reasons which motivated the crime, has existed. As mentioned, even Jesus Christ ran the risk of being killed by Herod as he was born.

As we are concerned with the theme of infanticide in modern American drama, it is noteworthy mentioning that theater has its roots in ritual. For even though no one really knows how the theater began, the theory most widely followed today is that it evolved from ritual:

In the beginning, man viewed the natural forces of the world, even the seasonal changes, as unpredictable, and sought, through various means, to control these unknown and feared powers. Those measures which appeared to bring the desired results were then retained and repeated until they hardened into fixed rituals. Eventually stories arose, which explained or veiled the rites' mysteries. As man progressed in knowledge, some rituals, such as those involving human sacrifice, were abandoned, but the stories, later called myths, persisted and provided material for art and drama.⁹

Within this context of ritual and myth it is possible to assure that drama, as it is known in the Western World, has its roots in Ancient Greece; therefore, ritual and myth can be considered as the originators of drama.¹⁰ It is therefore important to be concerned with rituals which date back to the beginning of human history, more particularly when the civilization of Egypt and the Near East entered an advanced stage, and also with Ancient Greek Mythology.

Egyptian myths were usually related to the recurrent cycle of life and of the seasons which seem to have been used in various rituals, but in terms of theater, the most

important of all rituals is the *Abydos Passion Play*, which is concerned with the death and resurrection of the god Osiris. There are also some other rituals which are concerned with the seasonal pattern of birth, growth, maturity, death, and rebirth.¹¹

The same idea of death and rebirth or resurrection is also found in the rituals of many savage tribes, especially those who are known to practise totetism. In such tribes the boy in the stage of puberty used to go to certain initiatory rites. The commonest was a pretence of killing the boy and bringing him to life again. This rite has to be seen as a means of transferring the youth's soul to his totem.

FRAZER, in his book *The Golden Bough*, gives us some examples which serve to illustrate this idea of resurrection in such tribes.

In the Binbinga tribe, on the Western coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the women and children believe that the noise of the bull-roarer at initiation is made by a spirit named Katajalina, who lives in an ant-hill and comes out and eats up the boy, afterwards restoring him to life. Similarly among their neighbour the Anula the women imagine that the droning sound of a bull-roarer is produced by a spirit called Gnabaia, who swallows the lads at initiation and afterwards disgorges them in the form of initiated men.¹²

Another example is found in an island called Rock which is situated between New Guinea and New Britain. There, people

hold festivals at which one or two disguised men, their heads covered with wooden masks, go dancing through the village, followed by all the other men. They demand that the circumcised boys who have not yet been swallowed by Marsaba

(the devil) shall be given up to them. The boys, trembling and shrieking, are delivered to them, and must creep between the legs of the disguised men. Then the procession moves through the village again, and announces that Marsaba has eaten up the boys, and will not disgorge them till he receives a present of pigs, taro, and so forth. So all the villagers, according to their means, contribute provisions, which are then consumed in the name of Marsaba.¹³

J.C. FRAZER goes on and explains the theory of life and resurrection in such tribes:

and whenever totetism is found of killing and bringing to life again the novice at initiation, there may exist or have existed not only a belief in the possibility of permanently depositing the soul in some external object — animal, plant, or what not — but an actual intention of so doing.¹⁴

We could mention some more examples taken from Greek Mythology in order to see the close relationship with the playwrights we shall be dealing with. Although "the worst crime of which the Greek could conceive was the murder of kin",¹⁵ some Greek myths also show death as related to the archetypal pattern of life — death — rebirth, and therefore connected with the immortality of the soul. This connection is also apparent in the plays we shall be dealing with. We could cite, as examples from Greek Mythology, the legend of king Cronus. His wife Rhea gave birth to some gods and goddesses, and he swallowed them shortly after each was born, fearing to be supplanted by a son. But, because of some emetic potion given to Cronus, he vomited the gods who were alive and unhurt.

We can also refer to another Greek myth in which

Procne killed her son Itys, and served his flesh to her husband Tereus to avenge her sister Philomela having been raped by Tereus.

Medea, which has been converted into drama, is another example taken from Greek Mythology, in which the mother kills her sons, and she does it to take revenge of her husband. As there seems to be an instinctive necessity to see the parents perpetuated into their sons, she decides to kill her children so that her husband cannot reach rebirth through the coming generation.

The text from EURIPIDES shows Medea first speaking to the women in the chorus and then to her husband.

MEDEA

Women, my task is fixed: as quickly as I may
To kill my children, and start away from this
land,
And not, by wasting time, to suffer my children
To be slain by another hand less kindly to them.
Force every way will have it they must die, and
since
This must be so, then I, their mother, shall
kill them.
Oh, arm yourself in steel, my heart! Do not
hang back
From doing this fearful and necessary wrong.
(....)

MEDEA

Yes, and my grief is gain when you cannot mock it.

JASON

I tell you it was not by hand that destroyed them.

MEDEA

But it was your insolence, and your virgin
wedding.

JASON

And just for the sake of that you chose to kill
them.

MEDEA

Is love so small a pain, do you think, for a
woman?

JASON

For a wise one, certainly. But you are
wholly evil.

MEDEA

The children are dead. I say this to make
you suffer.¹⁶

Greek Mythology also presents tragic dynasties such as the house of Atreus. King Atreus, feeling he had been cuckolded by his brother Thyestes, invited him to a banquet and served his brother's own sons, who had been butchered and boiled.

The king of Troy's wife, Hecuba, had a nightmare in which she gave birth to a firebrand. As the seers interpreted her nightmare and told her that her unborn child would destroy Troy, Hecuba exposed her infant on Mount Ida, but it survived.

Also regarding the theme of childmurder, it has been told that the king of Sweden, Aun or On, sacrificed nine of his sons to Odin at Upsala in order that his own life might be spared.¹⁷

This barbarous custom of taking human beings as victims from a family was also significant in Ancient Greece where they used to sacrifice the king's son: "There seems to have been at least one kingly house of great antiquity of which the eldest sons were always liable to be sacrificed in room of their royal sires".¹⁸

Thus the theme of infanticide develops throughout Greek Mythology showing the atrocities gods and goddesses committed when their children did not fully satisfy them. The flaws of these mythical deities were the same of common

human beings and therefore they killed their sons because of pride, lust, selfishness, etc. Although sometimes, the myths that arose were also related to the life cycle of birth, growth, decay, death and rebirth.¹⁹

After Greek drama there is a progressive evolution in literature in which many kinds of plays developed gradually. But the theme of infanticide, with variants notwithstanding, seems to have flourished along almost all the periods. In Roman tragedies, for instance, which seem to be based on Greek themes, we find Seneca's *Thyestes* (4 B.C-65 A.D.), in which the flesh of children is served at a banquet.²⁰ The same deed is also present in many plays of the Renaissance.

But as our aim is not to discuss infanticide in World drama but specifically in twentieth century American drama, only a few references will be made to infanticide in relation to other literatures, before dealing specifically with Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, and Sam Shepard.

So, looking backwards to the end of the eighteenth century, we find Johan Wolfgang von GOETHE, universally known for *Faust*, written in 1790. It is exactly in this play that infanticide is present.

Faust, aided by Mephistopheles, seduces the innocent and pure Margarete who, being aware of the misfortune which surrounds her, feels evil as part of her. As she gives birth to a child by Faust, she cannot see any other way out than killing her own child. Nevertheless, she is conscious of the crime she is committing and seems ready to expiate her sin. Likewise, Faust leaves the play showing repentance for what he has caused.

MARGARETE

Ich bin nun ganz in deiner Macht.
 Laß mich nur erst das Kind noch tranken.
 Ich herzt es diese ganze Nacht;
 Sie nahmen mir's, um mich zu dranken,
 Und sagen nun, ich hatt es umgebracht.
 Und niemals werd ich wieder froh.
 (....)

MARGARETE

Meine Mutter hab ich umgebracht,
 Mein Kind hab ich ertrankt.
 War es nicht dir und mir geschenkt?
 Dir auch-
 (....)

MARGARETE

Geschwind! Geschwind!
 Rette dein armes Kind!
 Fort! Immer den Weg
 Am Bach hinauf,
 Über den Weg
 Am Bach hinauf,
 Über den Steg,
 In den Wald hinein,
 Links, wo die Planke steht,
 Im Teich.
 Faß es nur gleich!
 Es will sich heben,
 Es zappelt noch!
 Rette! rette!²¹

Here infanticide does not lead to anything positive, as will be noticed in most of the plays which are going to be analyzed; on the contrary, the child which has been conceived in a sinful atmosphere is the personification of evil and the only way Margarete sees to eliminate evil is to commit the infanticide. The consequence for both characters is negative. She is taken to prison while Faust fails to reach all his ideals in life.

Another German playwright who also seems to introduce the same theme is Frank Wedekind, a expressionist dramatist who, by the end of the nineteenth century, in 1891, wrote *Spring's Awakening*. In this play, the author shows the theme

of sexuality in adolescents. One of the real conflicts which this theme reflects is the problem which *Wendla* has to face. At the age of fourteen, she is seduced by Melchior and gets pregnant. But as a consequence of the pressures of nineteenth century society, she aborts her child and dies.

Nine years after *Spring's Awakening*, in the twentieth century, a Swedish playwright, August Strindberg, also deals with the same theme. In *Brott och Brott*, he shows a dramatist, Maurice, who lives with Jeanne and their daughter Marion. One night he meets Henriette, a friend's lover, and spends the night with her. Afterwards, his daughter dies and he accuses Henriette of having killed her. Driven by love, they had revealed to each other that the only obstacle to their love was Maurice's daughter. At the same time, both say they wished that she did not exist. But their dialogue has been heard and he has been accused of murder. By the end of the play, it is found that the girl has died naturally, yet the father feels guilty for he has wished for her death. He "has committed" an infanticide even though it has only been accomplished in his mind. While Henriette spends the rest of her life alone, he feels the necessity of expiating the crime. Here the "crime" leads both Maurice and Henriette to a complete negative consequence in their lives. It is after the death of the girl that their love is condemned for the characters have to face either loneliness or expiation.

Contemporary drama continues to be concerned with the same theme. Jean-Paul SARTRE, the French philosopher and playwright, wrote *Huis Clos*, a year before the end of the

Second World War. It involves three characters: Garcin, a man of letters, Inès, a lesbian public functionary, and Estelle, a woman who belongs to high society. These three characters are all confined in a cloister and there, their relationships become unbearable. Estelle, a burgoise, has ascended in life through marriage, and in the name of convention, she killed a child she had given birth to by her lover. But she affirms that destiny was responsible for the infanticide, and, in this way, she gets rid of her guilt.

ESTELLE

Vous n'y êtes pas du tout. (Elle se redresse et les regarde toujours adossée à la porte. D'un ton sec et provocant:) Il voulait me faire un enfant. Là, êtes vous contents? (....)

ESTELLE

Non. L'enfant est venu tout de même. Je suis allée passer cinq mois en Suisse. Personne n'a rien su. C'était une fille. Roger était près de mois quand elle est née. Ça l'amusait d'avoir une fille. Pas moi.

GARCIN

Après?

ESTELLE

Il y avait un balcon, audessus d'un lac. J'ai apporté une grosse pierre. Il criait. "Estelle, je t'en pris, je t'en supplie." Je le detestais. Il a tout vu. Il s'est penché sur le balcon et il a vu des ronds sur le lac.

GARCIN

Après?

ESTELLE

C'est tout. Je suis revenue à Paris. Lui, il a fait ce qu'il a voulu.²²

Edward BOND, apparently the most controversial of England's contemporary playwrights, achieved notoriety with *Saved*.²³ In this play, a baby is stoned to death by its

father and his friends. Because none of the characters see the baby as a human being , they think they can rightfully kill it. Despite all the horror and decadence, everything seems to be accepted as normal.

PETE
Give it a punch.

MIKE
Yeh less!

COLIN
There's no one about!

Pete punches it.

COLIN
Ugh! Mind yer don't 'urt it.

MIKE
Yer can't.

BARRY
Not at that age.

MIKE
Course yer can't, no feelin's.

PETE
Like animals.

MIKE
'It it again.

COLIN
I can't see!

BARRY
'Arder.

PETE
Yeh.

BARRY
Like that! (He hits it)

COLIN
An' that! (He also hits it)

MIKE
What a giggle!

PETE
Cloutin's good for 'im. I read it.

BARRY
(to Fred) Why don't you clout it?²⁴

And thus the characters move on describing a whole process in which the baby is aimlessly destroyed by the aggressive attitudes and actions performed by the baby's father and his gang. All this violence and cruelty culminate with the baby's death.

In contemporary Brazilian drama, the theme reappears in Chico BUARQUE's play *Gota d'Água*. It is basically a modern reconstruction of the Greek tragedy *Medea*.

JOANA
A Creonte, ã filha; a Jasão e companhia
vou deixar esse presente de casamento
Eu transfiro pra vocês nossa agonia
porque, meu Pai, eu compreendi que o sofrimento
de conviver com a tragédia todo o dia
é pior que a morte por envenamento.
(.....)

Jasão senta; um tempo; ouve-se um burburinho de vozes; entra Egeu carregando o corpo de Joana no colo e Corina carregando os corpos dos filhos; põem os corpos na frente de Creonte e Jasão, um tempo; imobilidade geral; uma a uma, as vozes começam a cantar "Gota d'Água"; reversão de luz; os atores que fazem Joana e filhos levantam-se e passam a cantar também; ao fundo projeção de uma manchete sensacionalista noticiando uma tragédia.²⁵

Chico Buarque and Paulo Pontes modify the ancient tragedy inserting it into a Brazilian universe, but basically the theme of infanticide remains the same.

As our major concern is to study infanticide in modern American drama, these few references to works from dif-

ferent countries and belonging to different periods have been made to illustrate the idea that infanticide and its variants have been extensively explored in literature. Some texts leading to destruction and pessimism; others pointing to the idea of rebirth. But in order to study childmurder and its relationship with the recurrent cycle of life, it was necessary to look back to the beginning of human history and see the important role of rituals in relation to the cycle of life, death and rebirth. Some of these rituals, as seen, became fixed stories for they appeared to bring the desired results. These fixed stories were later on called myths. Some of the most important myths concerning our theme have been taken from Greek Mythology. It has been said that it is in Ancient Greece, precisely from Greek drama that our Western drama has evolved. Thus, a movement back towards the beginning of our Western drama, towards Greek tragedies specifically, continues to be among the major influences on modern drama.

Let us now concentrate on examining the plays per se in order to show how the theme of childmurder is handled under different perspectives but having in common the archetypal scapegoat motif. A synthesis is presented in the conclusion, with a panoramic table comparing the different causes and consequences of childmurder in each play, in order to project each author's particular vision of the theme.

NOTES

¹BLACK'S Law Dictionary. Rev.4.ed. St.Paul, Minn., West Publ., 1968. p.188.

²GUERIN, W. et alii. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York, Harper and Row, 1966. p.2.

³GUERIN, W. et alii, p.116.

⁴GUERIN, W. et alii, p.117.

⁵GUERIN, W. et alii, p.124-5.

⁶THE NEW Encyclopaedia Britannica. Macropaedia. Chicago, 1979. v.15, p.301-2.

⁷Quoted by CROSSAN, J.D. *The Dark Interval*; towards a theology of story. Allen, Texas, Argus Communications, 1975. p.51.

⁸CROSSAN, p.55,57,60.

⁹BROCKETT, O.G. *The Theatre*; an introduction. 3.ed. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. p.65.

¹⁰According to C. PICHOSIS in *La Littérature Comparée* (2.éd. Paris, A. Colin, 1967. p.147), "le mythe tire son origine de la foi populaire et appartient d'abord au folklore. Le hasard a voulu que les Grecs, dépositaires sans privilège d'une mythologie primitive, en aient fait un objet littéraire et, relayés par les Latins, aient décidé d'une bonne partie de notre littérature occidentale, fondant des lignées aussi vivaces que ramifiées".

¹¹It is interesting to observe, as mentioned by BROCKETT, p.67-8 that "much of our information about the Egyptians is derived from hieroglyphics and artifacts preserved in the pyramids built as tombs for the pharaohs. Many of these remains relate to the Egyptian Myths concerning the recurrent cycle of life and the seasons. (...) In addition to Egyptian rituals, records of others (dating from the fifteenth to the thirteenth centuries B.C.) in the Near East have been discovered on clay tablets. For the most part, they are concerned with the seasonal pattern of birth, growth, maturity, death and rebirth".

¹²FRAZER, J.G. *The Golden Bough*; a study in magic and religion. Abr.ed. London, Macmillan, 1974. p.907.

¹³FRAZER, p.910-1.

¹⁴FRAZER, p.916.

¹⁵MYTHOLOGY. Lindoln, Cliffs Notes, 1973. p.103.

¹⁶EURIPIDES. *Alcestis, The Medea, The Heracleidae et alii*. Ed. David Greene and R.Lattimore. New York, Modern Library, 1956. p.115-20.

¹⁷ Looking backwards into The Old Testament again, specifically in The First Book of Moses, Genesis, we find in Chapter 22 that the sacrifice of the son was also known from the Bible. It was considered a religious offering as we can see when God tempted Abraham: "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Mo-riah; and offer him there for a burn offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of".

¹⁸ FRAZER, p.382.

¹⁹ The Myths related to the life cycle can be seen since the beginnings of drama in Greece. As O. BROCKETT comments on page 68, "for several centuries Greek drama was presented exclusively at festivals honoring Dionysus, the god of wine and fertility supposedly the son of Zeus (the greatest of Greek gods) and Semele (a mortal). Dionysus was killed, dismembered and then resurrected. The myths that arouse about him were closely related to the life cycle and to seasonal changes: birth, growth, decay, death, and rebirth; spring, summer, fall, and winter".

²⁰ "The only Roman tragedies that now exist are based on Greek themes and are the work of Lucius Annaeus Seneca. (...) Nine of his tragedies are extant, of which five are adapted plays by Euripides. Seneca was not a professional dramatist and his plays probably were not staged. Nevertheless, he was a major influence on Renaissance tragedy, and therefore the characteristics of his work are important." The importance of Greek themes is thus pointed out by O. BROCKETT, p.110.

²¹ GOETHE, J.W. *Faust*. Basel, Verlag Birkhäuser, 1944. p.140, 142, 143, 144.

²² SARTRE, J.P. *Huis-Clos*. In: _____. *Théâtre*. Paris, Gallimard, 1947. p.297.

²³ According to A.P. HINGCLIFFE (*British Theatre 1950/1970*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1974. p.154), "Bond is interested in the aimless life of the young couple, a life that accepts sex and violence as part of living. (...) The same theme of obsessively gloomy family life and narrow opportunities are taken up in *Saved* (...) It was the stoning of a baby (invisible) that caused all the fuss: the mother had reduced the baby to an object because she cannot picture him as a human being and because he is treated as an object the gang can kill him".

²⁴ BOND, E. *Saved*. New York, Hill & Wang, s.d.

²⁵ BUARQUE, C. & PONTES, P. *Gota d'Água*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 1977. p.167-8.

2 ANALYSIS OF THE PLAYS

2.1 DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS

Although the theme of death has always been predominant in the oeuvre of Eugene O'Neill,* the first and still the greatest of American playwrights, this thesis deals only with two of his plays: *Desire Under the Elms*, written in 1924, and *Strange Interlude*, written in 1928.¹ Both plays present in their own particular views, the same topic under discussion: Childmurder.² They are inserted in the realistic tradition which, according to BROCKETT, proclaims the following precepts:

(....) the playwright should strive for a truthful depiction of the real world: since he may know the real world only through direct observation, he should write about the society around him: he should strive to be as objective as possible.³

*Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953). He is considered the most important of American dramatists. Son of a successful actor, James O'Neill, he began his career as a journalist but later on turned to stage and wrote a number of plays which first reached performance in Provincetown, Massachusetts. His first full-length play, *Beyond the Horizon* (1920), won him the first Pulitzer Prize. From then on, he wrote a number of successes; *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *Anna Christie* (1921), *The Hairy Ape* (1922), *All God's Chillun Got Wings* (1924), *Desire Under the Elms* (1924), *The Great God Brown* (1926), *Marco Millions* (1928), *Strange Interlude* (1928), *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931) and *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933). In 1936 he was awarded the Noble Prize for literature.

After this O'Neill disappeared from the theater until 1946, when he allowed *The Iceman Cometh* (written in 1939) to be produced. His plays continued to be produced even after his death as *A Long Day's Journey into Night*, *A Touch of the Poet* and *More Stately Mansions*.

Nevertheless, as we shall see, the two plays also lead us back into myth through the archetypal figure of the scapegoat.⁴

The action takes place on a New England farm in 1850 and the main characters are the members of the Cabot family. Ephraim Cabot, the father, has already outlived two wives and has recently married a third one, Abbie Putnan. She is resented by his three sons, two of whom decide to leave the farm and go to California in order to find gold. The youngest son, Eben, stays on the farm to fight for his inheritance. But Abbie uses her sexual attractiveness and seduces Eben so that she can give her husband an heir and, in this way, inherit the farm herself. A son is born but she has fallen in love with Eben who, in turn, finds out that she wanted the child only to become the owner of everything. Unable to persuade Eben that she loves him and does not care for the farm anymore, she can think of nothing else other than killing their own child. Eben reports the crime to the sheriff but as he does so, he realizes that he is also responsible for it. He abandons the farm and follows Abbie to prison.

From the summary, certain aspects arise which lead to the theme of childmurder in *Desire Under the Elms*, and these topics will now be discussed in detail.

The characters' reality is the farm. Even though they sometimes seem to dislike the farm, they are attached to it because of the sense of possessiveness they all have in relation to it. That is, they like the farmhouse for it gives them material security; but at the same time their reactions are of dislike and disgust as can be seen through the stage directions:

Eben spits on the ground with intense disgust, turns and goes back to the house. (p.3)

This sense of possessiveness is apparent, not only in relation to the house, but also to gold. Simeon and Peter aim to go to California and find gold there. The farm is not enough for them and they think of California, of the West, where they may find the material security that everybody in the play is looking for.

PETER

(....) They's gold in the West, Sim.

SIMEON

(still under the influence of sunset - vaguely)
In the sky!

PETER

Waal - in a manner o' speakin' - thar's the promise. (Growing excited) Gold in the sky -- in the West - Golden Gate - Californi-a! Goldest West! - fields o'gold!

SIMEON

(excited in his turn) Fortunes layin' just atop o' the ground waitin' t'be picked! Solomon's mines, they says! (p.4)

On the other hand, it is not only the Cabot family who feels attached to the farmhouse. Abbie Putnan, who has just married the boys' father, Ephraim, also seems to be interested in the farm; and from the very beginning, it becomes apparent that Abbie has married Ephraim only because of his money. And thus, as Abbie enters the house, she demonstrates the same sense of possessiveness that is apparent in all the members of the Cabot family. She wants to take advantage of the situation and make sure that everything in the house is hers.

ABBIE

(with lust for the word) Hum! (Her eyes gloating on the house without seeming to see the two stiff figures at the gate) It's purty - purty! I can't b' lieve it's r'ally mine.
(.....)

ABBIE

(with the conqueror's conscious superiority) I'll go in an' look at 'my' house. (She goes slowly around to porch). (p.18-9)

Therefore, as the three brothers acknowledge that a new "stepmother" is coming to the house, they realize that the property of the farm will be threatened, for the sense of possession that is present so strongly in every member of the family is present in their new "stepmother" as well. Thus they see her as a menace to everything they own, and their reaction toward the woman that is coming to the house is negative.

SIMEON

(after a pause - thoughtfully) What d'ye calc'late she'll be like - our new Maw? Like Eben thinks?

PETER

More'n' likely.

SIMEON

(vindictively) Waal - I hope she's a she-devil that'll make him wish he was dead an' livin' in the pit o' hell fur comfort!

PETER

(fervently) Amen! (p.13)

This sense of possessiveness which Abbie shows is also the strongest reason for Eben, her stepson, hating her. Thus, there is only one thought in his mind. She is there to steal everything that belongs to him. And every time this topic appears, both characters are viewed as greedy material-

listic persons.⁵ Eben feels, because the farm was his mother's, that he has the right to own it. Abbie, in turn, got married to have material security. So, as mentioned before, she has come to the farm with Ephraim with no other purpose in mind than to possess it, to become its owner.

ABBIE

(savagely seizing on his weak point) Your'n?
Yew mean - my farm?

EBEN

I mean the farm yew sold yerself fur like any other old whore - my farm!

ABBIE

(stung - fiercely) Ye'll never live t'see
the day when even a stikin' weed on it'll
belong t'ye! (Then in a scream) Git out o'
my sight! (p.26)

Although Eben hates Abbie, for she has come from the outside to steal the farm from him as mentioned, at the same time both characters have a lot in common. While hate separates them momentarily, their similarities are going to bring them together.

While in Abbie's relationship to Ephraim her greed for material possession is the dominant driving force that impels her towards marriage, in her relationship to Eben, this force is subdued and supplanted by another drive. Money is no longer the basic driving force anymore, for, when she sees Eben, her sensuality is awakened.

A moment later the kitchen door is slowly pushed open and ABBIE enters. For a moment she stands looking at EBEN. He does not notice her at first. Her eyes take him in penetratingly with a calculating appraisal of his strength as against hers. But under this her desire is dimly awakened by his youth and good looks. (p.21)

Even if it is for a moment, Abbie seems to be pushed into a different direction. She is now attracted by Eben's good looks, something that her old husband lacks. But if Abbie feels almost instantly attracted, Eben's reaction towards Abbie is predominantly negative; he does not want her to be a surrogate mother, once, as stated above, he knows that she has married his father just because of the farm.⁶

Thus, the first contact between Abbie and Eben is troubled for they already seem to hate each other and this hate seems to grow as they talk.

But, if stage directions are taken into consideration, while Eben talks with anger and revolt, inwardly he feels attracted to her and tries to fight against it. "(....) (fighting against his growing attraction and sympathy)" (p.21). The two selves of Eben are now visible: inside he is attracted to the woman but his outward reaction is of repelence. This ambivalent reaction toward Abbie dominates all of Eben's attitudes. He will be oppressed by love and hate, where love becomes a synonym for desire. Hate and desire will come together. He hates the woman for what she stands for: greed and possession. But at the same time, he desires her.

So, as it has been demonstrated, the "mother-son" relationship is permeated with conflicting elements. But, their apparent hate will be left aside and their sexual desire will make them come together so that the theme of "childmurder" will appear and finally the crime will be consummated. The materialism that is sensed from the beginning of the play will be one cause for the future murder. The coming of Abbie, and her relationship to Eben creates the mood for the "kinder-

mord" to be accomplished. Abbie and Eben will be the agents of a future murder.

The topic of possession also comes into Abbie and Ephraim's talk. Ephraim mentions that he is getting old and that he may leave the farm to Eben, the only son that is left to him. Abbie feels herself betrayed by her husband's attitudes, but he explains his point of view. He thinks that leaving the farm to a son is the same thing as possessing it himself once he thinks that a son is the extension of his own existence. A son is like a part of himself.

CABOT
Ye're on'y a woman.

ABBIE.
I'm yewr wife.

CABOT
That hain't me. A son is me- my blood - mine. Mine ought to t'git mine. An'then it's still mine - even though I be six foot under. D'ye see?

ABBIE
(giving him a look of hatred) Ay-eh. I see.
(She becomes very thoughtful, her face growing shrewd, her eyes studying Cabot craftily).
(p.29)

If Ephraim thinks a son should inherit the farm, Abbie decides to have one herself so that she can keep the land and the farmhouse.

ABBIE
(suddenly) Mebbe the Lord'll give us a son.

CABOT
(turns and stares at her eagerly) Ye mean - a son - t'me'n'yew?

ABBIE
(with a cajoling smile) Ye're a strong man yet, hain't ye? 'Tain't nowadays impossible,

be it? We know that. Why d'ye stare so?
Hain't ye never thought o' that afore?
I been thinkin' o' it all along, Ay-eh-
an' I been prayin' it'd happen, too.

CABOT

(his face growing full of joyous pride and
a sort of religious ecstasy) Ye been
prayin', Abbie? - fur a son? - t'us?

ABBIE

Ay-eh. (with a grim resolution) I want a son
now. (p.29)

Thus, her desire for possessing the farmhouse is stronger than anything else. And the only way of getting it is giving Ephraim a new heir. That is Abbie's plan and, even without knowing it, Ephraim accepts it.

But in order to accomplish her plan she also needs Eben. She needs him in order to give Ephraim a son. If Abbie's feelings are taken into consideration, it is obvious that she repels her husband but wishes to possess her stepson. Once seducing Eben, he is going to be her medium in order to have the child.

Abbie makes her decisive move in order to get what she wants when she decides to go to the "best-parlor". For, although nobody has dared to enter ever since Eben's mother died, her plans are not going to be hindered by anything or anybody.

Even if Eben does not want to do what she asks him to, he feels desperately compelled to go her way. His inner self is attracted to her so desperately and so intensely that it drives him to her. Another aspect that makes Eben go to the parlor is the remembrance of his diseased mother. The parlor and his mother are now vividly present in him. They become present and it is with mixed feelings that he calls his mother:

ABBIE

(holding her eyes and putting all her will into her words as she backs out the door)
I'll expect ye afore long, Eben.

EBEN

(stares after her for a while, walking toward the door. A light appears in the parlor window. He murmurs) In the parlor?
(This seems to arouse connotations for he comes back and puts on his white shirt, collar, half ties the tie mechanically, puts on coat, takes his hat, stands barefooted looking about him in bewilderment, mutters wonderingly) Maw! Whar air yew?
(Then goes slowly toward the door in rear).
(p.34)

The memory of his mother and his uncontrolled lust for Abbie make Eben go to the parlor, while Abbie goes there just for one reason: she needs to seduce Eben so that she can have a son by him and thus inherit the farmhouse.

The seduction scene happens in the parlor where Abbie demonstrates that she is stronger than Eben and thus, through an incestuous stepmother — son relationship, a child will be born.

The interior of the parlor is shown. A grim, repressed room like a tomb in which the family has been interred alive. ABBIE sits on the edge of the horsehair sofa. She has lighted all the candles and the room is revealed in all its preserved ugliness. *A change has come over the woman. She looks awed and frightened now, ready to run away.* The door is opened and Eben appears. His face wears an expression of obsessed confusion. *He stands staring at her, his arms hanging disjointedly from his shoulders, his feet bare, his hat in his hand.* (p.34-5)
(Italics are mine.)

From the description above, both characters seem to have changed. All of Abbie's self-assurance has disappeared and now she is revealed as a frightened and awed person. If

previously she has faced the situations, now she seems ready to draw back. At the same time, Eben also undergoes a change. If at first he has aimed to show her his hate, now he is ready to do whatever she wants: his attitude is of a submissive person with no reactions against her.

Since the very beginning of Abbie and Eben's talk, the presence of Eben's mother is emphasized.⁷ It is clear that both of them can feel her presence in the room. So, the changes that the characters go through are due to this mysterious presence. Her presence is changing their way of behaving.

ABBIE

When I fust come in - in the dark - they seemed somethin' here.

EBEN

(simply) Maw.

(....)

ABBIE

At fust I was feered o' it. I wanted t'yell an' run. Now - since yew come - seems like it's growin' soft an' kind t'me. (Addressing the air-queerly) Thank yew.

EBEN

Maw allus loved me. (p.35)

As Eben loves his mother and Abbie becomes conscious of this "mother-son love" she tries to conquer him by acting at first like a mother to her child.

ABBIE

(both her arms around him - with wild passion) I'll sing fur ye! I'll die fur ye! (in spite of her overwhelming desire for him, there is a sincere maternal love in her manner and voice - a horribly frank mixture of lust and mother love) Don't cry Eben! I'll take yer Maw's place! I'll be everythin' she

was t'ye! Let me kiss ye, Eben! (She pulls his head around. He makes a bewildered pretense of resistance. She is tender) Don't be afeered! I'll kiss ye pure, Eben - same's if I was a Maw t'ye - an' ye kin kiss me back's if yew was my son - my boy sayin' good-night t'me. Kiss me Eben. (p.36)

But at the moment this "mother-son relationship" is broken, his attitude towards Abbie also changes. It seems as if he only wanted to love her in the role of a mother, not as a woman. But Abbie cannot restrain herself and pleads to Eben's mother to interfere favorably in their relationship and she wins again, that is, she makes Eben act the way she wants him to.

EBEN
(to the presence he feels in the room)
Maw! Maw! What d'ye want? What air ye tellin'me?

ABBIE
She's tellin' ye t'love me. She knows I love ye an' I'll be good t'ye. Can't ye feel it? Don't ye know? She's tellin' ye t' love me Eben!

EBEN
Ay - eh. I feel - mebbe she - but - I can't figger out - why - when ye've stole her place - here in her hum - in the parlor whar she was -

ABBIE
(fiercely) She knows I love ye!

EBEN
(his face suddenly lighting up with a fierce, triumphant grin) I see it! I sees why. It's her vengeance on him - so's she kin rest quiet in her grave. (p.36-7)

It is at the consummation of Abbie and Eben's sinful love-affair that Eben's mother is most strongly sensed in the play. The sexual intercourse takes place and this is

when Eben's mother is going "to act". She is in the parlor and her presence has been felt throughout the whole play for one reason: through Abbie and Eben, she is going to act against Ephraim. A revenge against him is to start. And in this way, Abbie and Eben's sin is also the beginning of the retributive process against his mother's oppressor, Ephraim. That is why she approves of the sin and can be sensed between the two lovers. After the sin has been committed, she feels herself free from her vengeance and thus can rest in her grave.

Eben's mother had been forced to work intolerably hard, and work finally killed her. Besides, there is a reason to believe that Ephraim has taken the farm from her and therefore from their son. But if the wrong done to the mother hangs over the play like a curse, then Abbie and Eben may be seen as unconscious agents of the process of justice directed against Ephraim.

In this sense, Abbie and Eben at first fail to assume the role of agents of the retributive process against Ephraim. They are only moved by their lust. But, with the help of Eben's mother, they become capable of becoming instruments of this process of revenge directed against Ephraim.

At the same time Abbie and Eben have discovered love and this has become the reason why their life has changed. Thus in *Desire Under the Elms*, the mother is a symbolic force who seems to guide the two lovers to accomplish the unchaining process that their love relationship generates: sexual intercourse, the birth of the child, its murder, the

punishment and rebirth of both characters. The mother here is seen as a sympathetic figure who will be helping the two lovers to reach their final goal.

The son is born and Eben realizes that he has only been a puppet with whom Abbie could play whenever she wanted. She has always had a plan in her mind: to possess the farm. So, as soon as Eben finds out the greed there is in Abbie, his attitudes towards her and their son change; he puts his "cuss" on Abbie and even on his son. If the child has come to materialize her plans, he wishes the child had never been born.

EBEN

(unheedingly. With tortured passion)
I wish ye was dead! I wish I was dead
along with ye afore this come!
(....)

EBEN

(with fierce determination) I'm a - goin',
I tell ye! I'll git rich thar an' come back
an' fight him fur the farm he stole - an'
I'll kick ye both out in the road - t'beg an'
sleep in the woods - an'yer son along with ye -
t' starve an' die!

ABBIE

(with a shudder - humbly) He's yewr son, too,
Eben.

EBEN

(torturedly) I wish he never was born!
I wish he'd die this minit! I wish I'd never
sot eyes on him! It's him - yew havin' him -
a - purpose t'steal - that's changed everythin'!
(p.48)

Therefore, after Eben has said what he thinks about the situation, Abbie starts to think things over. Their love, their son and their present situation have changed their lives. Before the coming of the child they felt strongly

attached to each other; before Eben discovered Abbie's plans, the son seemed to join them, he seemed to be there to reinforce the love they felt towards each other but now, this child represents the end of all continuity of love between them. Since for Eben the child represents Abbie's greed, he hates him. Even more, the son has caused Eben to hate Abbie, but as Abbie loves him desperately, now, in spite of the farm, she tries to make up a plan to bring Eben close to her as he was before the son was born. It is now that the first idea of committing an infanticide, of killing the child, comes into Abbie's mind. If the child has been the cause (for what he represents now to Eben) of their lack of love, this cause has to be extinguished so that their love may triumph.

ABBIE

(after a pause - with a dreadful cold intensity - slowly) If that's what his comin's done t'me - killin' yewr love - takin' yew away - my on'y joy - the on'y joy I ever knowed - like heaven t'me - purtier'n heaven - then I hate him, too, even if I be his Maw!

EBEN

(bitterly) Lies! Ye love him! He'll steal the farm fur ye! (....)

ABBIE

(distractedly) He won't steal! I'd kill him fust! I do love ye! I'll prove t' ye ...!
(p.49)

Abbie seems to be a totally selfish person, somebody who can think only of herself. At the beginning she wanted a son so that she could have the farm; now the farm is no longer that important; what she really cares for is Eben's love for her and, in the same way that she did everything to

achieve her purpose in relation to the farmhouse, she is going to do anything to get Eben's love back.

Abbie's plan to gain Eben back is to eliminate the child who has caused the end of their love-affair. So, she thinks there is only one thing to be done to bring his love back; it is to kill her own child and, by doing so, she, once more, fulfills her personal and selfish aspirations.

ABBIE

(hysterically) I done it, Eben! I told ye I'd do it! I've proved I love ye - better'n everythin' - so's ye can't never doubt me no more!

(....)

ABBIE

(....) I left the piller over his little face. Then he killed himself. He stopped breathin'. (She begins to weep softly)

EBEN

(rage beginning to mingle with grief)
He looked like me. He was mine, damn ye!

ABBIE

(slowly and brokenly) I didn't want t'do it. I hated myself fur doin'it. I loved him. He was so purty - dead spit'n' image o'yew. But I loved yew more - an' yew was goin' away - far off whar I'd never see ye agen, never kiss ye, never feel ye pressed agin me agen. (p.50-2)

But while in the previous scenes, Eben's hate for Abbie is apparent, in the last scene of the play, he has repented and the only thing he asks for is forgiveness. He now realizes that it is not Abbie alone who is guilty of childmurder, he also had his share of responsibility in it. If the sheriff is coming, it is not only Abbie who has to expiate the sin but he himself has to expiate for his partnership in it.

Ultimately, if on the one hand, the child can be seen as something negative, sinful (once it had been conceived in a sinful atmosphere — a stepmother/son relationship —, and it had come to the world to satisfy the sexual desire Abbie and Eben felt for one another and Abbie's personal desire for possession), on the other hand, Abbie murders the child in order to reaffirm their love, in order to prove Eben she loves him.⁸

Therefore the killing of the child has brought both Abbie and Eben a new conception of life based on joy and true love. Now, nothing besides love counts. So, through the murder of the child, they have experimented a positive revival of their lives. And, in this sense, the murdered child can be compared to the archetypical figure of the "scapegoat", as defined in the Introduction.

O'NEILL's *Desire Under the Elms* is therefore a good example of the archetypal motif of the sacrificial scapegoat in modern American drama.⁹ Here the child can be regarded as a scapegoat, even if only for the mother. We have already seen that possessiveness, greed, lust, sexual attraction and finally love led to childmurder; but it is after Abbie has offered her child as a scapegoat to atone for her sins, that their true love is achieved and they can reach spiritual rebirth.

NOTES

¹ O'NEILL, E. *Desire Under the Elms*. In: _____. *Three Plays*. New York, Vintage Books, 1959. p.1-58. All quotations refer to this edition and will be followed by the page number.

² As W.FLEMING JR. states in *Tragedy in American Drama* (Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. p.84. Ph.D., University of Toledo, 1972), when he writes about O'Neill's tragedies and, as Fleming himself calls them "near-tragedies", "perhaps O'Neill felt the primary mysterious force which pushes men on was a hope in death, that there he would find peace". So, since the beginning death is seen as a positive element where peace can be reached.

³ BROCKETT, O.G. *The Theatre*; an introduction. 3.ed. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. p.313.

⁴ It is also the first of O'Neill's drama in which the theme of Greek tragedy appears. C.PICKERING in *The Works of Eugene O'Neill* (Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. p.125. Ph.D., East Texas State University, 1971) comments that "the young dramatist had no inhibitions about incorporating Greek and Shakespearean dramatic techniques into his own contemporary framework. Most modern writers would have balked at the Greek themes of incest and infanticide, but not O'Neill. He was familiar with the Hippolytus and Medea of Euripides and saw no reason why Medea of Euripides should not be translated to the American stage".

⁵ And this emphasis on materialism is not indicated only by Eben and Abbie; Ephraim, as well as his two other sons, are also dominated by it throughout the whole play. According to FLEMING JR., p.19, "material goods seem a necessity in twentieth century". He also observes that Modern Tragedy is dominated by materialism.

⁶ J.GASSNER in *O'Neill*; a collection of critical essays (Englewood-Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1964. p.43) argues that "there is no drama of O'Neill's in which an intense love relationship is presented as creative or satisfying. The deepest emotional drive in his plays is based on father-daughter, mother-son relationship (....) Their passion is necessarily evil, because it is incestuous; yet it is unavoidable because it is the condition upon which they are born".

⁷ As it has been mentioned, it is when Abbie and Eben are inside the parlor that the presence of the mother in the play is emphasized. Notwithstanding, as FLEMING JR. states, "the dominance of the dead mother is symbolically indicated by the scenery. 'Two enormous elms are on each side of the house.' (....) They brood oppressively over the house. They are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof". Therefore since the very beginning of the play the mother seems to prove its existence.

⁸ R.POULARD in *O'Neill and Nietzsche*; the making of a playwright and thinker, p.104, gives us a similar idea when she says: "The baby died because he was conceived in a moment of animal passion. He was at first a means for gaining possession of the farm and revenge and later

on became a possession to Eben. He was not born through the desire to create the overhuman, (as Ephraim wanted him to be) and died in Abbie's attempt to prove her all-too-human love for Eben". (Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. Ph.D., Loyola University of Chicago, 1974).

⁹ Also in relation to the scapegoat figure, W.GUERIN moves into religion and points to the fact that even Jesus Christ can also be regarded as a scapegoat to all mankind. "(....) the central figure in Christian religion played out a gruesome role of the godking as scapegoat, so that man might achieve spiritual rebirth". *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York, Harper and Row, 1966. p.125.

2.2 STRANGE INTERLUDE

O'NEILL's second play to be dealt with is *Strange Interlude*.¹ It is a nine-act play which tells the story of Nina Leeds. She loves Gordon, her sweetheart, but cannot accomplish her plans and marry him first because of her selfish father and then because Gordon had been killed in the war. So, as a way of compensating for her lack of love she gives herself to the wounded soldiers while working as a nurse in a hospital. But, after a time, she is persuaded to marry Sam Evans, Gordon's friend. Soon after her marriage, her mother-in-law tells her about the insanity that hovers over the Evans family like a curse. As a consequence, Nina feels compelled to abort the child she is bearing. But, in order to give her husband a healthy child, she gives herself to Dr. Darrell with whom she becomes physically involved. As the play moves on, Evans dies, her lover abandons her and her son gets married. Nina is left alone and sees as her only solution to stay with Marsden, her father's old friend, and live with him an assexual relationship.

Starting our analysis we see that in the first period of her life, Nina was happy and full of security; she was healthy and her mind was peaceful. But as Gordon was killed in the war, she started giving her body to men as a reward to the time she was with Gordon and refused to give him her

body. Moral values were too strong on Nina then and she now realizes that she should not have taken them so seriously. Now she repents for it. But once her marriage with Evans is arranged, Nina in a way moves back to the first stage, abandoning promiscuity.

Her whole personality seems changed, her face has a contented expression, there is an inner calm about her. And her personal appearance has changed in kind, her face and figure have filled out, she is prettier in a conventional way and less striking and unusual; nothing remains of the strange fascination of her face except her unchangeably mysterious eyes. (p.98)

Thus, as stated above, Evans and Nina's marriage was something arranged, not based on true love. Nina married him because she wanted a son to experience personal fulfillment. As already seen, *Desire Under the Elms* also presents a similar structure, for Ephraim and Abbie's marriage is something previously settled to satisfy their own needs. Abbie got married because she wanted to inherit the farmhouse so that it would give her security and therefore, fulfillment. So, both Nina's and Abbie's marriages frustrate them because their aspirations are not fully accomplished.

As soon as Nina marries Sam, she finds out that she is pregnant but, even though she has married Sam and the son will be his, she still thinks of Gordon; her love is so intense that it dominates her throughout the whole play. Physically, she is attached to Sam while emotionally she moves back to her past and idealized love. In fact it may be said that for Nina the baby even has to look like Gordon as if it were really his son. Sam would only be a connection between

Nina and Gordon so that she could materialize her dream of belonging to him.

NINA

... oh, I hope it is a boy ... healthy and strong and beautiful ... like Gordon!...
(p.100)

Nina and the audience are at first the only ones to know about her pregnancy. She does not want to share it with anybody else except herself. And if on the one hand, she has married Sam without loving him, if she wants the baby to be a continuation of Gordon, on the other hand she feels that the baby will make her love her husband. A child as usually acknowledged is a bond between a man and a woman; a son is a positive element to bring two people together:

NINA

... well, I do feel happy when I think ... and I love Sam now ... in a way ... it will be his baby too ... (p.99)

So, as stated above, Nina has not told anyone about the coming baby. But it is through the stream of consciousness device² (which O'Neill developed and which enables the characters to speak the normally unspoken thoughts and thus their inner conflicts and motives become palpable), that the audience of the play becomes aware of Nina's pregnancy. It is also through this device that the other characters declare their knowledge of it as when Marsden and Mrs. Evans think about Nina's possible baby.

MARSDEN

... her face filled out ... her eyes lazily examined peace ... pregnant ... yes, she must be ... I hope so ... Why? ... for her sake ... my own, too ... (p.101)

MRS. EVANS

I do hope I'm wrong!... but that old shiver of dread took me the minute she stepped in the door!... I don't think she's told Sammy but I got to make sure ... (p.103)

So, after Nina gets married, she decides to struggle towards a new life with her husband (whom she is trying to love) and their coming son (whom she wants desperately), Nina said to Marsden once: "I want children. I must become a mother so I can give myself." (p.96) But, in the same way that Nina thinks of a son as something positive to her life as a woman, there is also an embryonic thought of a child as something negative which comes from Mrs. Evans' mind. She is the only one to dislike the idea of a coming baby. As she envisions the possibility of a baby, she promptly struggles to destroy it.

MRS. EVANS

(....) If only she isn't going to have a baby ... if only she doesn't care so much about having one ... I got to have it out with her ... got to! ... no other way ... in mercy ... in justice ... this has got to end with my boy ... and he's got to live happy!... (p.105)

Thus, Mrs. Evans' only solution to destroy the child Nina bears is by telling her the incredible story about the Evans' insanity curse.³ She reveals to Nina that there have been cases of insanity in her husband's family. Her husband was insane and the taint has been strong in the Evans' family. That is why Mrs. Evans advises Nina to abort her child.

MRS. EVANS

(....) Only remember it's a family secret and now you're one of the family. It's the curse on the Evanses. My husband's mother

- she was an only child - died in the asylum and her father before her. (...)
 I didn't know about the Evanses until after I'd married my husband. He came to the town I lived in, no one there knew about the Evanses. He didn't tell me until after we were married. He asked me to forgive him, he said he loved me so much he'd have gone mad without me, said I was his only hope of salvation. So I forgave him. I loved him an awful lot. I said to myself, I'll be his salvation - and maybe I could have been if we hadn't had Sammy born. My husband kept real well up to then. We'd swore we'd never have children. (...) Then one night we'd both gone to a dance, we'd both had a little punch to drink, just enough - to forget - driving home in the moonlight - that moonlight! - such little things at the back of big things!

NINA

(in a dull moan) I don't believe you!
 I won't believe you!

MRS. EVANS

(drones on) My husband, Sammy's father, in spite of all he and I fought against it, he finally gave in to it when Sammy was only eight, he couldn't keep up any more living in fear for Sammy, thinking any minute the curse might get him, every time he was sick, or had a headache, or bumped his head, or started crying, or had a nightmare and screamed, or said something queer like children do naturally. (A bit stridently) Living like that with that fear is awful torment! I know that! I went through it by his side! It nearly drove me crazy, too - but I didn't have it in my blood! And that's why I'm telling you! You got to see you can't, Nina! (p.107-8)

But the device of insanity is merely a way of stating the impossibility of realization of human dreams. The child was supposed to be Nina's life's dream, and destroying the child would mean to destroy the dream or to tear her idealized world down.

Thus unlike *Desire Under the Elms*, where the mother, as mentioned, is seen as a sympathetic force who helps the

two lovers to achieve their love, in *Strange Interlude* Sam's mother acts as a malign character to Nina once she is seen as a largely destructive force for she will be responsible for making the normal achievement of love impossible. True love cannot be conquered once its process is interrupted by the abortion of a being that would be the uniting bond between the couple.

As we can see, Nina and Mrs. Evans have different concepts of her pregnancy. Nina wants her baby desperately for it means the substantiation of love and her personal fulfillment. Mrs. Evans, in turn, pretends to Nina that if the child is ever born it would be like committing a crime for Nina would give birth to a being condemned by the curse of insanity. Nina's concepts are inverted by Sam's mother and they will remain so once Nina decides to have the abortion.

NINA	MRS. EVANS	NINA
to give birth → love to abort → crime	to give birth → love to abort → crime	to give birth → crime to abort → love

MRS. EVANS
 (....) And your baby, you'd be bringing it into torment. (a bit violently) I tell you it'd be a crime - a crime worse than murder! (Then recovering - comiseratingly) So you just can't, Nina! (p.107)

But, as Mrs. Evans talks, Nina feels it is Gordon who is speaking through her and accepts to do what the older woman wants, she accepts to abort the child.

MRS. EVANS

(....) But I can say I feel proud of having lived fair to them that gave me love and trusted in me!

NINA

(struck - confusedly) Yes - that's true, isn't it? (Thinking strangely) Lived fair ... pride ... trust ... play the game! Who is speaking to me ... Gordon! ... oh, Gordon, do you mean I must give Sam the life I didn't give you?... Sam loved you too ... he said, if we have a boy, we'll call him Gordon in Gordon's honor ... Gordon's honor!... what must I do now in your honor Gordon? ... Yes! ... I know! ...
(p.110)

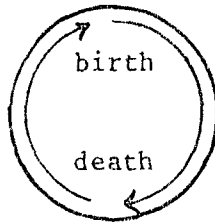
Thus, once Nina acquiesces with Sam's mother's plan, the myth of life is destroyed and a crime committed. But Nina feels herself forced to abort her son to save him from a possible madness. She does not want the curse of the Evans family to be perpetuated through the coming generations.

NINA

(....) I've got to kill my - oh, yes I see I've got to, you needn't argue anymore! I love it too much to make it run that chance! And I hate it too, now, because it's sick, it's not my baby, it's his!
(p.109)

Nina develops then ambivalent feelings towards her baby. She loves it for it represents her self-realization as a mother and also the possibility of love between husband and wife, but, at the same time, she also hates the child for it possibly carries the curse of madness that has followed the Evans' family through generations. A similar conflicting situation was also presented in *Desire Under the Elms* where the baby effectively represented the curse of materialism which dominated the characters. So, both beings

have negative connotations and therefore have to be destroyed so that evil may also disappear. Nina aborts her son, but the abortion she has forcefully undergone is a circle-like image because it is the abortion of Nina's first son which leads to another birth. It is death bringing life again.⁴



The universal symbol of the circle has been completed and now harmony may be achieved through the birth of Nina's second son.

But Nina's second and healthy son is a consequence of her relationship with Darrell, her lover. They are physically involved with each other, but they will never openly admit it to the others. Nina wants to continue with both her lover's and her husband's relationships, but Darrell is exhausted and leaves her. *Desire Under the Elms* also presented the lover figure in Abbie's step-son. But, unlike in *Strange Interlude*, in the previous play Abbie and Eben's love triumphs regardless of all the adversities they have to face. In both plays, nevertheless, the newly born children are the consequences of extra-marital relations between Nina and Darrell and Abbie and Eben. They also serve as a means for both women to satisfy their needs. Nina wants to feel the ownership of her son, to feel herself rewarded as a mother, whereas Abbie wants to have the child to satisfy her obsessive materialism.

We have seen that there are some motives which lead

Nina to abort her child. Since the beginning Mrs. Evans shows her negative expectations in relation to the possibility of a coming baby, and because of this, the curse-of-insanity motif comes to the surface and becomes the reason for the mother to feel the right of destroying her son.

Thus, abortion in *Strange Interlude* is a means of projecting Nina's hopes and aspirations into a new being. It is, as explained above, the death and rebirth archetype which the circle image suggests. Death of disease but at the same time rebirth of Nina's hopes because of the conviction of a new and healthy being to take the place of the diseased one.⁵

Concluding, it has been shown how in *Desire Under the Elms*, the boy represents Abbie's materialism whereas in *Strange Interlude* the coming child stands for the continuation of the mental disease that has been present in the Evans family through generations. Thus, it becomes necessary to sacrifice both, the first as a scapegoat so that Abbie can show Eben she truly loves him; the second also as a sacrificial scapegoat in order to prevent the malady to continue. The destruction of the children's lives also means the extinction of the harm both children will carry with them. In this way it is after the killing of both children that Abbie and Eben recognize love and Nina directs all her hopes of self-realization into a healthy son. So, both O'Neill's plays, though different in many ways, present the theme of childmurder as something positive in the sense that both crimes take place in order to destroy the evil — real and unreal — that the children convey and to make the rebirth of the characters possible.

NOTES

¹O'NEILL, E. Strange Interlude. In: _____. *Three Plays*. New York, Vintage Books, 1959. p.59-222. All quotations refer to this edition and will be followed by the page number.

²CARPENTER, F.I. *Eugene O'Neill*. New Haven, Twayne, 1964. p.124. Also in relation to the spoken thoughts, CARPENTER states that "these spoken thoughts often develop surprisingly dramatic conflicts between inner feeling and outer conventions, which give rise both to new insight and to rich dramatic irony".

³According to what CARPENTER says, "this device of insanity is truly arbitrary and romantic, resembling (...) the old Gothic novels rather than modern realistic fiction. It merely declares in dramatic terms the impossibility of the realization of human dreams". (p.73)

⁴CARPENTER (p.126), also shows this idea of death bringing life when he comments that "at the end of Act Six, Nina has just had a 'healthy' baby by her lover to replace the one destroyed by her husband's insanity".

⁵Unlike CARPENTER's opinion (p.122), that "its [the play's] movement of thought and feeling is downwards — away from all hope and disillusion", we think that there is a hope for illusion in Nina's life when she has her second son. Throughout the play she has shown her desire for a son. Now, even though her son will not fully satisfy her, temporarily Nina envisions him as a possible attempt to achieve the ideal life.

2.3 SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH

Although three decades have passed from O'Neill's two plays dealing with infanticide and abortion to Tennessee WILLIAMS' *Sweet Bird of Youth*,* the same theme reappears, again with variations and under a modified aspect.

In relation to Tennessee Williams, we also have to remember that, although a follower of O'Neill, Williams inserts himself into a new trend: the modified realism. It accepts, according to BROCKETT,

simplification, suggestion and distortion as basic techniques in art. In the theatre the result was greater emphasis on theatricality, less dependence on illusionism, and more willingness to recognize that art is different from reality.¹

In relation to these techniques, BROCKETT also gives us an idea of T. Williams and his tendency in the postwar realism:

Although Williams' plays may be extremely theatrical, they are intensely real in their treatment of character. Williams is concerned principally with inner psychological realities that can best be projected through the manipulation (rather than mere recording of external elements).²

*Tennessee Williams (1914-1983) came to prominence in 1945 with *The Glass Menagerie* and since then has contributed to the theater with such plays as *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Summer and Smoke*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* among others. He can be considered a brilliant creator of theatrical atmosphere, and uses non-realistic devices though his plays are intensely real.

Sweet Bird of Youth,³ first published in 1959, is set in a small town on the Gulf of Mexico, called St. Cloud, which is controlled by Boss Finley, a corrupt politician. Chance Wayne, who has become the gigolo of a faded movie-star, is returning to St. Cloud, his hometown, to recapture Heavenly, Boss Finley's daughter. But, without knowing it, Chance had infected his girl with a venereal disease on his previous visit. For this reason she had to undergo an operation which left her sterile. So, the dream of recapturing his lover is to become a nightmare in Chance's life once he finds out he will never be able to conquer her again and the only thing that comes after their love-affair is their ruin.

The play starts with Chance's homecoming. He is in a hotel in St. Cloud with Alexandra del Lago, the movie-star. The reason for Chance being back there is Heavenly but, before Chance makes any movement toward Heavenly, he is visited in the hotel he is staying at by Dr. Scudder and warned what has happened to her. Unable to speak plainly, Scudder hints at the operation Heavenly has undergone, so that Chance becomes aware of the situation that involves him in St. Cloud. Scudder had already tried to inform Chance what had happened to Heavenly some time ago, but nothing had ever reached him:

SCUDDER

(....) In this letter I just told you that a certain girl we know had to go through an awful experience, a tragic ordeal, because of past contact with you. I told you that I was only giving you this information so that you would know better than to come back to St. Cloud, but you didn't know better.

CHANCE

I told you I got no letter. Don't tell me about a letter, I didn't get any letter.
(p.21)

It is only almost at the end of the play that Tom Junior, Heavenly's brother, tells Chance the whole story about his sister's operation which shows Chance's ignorance about the situation.

TOM JUNIOR

(....) I know it's possible, it's barely possible that you didn't know what you done to my little sister the last time you come to St Cloud. (....) Until you met this bitch Minnie, the Texas one with the yacht, and started spending weekends on her yacht, and coming back Mondays with money from Minnie to go on with my sister. I mean you'd sleep with Minnie, that slept with any goddam gigolo bastard she could pick up on Bourbon Street or the docks, and then you would go on sleeping again with my sister. And sometimes during that time, you got something besides your gigolo fee from Minnie and passed it on to my sister (....) My little sister, Heavenly, didn't know about the diseases and operations of whores till she had to be cleaned and cured - I mean spayed like a dawg. (p.91-2)

So, Heavenly's sexual relationship with her lover Chance has brought her negative consequences. But, while Heavenly has already had sexual intercourse with her lover and now regrets it, if we think of Nina in *Strange Interlude*, we see that Nina has not given herself to Gordon and also feels sorry for it; the only solution Nina finds is to give herself to soldiers as a means of compensating for it. Heavenly, in turn, finds no solution, only defeat. She has had a whore's operation performed according to Boss Finley's orders.⁴ The girl resents it for it means the end of love and youth. From then on, she feels old because all her youth seems to have gone with the operation.

HEAVENLY

(....) I felt worse than embarrassed when I found out that Dr. George Scudder's knife had cut the youth out of my body, made me an old childless woman. Dry, cold, empty like an old woman. (p.65)

And here it is possible to establish a parallel between *Strange Interlude* and *Sweet Bird of Youth* in the sense that both women were forced to remove their motherly potentialities because of some kind of disease which was brought upon them by the men they had given themselves to. In *Strange Interlude* Nina was forced to give up her unborn child and abort it because of "the mental disease" that surrounded her husband's family. In *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Chance has a venereal disease and passed it to Heavenly. Therefore, she has to be spayed, castrated in a way. The result of it is a dry, cold, and childless woman with no more chances to give birth. But while Heavenly becomes totally sterile, Nina can still give birth to a healthy child. Heavenly feels she has become a person with no objectives in life. Spiritual death is close to her as well as to Chance.

So, after the operation, Heavenly does not seem to be as young and pretty as she used to. In the same way that the operation has destroyed her inner self, it has also affected her physical appearance. Aunt Nonnie refers to Heavenly as "faded". But, for Chance Wayne, she still represents youth;⁵ therefore, no matter how much suffering it will cost him, he wants Heavenly back as he also wants his youth back again.

CHANCE

I go back to Heavenly or I don't. I live or die. There's nothing in between for me.

AUNT NONNIE

What you want to go back is your clean, unashamed youth. And you can't. (p.76)

Heavenly's father is to be blamed for everything: for her descending movement in life, and for the things she had to endure after he denied her the right to be happy with Chance while happiness was something worth fighting for.⁶

HEAVENLY

Don't give me your 'Voice of God' speech. Papa, there was a time when you could have saved me, by letting me marry a boy that was still young and clean, but instead you drove him out of St Cloud. And when he came back, you took me out of St Cloud, and tried to force me to marry a fifty-year-old money bag that you wanted something out of -

BOSS

Now, honey -

HEAVENLY

- and then another, another, all of them ones that you wanted something out of. I'd gone, so Chance went away. Tried to compete, make himself big as these big-shots you wanted to use me for a bond with. He went. He tried. The right doors wouldn't open, and so he went in the wrong ones, and - Papa, you married for love, why wouldn't you let me do it, while I was alive, inside, and the boy still clean, still decent?

BOSS

Are you reproaching me for- ?

HEAVENLY

(shouting): Yes, I am, Papa, I am. You married for love, but you wouldn't let me do it, and even though you'd done it, you broke Mama's heart, Miss Lucy had been your mistress - (p.63)

Thus, as in *Strange Interlude*, where the father forbids his daughter Nina to marry her great love Gordon, and for this reason she suffers throughout the whole play trying to find the lost love in a son, lover or husband; in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, as can be seen, there is the same "father-castrating image" which interrupts the normal process of love.⁷ Here, as in *Strange Interlude*, it is Heavenly's father, Boss Finley, who castrates the love-relationship forbidding its continuation.

So, both Heavenly and Nina feel that they cannot bear their situations at home and decide to leave. Nina succeeds while Heavenly is once again dominated by her powerful and selfish father who only wants her for his political campaign.

HEAVENLY

(....) If they'll let me, accept me, I'm going into a convent.

BOSS

(shouting) You ain't going into no convent. This state is a Protestant region and a daughter in a convent would politically ruin me. (p.66)

So, because of Chance and Heavenly's past relationship and the consequences it has brought the girl, Chance is told to leave the town; but he does not want to do it, not without his girl for she represents everything he wants in life; youth and love. Even though he too may be exposed to some kind of tragic ordeal, he wants to run the risk. Scudder has warned him that "the father of this girl wrote out a prescription for you, a sort of medical prescription which is castration". (p.22)

The first apparent bond between Chance and Heavenly is in the importance they give to their love which is shown by means of physical words or expressions, as he comments to the princess:

This is a flashlight photo I took of her, nude, one night on Diamond Key (...). The water is just beginning to lap over her body like it desired her like I did and still do and will always, always. (p.47)

It is also when Chance remembers Heavenly that he brings out his conception of love as being the most relevant thing a man can have in life.⁸ It is only through love, through pleasure in love that people will find happiness.

CHANCE

Princess, the great difference between people in this world is not between the rich and the poor or the good and the evil, the biggest of all differences in this world is between the ones that had or have pleasure in love and those that haven't or hadn't any pleasure in love, but just watched it with envy, sick envy. (p.48)

But the pleasure in love Chance refers to has also brought him, and especially Heavenly, moral and physical decay. Heavenly and Chance's pleasure in love has become a misfortune and now the only thing people remember is the whore's operation she had to undertake. The operation now functions as a curse since it seems to be following the family wherever they go, for they are always questioned about the operation she had to suffer.

BOSS

Discreetly, like you handled the operation you done on my daughter, so discreetly that a hill-billy heckler is shouting me questions about it wherever I speak (p.54)

In the same way, materialism in *Desire Under the Elms* and insanity in the Evanses family in *Strange Interlude* work as curses, for materialism and insanity pursue the protagonists preventing them from reaching their objectives either partially or completely.

Simultaneously to the time spent with Heavenly, Chance also moves into a life of corruption and decay with other girls, with millionaires widows and wives, debutante daughters, etc., as he says to the princess when he tells her his life story.

And at the same time pursued my other vocation (....) Maybe the only one I was truly meant for, love-making (....) names mentioned daily in columns (....)
I gave people more than I took. Middle-aged people I gave back a feeling of youth. Lonely girls? (p.45)

The only thing he was really meant for then was "love-making". This giving-taking action seems to be based only on a physical level, no love has ever been mentioned. People are only trying to satisfy their basic sexual needs. This is the same kind of relationship that Chance has been establishing with Alexandra del Lago once he has returned to St. Cloud as her gigolo. Chance satisfies her sexual needs, and in return, she gives him money; sex and greed are the only things that count for both:

PRINCESS

(....) I want you ... I say now and I mean now, then and not until then will I call downstairs and tell the hotel cashier that I'm sending a young man down with some travelers' checks to cash for me... (p.42)

All the main characters in the play admit Chance's corrupted life and Chance himself also feels guilty and recognizes his defeat in life.⁹ He, as well as Heavenly, have not achieved anything in life except sterility, failure, and regret as can be seen from these different quotations:

CHANCE

You're not going to leave this room till you've explained to me what you've been hinting at about my girl in St Cloud.

SCUDDER

There's a lot more to this which we feel ought not to be talked about to anyone, least of all to you, since you have turned into a criminal degenerate, the only right term for you. (p.22)

TOM JUNIOR

Is Chance Wayne insane?

SCUDDER

Is a criminal degenerate sane or insane is a question that lots of law courts haven't been able to settle. (p.56-7)

BOSS

Nonnie, you got a whole lot to answer for.

NONNIE

Have I?

BOSS

Yes, you sure have, Nonnie. You favored Chance Wayne, encouraged, aided, and abetted him in his corruption of Heavenly over a long, long time. (p.58)

AUNT NONNIE

I've got one thing to tell you, Chance, get out of St Cloud.

CHANCE

Why does everybody treat me like a low criminal in the town I was born in? (p.72)

CHANCE

Who in hell's talking! Look. (He turns her forcibly to the mirror.) Look in that mirror. What do you see in that mirror?

PRINCESS

I see - Alexandra del Lago, artist and star! Now it's your turn, you look and what do you see?

CHANCE

I see - Chance Wayne ...

PRINCESS

The face of a Franz Albertzart, a face that tomorrow's sun will touch without mercy. (...). We are two monsters, but with this difference between us. Out of the passion and torment of my existence I have created a thing that I can unveil, a sculputure, almost heroic, that I can unveil, which is true. But you? You've come back to the town you were born in, to a girl that won't see you because you put such rot in her body she had to be gutted and hung on a butcher's hook, like a chicken dressed for Sunday. (p.107)

PRINCESS

Chance, we've got to go on.

CHANCE

Go on to where? I couldn't go past my youth, but I've gone past it.

(The 'lament' fades in, continues through the scene to the last curtain.)

PRINCESS

You're still young, Chance.

CHANCE

Princess, the age of some people can only be calculated by the level of - level of - rot in them. And by that measure I'm ancient. (p.110)

So, unable to achieve the dream of recapturing youth and love, the only thing both Heavenly and Chance face in life is failure and regret. That is the only consequence that their love-affair has brought them once their abortive

attempt to regain love has shown that only sterility and decay accompany both lovers.

We have seen how the father-castrating image, the lost innocence, corruption, and finally the infection itself have led to castration of both Heavenly and Chance. Castrated, both feel physically and spiritually dead, it seems as if the corruptions of the other characters were all transferred to Heavenly and Chance. Ultimately, they too serve as scapegoats so that the others can achieve the cleansing and atonement for their corrupted life.

Concluding, *Sweet Bird of Youth* has not presented childmurder or even abortion in its strict sense; Heavenly's castration through the operation, however, can be considered, in literary terms, as a variant to the theme of infanticide, once the protagonist of the play, by having her ovaries removed, is a sterile person with no more possibilities of bearing any children. Symbolically speaking, the operation she has forcefully undertaken stands for all the possible children that she could have had but which have been denied to her. Ultimately, all her potential children have been metaphorically murdered by means of an operation which has left her sterile until the end of her days.

Thus, unlike in O'Neill's plays, where there could be found a revival in life or a hope for it, in *Sweet Bird of Youth* Tennessee Williams shows the decay of two lovers with no more hope in life. Heavenly and Chance's sexual contact has brought them a succession of misfortunes that culminate, through castration, in the characters' physical decay and spiritual death.¹⁰

NOTES

¹ BROCKETT, O. *The Theatre*; an introduction. 3.ed. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. p.374.

² BROCKETT, p.376.

³ WILLIAMS, T. *Sweet Bird of Youth, A Street Named Desire, The Glass menagerie*. Ed. by E.Martin Browne. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971. p.14-111. All quotations refer to this edition and will be followed by the page number.

⁴ In *Tragedy in American Drama*, FLEMING JR. asserts that the sexual intercourse Heavenly had with Chance led to an abortion. "When she was fifteen she had sexual intercourse with Chance, then she had an abortion which was arranged by her father and which she resents." (Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. p.129. Ph.D., University of Toledo, 1972.)

⁵ Youth was not the only thing Chance wanted from Heavenly, he also wanted love, as N.TISCHLER points in *Tennessee Williams: rebellious*. New York, Citadel Press, 1961. p.268. "Love seemed a cure for failure."

⁶ TISCHLER, p.268, confirms the idea of Heavenly's father as an obstacle for both Heavenly and Chance conquering their love through marriage. "She remained a single permanent thing for him in a changing world. Her father, however, did not approve of their marrying. He had in mind a more useful political or financial alliance."

⁷ The figure of the father is illustrated by B.NELSON in *Tennessee Williams*; the man and his work. New York, I. Obolensky, 1961. p.267. "Once more Williams is involved with an Oedipal situation in which an authoritarian father image is prepared to destroy the sexual transgressor against his woman. Both Heavenly and Chance are punished by castration and the father is triumphant."

⁸ As W.FLEMING JR. states (p.132), "Chance brings out an important Williams' concept here. The playwright implies that in order for anyone to exist happily he must be successful in physical love as well as spiritual love. When this does not occur, tragedy is likely to take place".

⁹ NELSON also mentions the idea of Chance having recognized his defeat in life. "(...) his final ruin is complete in his recognition of the falsity of his dream and the waste of his life. The sweet bird of youth is gone forever and all that remains are the skeletons of decay and memory." (p.264.)

¹⁰ NELSON affirms: "(...) Chance's final realization that he has sunk to the rock bottom. He has discovered what he has done to Heavenly and with this knowledge the last vestiges of his dream are shattered. As the play closes he awaits literal and figurative castration with a stoic and masochist- serenity." (p.268)

2.4 THE AMERICAN DREAM

Albee's first play in which the theme of childmurder is present is *The American Dream*, which was first performed at the York Playhouse, in New York, 1961.* Albee's plays, however, are not placed inside the realistic tradition of O'Neill or inside the new realism of T. Williams, for by attacking bourgeois conventions and attitudes, they remind us of the Theater of the Absurd. As we know, in the Absurd Theater, "all the ideas about man's significance, knowledge, and behavior are equally fictitious and illogical. Man, adrift in a chaotic universe, constructs whatever fictions he can to help him survive".¹ But, even belonging to the Absurd Drama, this does not exclude myth, as in the other plays.

Basically speaking, *The American Dream* shows an American family, Mommy, Daddy and Grandma, in search of a replacement for their adopted child who, as he did not fit his parents' expectations of an ideal son, was murdered by them.

*Edward Albee (1928-) belongs to the Theater of the Absurd because his work attacks the foundations of the American optimism. His first play which places him in the Absurd Theater is *The Zoo Story*. Albee also wrote some social criticism with *The Death of Bessie Smith*, but it is with *The American Dream* that he develops the subject-matter of the Absurd Theater. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is Albee's first full-length play which placed him into the first rank of contemporary American playwrights.

Mrs. Baker is in charge of finding a substitute for the child since she has also been responsible for its sale. Notwithstanding, the missing member of the family comes back afterwards, in the shape of a handsome young man, apparently the prototype of the American Dream Man.

Childmurder is introduced in the plot by means of an exposition — "that part which tells the audience what it has to know about the past, the antecedent action"² — in which Grandma and Mrs. Baker are talking about a past event. Mrs. Baker, the visitor, ignores the reason why she has been called to that house and asks Grandma, who in turn, starts telling her the supposedly true story of a childmurder. And she starts telling her about it in the same way people tell stories to children. "Once upon a time, not very long ago ...",³ suggesting that all that is to be told is a fable or some kind of unrealistic game which Grandma and consequently Mommy and Daddy have created to satisfy their needs of actually becoming a mommy, a daddy and a grandma. But since Mommy and Daddy cannot have any children of their own they decide to materialize their dream and adopt a child. But this dreamy kid is to become a nightmare for them in the sense that all the child's attitudes are considered so awkward that they confine it to a brutal death. Little by little, in a detailed manner, Grandma describes the way the "bumble" is murdered by having its parts torn away. And Mrs. Baker is a part of this cruel world for she anticipates all the monstrous actions done to the child.

GRANDMA

But that was only the beginning. Then it turned out it only had eyes for its Daddy.

MRS. BAKER

For its Daddy! Why, any self-respecting woman would have gouged those eyes right out of its head.

GRANDMA

Well, she did. That's what she did.
(p.99-100)

After having eliminated the boy's eyes, the parents move on to another monstrous action with no plausible reason for it; they decide to castrate the child.

GRANDMA

That's what they thought. But then, it began to develop an interest in its you-know-what.

MRS. BAKER

In its you-know-what! Well! I hope they cut its hands off at the wrists!

GRANDMA

Well, yes, they did that eventually. But first, they cut off its you-know-what.

MRS. BAKER

A much better idea!

GRANDMA

That's what they thought. But after they cut off its you-know-what, it still put its hands under the covers, looking for its you-know-what. So, finally, they had to cut off its hands at the wrists.

MRS. BAKER

Naturally!

GRANDMA

And it was such a resentful bumble. Why one day it called its Mommy a dirty name.

MRS. BAKER

Well, I hope they cut its tongue out!

GRANDMA

Of course. And then, as it got bigger, they found out all sorts of terrible things

about it, like: it didn't have a head on its shoulders, it had no guts, it was spineless, its feet were made of clay ... just dreadful things.

MRS. BAKER
Dreadful.

GRANDMA
So you can understand how they became discouraged.

MRS. BAKER
I certainly can! And what did they do?

GRANDMA
What did they do? Well, for the last straw, it finally up and died; and you can imagine how that made them feel, their having paid for it, and all. So, they called up the lady who sold them the bumble in the first place and told her to come right over to their apartment. They wanted satisfaction, they wanted their money back. That's what they wanted. (p.100-1)

All this detailed description of the "dreamy child's" mutilation shows the degenerative process of a dream; in the same way that Nina in *Strange Interlude* saw her dreams of becoming a mother shattered when she aborted her child, Mommy and Daddy dream to have a child who would represent the ideal American child, a boy who would fulfill their hopes of being actually "Mommy and Daddy". But this child turns out to be the opposite of the ideals the mother and father were pursuing in a child, so they see as the only solution to mutilate the child little by little till it comes reduced to nothing and dies. Contrary to Nina who has to abort because of the curse of insanity, Mommy and Daddy have no concrete reasons for killing. Only because the boy does not satisfy its parents' dream, they feel that it is their rightful duty to destroy it.

Thus, since the bumble did not work out, Mommy and Daddy thought of calling the lady who had sold it to them and ask for a refund. So, the adoption of the child does not seem to be anything else than the acquisition of some kind of material good. Once the child did not give them satisfaction, and that is what they paid for, money is the only thing that counts now.

Nevertheless, since the beginning of the play there is a search for the ideal family life which is both deformed and destroyed. This ideal is deformed in the sense that there is a married couple (Mommy and Daddy) and a Grandma who went to live with them; but, actually, they are only persons who are in search of an identity of a grandma, a daddy and a mommy once there is no son for them to really accomplish the tasks of a father, a mother or a grandmother. And it is destroyed because after the adoption of the son, the child does not seem to satisfy the parents' ideal of a son, and so, they kill it.⁴

The disintegration of the ideal family life is also present once there also seems to be no sense of togetherness or understanding among the members of the family. For, as Mommy talks, she has to force Daddy to pay attention to what she is telling him. He does not seem to be interested even though he tries to demonstrate the opposite by repeating what she has last said — a tendency explored by the Absurd Theater.

MOMMY

(....) And I said "Oh, it's just lovely."
And so I bought it. (Stops, looks at
Daddy)

DADDY

(To show he is paying attention) And so
you bought it. (p.59.

So, the non-communication between the characters and consequently their lack of understanding, compels them "to create" a human being capable of keeping their dreams alive. They want the son to personify the perfection they seem to be aiming at, through an ideal family, but can never reach it.⁵

But as it happened in *Strange Interlude* where Nina's second son came to replace her previously shattered dream of becoming a mother, in *The American Dream*, a new character also appears; a young man, to take the place of the previously adopted child and later to become the representative of the American Dream.

At first, the only point about the young man to come into consideration is his appearance. Grandma is amazed by the young man's good looks.

GRANDMA

I said, my, my, aren't you something.

YOUNG MAN

Oh. Thank you.

GRANDMA

You don't sound very enthusiastic.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, I'm ... I'm used to it.

GRANDMA

Yup ... Yup. You know if I were about a hundred and fifty years younger I could go for you.

YOUNG MAN

Yes, I imagine so.

GRANDMA

Unh-unh ... will you look at those muscles!

YOUNG MAN

(Flexing his muscles)

Yes, they're quite good, aren't they?

GRANDMA

Boy, they sure are. They natural?

YOUNG MAN

Well the basic structure was there, but I've done some work, too ... you know, in a gym.

GRANDMA

I'll bet you have. You ought to be in the movies, boy
(....)

GRANDMA

Oh, that's nice. And will you look at that face!

YOUNG MAN

Yes, it's quite good, isn't it? Clean-cut, midwest farm boy type, almost insultingly good-looking in a typically American way. Good profile, straight nose, honest eyes, wonderful smile ... (p.106-7)

Once Grandma is the first character to get acquainted with the young man, she is also the first person to notice something familiar in the young man's appearance. It seems obvious that this familiarity has great significance in the play, it is not merely accidental; the young man comes as a survivor from the past.

GRANDMA

Hey! You look familiar.

YOUNG MAN

Hm? Pardon?

GRANDMA

I said, you look familiar.

YOUNG MAN

Well, I've done some modeling.

GRANDMA

No... no. I don't mean that. You look familiar. (p.112-3)

After perceiving all the young man's physical qualities and the familiarity he conveys, it becomes apparent that Grandma cannot think of anything else besides seeing that young man as the embodiment of the "American Dream". The prototype of what any American family would expect from a son and therefore the positive side of the bumble.

GRANDMA

Yup. Boy, you know what you are don't you? You're the American Dream, that's what you are. All those other people, they don't know what they're talking about. You ... you are the American Dream. (p.108)

But if on the one hand the young man is introduced as the prototype of the "American Dream Man" for his physical qualities, on the other hand he feels he is not a complete being.

YOUNG MAN

No, no. It's part of the interviews. I'll be happy to tell you. It's that I have no talents at all, except what you see ... my person, my body, my face. In every other way I am incomplete, and I must therefore ... compensate. (p.113)

So, the American Dream Man, who has come to replace the mutilated and consequently murdered child, seems to be only a dream or even a parody of the American Man. As the concept of the New World Hero is given by R.W.G. LEWIS in the American Adam:

(....) a radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources.⁶

Lewis also points out that the American Adam would also be the central figure of the Dream of Success, the Self-Made-Man free from materialism and possessing a sense of humanity, in other words, the archetype of the American hero.

Consequently, the young man, portrayed in this play, is only a dream because, besides his physical qualities, he is described as an imperfect being, therefore the opposite of what derives from the Edenic mythological figure of the American Adam. The young man, epitomizes a character who is closer to the American Nightmare than to the American Dream for he himself admits that he consists only of muscles and a healthy exterior, but is dead inside, drained of genuine feeling and the capacity for experience. Besides that, he will also do anything for money.

So, as the young man starts to reveal himself, all the facts related to his feelings of incompleteness can be connected to the bumble's mutilation. If the bumble was once physically crippled till nothing remained, the young man also has a feeling that nothing, except his good looks, remains. He has also been sacrificed as the bumble had once been. The bumble had been his twin brother, as the text indicates,

YOUNG MAN

We were identical twins ... he and I ... not fraternal ... identical, we were derived from the same ovum; and in this, in what we were twins not from separate ova but from the same one, we had a kinship such as you cannot imagine. (p.114)

and all the things that were done to his twin brother have also affected him.

In this way, there is a specular structure developed in this play, since everything that the young man tells grandma about his moral defects has its correspondence with the physical injuries that his twin brother had suffered by Mommy and Daddy.

BUMBLE	YOUNG MAN
<p>1. "(....) One night it cried its heart out, (....)"</p> <p>Lack of heart.</p>	<p>1. "(....) Once ... it was as if all at once my heart became numb ... and from that time I have been unable to love."</p> <p>Lack of love.</p>
<p>2. "(....) Why, any self-respecting woman would have gouged those eyes right out of its head."</p> <p>Lack of eyes.</p>	<p>2. "Once ... I was asleep at the time I awoke and my eyes were burning. And since that time I have been unable to see anything, anything with pity, with affection ... with anything but ... cool disinterest."</p> <p>Lack of seeing with affection.</p>
<p>3. "(....) But then, it began to develop an interest in its you-know-what." "(....) they cut off its you-know-what."</p> <p>Lack of sexual organs.</p>	<p>3. "And my groin ... even there... since one time ... one specific agony ... since then I have not been able to love anyone with my body."</p> <p>Lack of giving physical love.</p>
<p>4. "Well! I hope they cut its hands off at the wrists." "(....) Well, yes, they did that eventually."</p> <p>Lack of hands.</p>	<p>4. "And even my hands ... I cannot touch another person and feel love."</p> <p>Lack of touching or feeling love.</p>
<p>5. "(....) They cut its tongue out! (....) it didn't have a head on its shoulders, it had no guts, it was spineless, its feet were made of clay (....) it finally up and died."</p> <p>Physical death.</p>	<p>5. "And there is more ... there are more losses, but it all comes down to this; I no longer have the capacity to feel anything. I have no emotions. I have been drained, torn asunder disemboweled. I have, now, only my person ... my body, my face."</p> <p>Spiritual death.</p>

The bumble's lack of heart, brings to the young man an inability to love. The same thing happens when the bumble's adoptive parents decide to pull out the boy's eyes making it incapable of seeing anything; this also brings to the young man an inability to see anything with affection. When the bumble's sexual organs are cut off, the young man also feels he is not able to give physical love to anyone. Finally, when the bumble's hands are cut off, the young man feels no possibility of touching or even feeling love with his own hands. The result of all this mutilation is death, either physical in the bumble or spiritual in the young man. Therefore, everything that was physically injured in the adoptive child is now lacking in the young man's inner self. In order to compensate for everything that has been taken away from him, he lets people use everything he has; he lets people love him but he cannot love back, he lets people touch him but he cannot touch back, he lets them draw pleasure from his groin but he cannot feel anything. And, it is only after the young man finishes telling grandma the story of his life that she fully realizes the relationships between the adoptive child and the newcoming young man. Or even more than that: she seems to notice that the rejected child has now become the young man who is being worshipped as the American Adam.

GRANDMA

I was mistaken ... before. I don't know you from somewhere, but I knew ... once ... someone very much like you ... or, very much as perhaps you were. (p.115)

So, once the young man is presented as having the same faults as the bumble did, what actually happens is that through the characters, Edward Albee is speaking ironically about the mythological figure of the American hero, he is making a parody, through the young man's materialism and lack of moral virtues, of the uncorrupted Adam. For, as it has been observed, the bumble has been killed for it did not achieve the ideals of perfection the parents wanted for a son, and now the young man is seen as possessing the same imperfections as the bumble did, notwithstanding he is ironically worshipped as the American Dream.

MOMMY

(Herself again, circling the young man, feeling his arm, poking him). Yes, sir! Yes, sirree! Now this is more like it. Now this is a great deal more like it! Daddy! Come see. Come see if this isn't a great deal more like it. (p.124)

As in *Strange Interlude*, *The American Dream* also presents a substitute for the child who went wrong and died; it is the young man who ironically represents the embodiment of the American hero, therefore the materialization of his parents' aspirations of what a son should look like.

Concluding, it is necessary to say that even though in this play infanticide can be considered metaphorical, there is still a cause for it. For, unlike the previous plays, where the reasons for committing the crimes were predominantly negative, (materialism, insanity, venereal disease), here the child's apparently normal attitudes lead both father and mother to kill their adoptive son in a horrid ritual just because it did not completely satisfy them.

In Albee's *The American Dream*, the adoptive child represents the mythological figure of the scapegoat in the sense that it has been mutilated and killed so that its parents can reach the ideal family life they are pursuing and which seems to be threatened by the physically imperfect child. Thus, the baby passes through a shocking ritual, which culminates in its death, in order to atone for its imperfections which are ultimately the parents' own deficiencies. Mother and father have transferred to the child all the imperfections they actually have and by killing the child, which thus becomes a scapegoat, they think they can achieve the ideals of physical fitness in the family through another and more acceptable son. In this way, the analyzed motives which are so apparent in this play as the disintegration of the ideal family life, the search of the uncorrupted Adam, thus bringing myth and the tradition of the Absurd together, lead Mommy and Daddy to kill the child for it represents neither the ideal of family nor the American Adam.

NOTES

¹ BROCKETT, O.G. *The Theatre; an introduction*. 3.ed. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. p.392.

² BARNET, S. *A Short Guide to Writing about Literature*. 2.ed. Boston, Little, Brown, 1971. p.95.

³ ALBEE, E. *The American Dream; The Zoo Story*. Chicago, New American Library, 1961. p.96. All quotations refer to this edition and will be followed by the page number.

⁴ As Martin ESSLIN comments in *The Theatre of the Absurd*, "the American Dream (...) fairly and squarely attacks the ideals of progress, optimism, and faith in the national mission, and pours scorn on the sentimental ideals of family life, togetherness and physical fitness". (Rev. enl.ed. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968. p.302.)

⁵ Closely related to the concept of an idealistic family, of an idealistic American dream man, is what W.GUERIN describes as "the Myth of Edenic Possibilities, which reflects the hope of creating a second Paradise, not in the next world and not outside time, but in the bright New World of the American continent. From the time of its first settlement American was seen from European eyes as a land of boundless opportunity, a place where man, after centuries of poverty, misery, and corruption, could have a second chance to fulfill, in reality, his mythic yearnings for a return to Paradise". *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York, Harper and Row, 1966. p.142.

⁶ Quoted by GUERIN, p.145.

2.5 WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

Edward Albee's first three-act play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*,¹ written in 1962, is about an irritable couple in their forties, George and Martha, who come home from a party and start insulting themselves and their two guests, a younger and seemingly happier but actually as miserable a couple. The hosts and their guests, go in for "fun and games" and it is under the pretense of fun and games that the action proceeds. The play is a succession of different games in which there is always an aggressor and its opponent. In the final game, George brings up the crucial fact that Martha and he have never had a son and could not have a child. After all the fun they have been having and the plays they have been playing, they are brought to the point of renouncing the games they have been playing for so many years. The time for illusion is over and husband and wife can face life together.

As suggested, the whole play is presented in terms of several different games which both the hosts and guests are involved in. As the theme of childmurder is developed inside the games of the play, it is presented through non-realistic devices, as games usually are. In this way, like in *The American Dream*, where the story of the childmurder was told suggesting an imaginary situation, this play (including the

kindermord theme), is placed within fantasy and illusion: illusion of an imaginary motherhood and of an imaginary son who later on will be destroyed. Nevertheless, the destruction of the invented son can be seen as a possibility of presenting a new reality in the characters' lives away from all the fantasies they have created.

As it has been stated above, the child in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, is imaginary. George has told the guests: "Yes, Martha doesn't have pregnancies at all" (p.97). Suggesting that they haven't had any children of their own, even though throughout the play, there is a constant presence of a fancied child who is treated by his parents as a real being.

As the play moves on, George reinforces the idea that Martha has never got pregnant by reassuring the notion that the son both mention is only a metaphorical being created to satisfy their needs. But in spite of what George says about Martha not having pregnancies, the conversation about the kid is carried on in a very realistic way.

NICK

Well, no ... I don't imagine so ... now.
Do you have any other kids? Do you have
any daughters, or anything?

GEORGE

(As if it's a great joke) Do we have any
what?

NICK

Do you have any ... I mean, do you have
only one ... kid ... uh ... your son?

GEORGE

(With a private knowledge) Oh no ... just
one ... one boy ... our son. (p.97-8)

GEORGE

Isn't Martha something? Here we are, on the eve of our boy's homecoming, the eve of his twenty-first birthday, the eve of his majority ... and Martha says don't talk about him. (p.214)

Since all the main characters, in a way, lack communication and understanding, or as Thomas PORTER states: "their 'communication' is a double monologue, each trying to hurt the other with invective and name calling",² and also because the characters want to avoid confronting problems, they create ideal situations. If we think back to the characters in *The American Dream*, they too created a human being capable of keeping their dreams alive. And, like in *The American Dream*, where Mommy and Daddy wanted to achieve their ideals of perfection through an imaginary and perfect son, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, George and Martha also invent a son who also seems to follow the standards of perfection for his parents.

MARTHA

It was true! Beautiful; wise; perfect.
(p.222)

So both *The American Dream* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, show the child as a representative of the prototype of the "American Man"; an ideal which the parents have wanted to achieve but which they have been denied of. So, as a means of compensating for their lack of success, they transfer all virtues that the prototype of the "American hero" possesses to their idealized sons.

As George and Martha's son is imaginary, they have given him the physical appearance they want him to have,

modelling him the way they would want him to look like. Martha wants the kid to look like her but George also wants the child to have the same appearance as he does, as if the physical beauty the boy has could be transferred to the parents.

MARTHA

(To George) Our son does not have blue hair ... or blue eyes, for that matter. He has green eyes ... like me.

GEORGE

He has blue eyes, Martha

MARTA

(Determined) Green.

GEORGE

(Patronizing) Blue, Martha.

MARTHA

(Ugly) GREEN! (to Honey and Nick) He has the loveliest green eyes ... they aren't all flaked with brown and gray, you know ... hazel ... they're real green ... deep, pure green eyes. like mine. (p.74-5)

Since the first act, a kind of negative connotation is given to the idea of revealing things to other people about the child.³ There seems to be a kind of implied agreement between husband and wife to keep the secret about the existence of the kid private. Once Martha disregards George's continuous warnings, the child will be exposed and this exposure of the kid will later on culminate in its murder.

MARTHA

(Really angered) Yeah? Well, I'll start in on the kid if I want to.

GEORGE

Just leave the kid out of this.

MARTHA

(Threatening) He's mine as much as he is yours. I'll talk about him if I want to.

GEORGE

I'd advise against it, Martha. (p.18-9)

The child had been a secret between Martha and George but it is Martha who reveals it to Honey who, in turn, goes to George and Nick, her husband, telling them she knows about the existence of George and Martha's son.

HONEY

(To George brightly) I didn't know until just a minute ago that you had a son.

GEORGE

(Wheeling, as if struck from behind) WHAT?

HONEY

A son! I hadn't known.

NICK

You to know and me to find out. Well, he must be quite a big ...

HONEY

Twenty-one ... twenty-one tomorrow ... tomorrow's his birthday.

NICK

(A victorious smile) Well!

GEORGE

(To Honey) She told you about him?

HONEY

(Flustered) Well, yes. Well, I mean ...

GEORGE

(Nailing it down) She told you about him.

HONEY

(A nervous giggle) Yes. (p.44-5)

But the revelation of the existence of the child seems to be a very controversial topic. George, at the beginning, tells Martha not to involve the boy in the conver-

sation going on at the party, as he does not want to discuss the child with anybody else except themselves. For George, the boy represents a nostalgic ideal of a son and therefore has to remain so. But once Martha has brought up the conversation, he is forced to talk about it.

MARTHA
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT!

GEORGE
I'll bet you don't (To Honey and Nick)
Martha does not want to talk about it ...
him. Martha is sorry she brought it up ...
him.

HONEY
(Idiotically) When's the little bugger
coming home? (Giggles).

GEORGE
Yes, Martha ... since you had the bad taste
to bring the matter up in the first place ...
when is the little bugger coming home? (p.70)

As the play moves on, George again warns Martha not to include the little bugger into the conversation with the guests. And, whenever George talks about leaving the child out of their talk, he threatens her.

GEORGE
Now, you've already sprung a leak about
you-know-what.
(....)

MARTHA
(A duck) What? What?

GEORGE
... about the apple of our eye ... the
sprout ... the little bugger ... (spits it
out) ... our son ... and if you start in on
this other business, I warn you Martha,
it's going to make me angry. (p.83)

But it is Martha once more who insists upon bringing up the subject matter of the child even though George does not want to talk about it at all, especially because they are not alone and George does not want to have complicity in regard to their made-up son.

GEORGE

(To them all) I didn't want to talk about him at all ... I would have been perfectly happy not to discuss the whole subject ... I never want to talk about it.

MARTHA

Yes you do.

GEORGE

When we're alone, maybe. (p.121)

Disregarding George's appeals, Martha reveals to the guests the whole story of their son, but at the same time George finds the solution for it and destroys Martha's fantasy of motherhood, of having a child.⁴ He, in a way, anticipates what his solution will be: the killing of the boy.

GEORGE

(....) I've got it! I've got it Martha ...!
(....) our ... son ... is ... dead! (p.180)

The first idea of death is given in the way George shows the presence of his boy in the house. The son is seen in a metaphorical way when the snapdragons appear in the doorway and George refers to the flowers as if they actually were for a dead person.

MARTHA

(Giggles) Sorry, baby; go on now; open the little door.

NICK

(With great rue) Christ.
(He flings open the door, and a hand thrusts into the opening a great bunch of snapdragons; they stay there for a moment. NICK strains his eyes to see who is behind them)

MARTHA

Oh, how lovely!

GEORGE

(Appearing in the doorway, the snapdragons covering his face; speaks in a hideously cracked falsetto)
Flores; flores para los muertos. Flores.

MARTHA

Ha, ha, ha Ha!

GEORGE

(A step into the room, lowers the flowers; sees NICK; his face becomes gleeful; he opens his arms) Sonny, you've come home for your birthday! At last! (p.195)

So, it is during this last game that the play reaches its climax. George and Martha describe the boy's life as if it really existed and at the same time they envelop it by an unreal atmosphere by the way George orders Martha to narrate it. It is a recitation and therefore a memorized discourse which is to be represented by its authors whenever it is needed.

GEORGE

Good boy; you'll go far. All right, Martha; your recitation please.

MARTHA

(From far away) What, George?

GEORGE

(Prompting) "Our son ..."

MARTHA

All right. Our son. Our son was born in a September night, a night not unlike tonight, though tomorrow, and twenty ... one ... years ago. (p.217)

And thus Martha's memorized description moves on, Martha retelling the idealistic story of their son sometimes prompted by George, as actors do when they are acting out a play, so that she does not miss a single detail. Martha is telling Nick and Honey the story of a child they have wanted to have. As they never had one, they create a being and include it in the game being now performed. As it has been said, it is George who interrupts Martha in her description whenever he thinks a correction becomes necessary. Both, husband and wife, become so involved with the things being mentioned about the boy, that their obsession with their own creation is easily noticed.

24

MARTHA

(....) those four days ... and animal crackers, and the bow and arrow he kept under his bed ...

GEORGE

... the arrows with rubber cups at their tip ...

MARTHA

... at their tip, which he kept beneath his bed ...

GEORGE

Why? Why, Martha?

MARTHA

... for fear... for fear of ...

GEORGE

For fear. Just that: for fear. (p.219)

Once the child is completely revealed to both guests, George feels he has the right to kill it, of destroying it in front of Nick and Honey in the same way that Martha has shown it to them. Martha has disregarded their agreement; therefore, George thinks he has the right to stop the boy's

evolutionary process in their minds and metaphorically he kills him. Unlike the delivery process which was accomplished by both George and Martha, now it is only George without Martha's acquiescence who puts an end to Jim.

GEORGE

Martha ... (Long pause) ... our son is dead.
(Silence)

He was ... killed ... late in the afternoon. ...
(Silence)

(A tiny chuckle) on a country road, with his learner's permit in his pocket, he swerved, to avoid a porcupine, and drove straight into a. ...

MARTHA

(Rigid fury) YOU ... CAN'T ... DO ... THAT!

GEORGE

... large tree.

(....)

MARTHA

(Quivering with rage and loss) NO! NO!
YOU CANNOT DO THAT! YOU CAN'T DECIDE THAT
FOR YOURSELF! I WILL NOT LET YOU DO THAT!

(....)

GEORGE

(Tenderly) I have the right, Martha. We never spoke of it; that's all. I could kill him any time I wanted to.

MARTHA

But why? Why?

GEORGE

You broke our rule, baby. You mentioned him ... you mentioned him to someone else.
(p.231-2,236)

The killing of the child can be regarded as the killing of all the misunderstandings and aggressions between George and Martha and also the killing of their illusions.⁵ They have exorcised all the evil that remained within them-

selves and now only peace and quietness envelops them. They now see each other as people who need care and protection and who aim to face truth together.

MARTHA
(Pause) I'm cold.

GEORGE
It's late.

MARTHA
Yes.

GEORGE
(Long silence) It will be better.

MARTHA
(Long silence) I don't ... know.

GEORGE
It will be ... maybe.

MARTHA
I'm ... not ... sure.

GEORGE
No.

MARTHA
Just ... us?

GEORGE
Yes.

(....)

GEORGE
(Puts his hand gently on her shoulder; she puts her head back and sings to her, very softly)
Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf
Virginia Woolf
Virginia Woolf, (p.240-1)

So, as in *Desire Under the Elms* where the killing of the recently born baby stands for the end of all misunderstanding, and the consequent resurrection for a new life where love triumphs, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* the characters look for truth which is found when all their fan-

tasies and illusions are exposed, dramatized and finally destroyed in the figure of the imagined son, created and then killed. The main reason for the metaphorical killing of the child is the gradual revelation of the son to the guests. The boy is a tabooed being and therefore cannot be exposed to the others. But since the child represents an obstacle for both George and Martha to find truth in life, he has to be killed; he becomes thus a scapegoat because, after he has been sacrificed, the parents seem to experiment reconciliation in their married life; consequently, a re-birth for both George and Martha takes place.

NOTES

¹ALBEE, E. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* New York, Atheneum, 1978. 242 p. All quotations refer to this edition and will be followed by the page number.

²PORTER, T. *Myth and Modern American Drama*. Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1969. p.240.

³This has a close relationship with the custom of some savage tribes who believed that personal names were tabooed, therefore they would not be revealed to the enemies. FRAZER's *The Golden Bough*, a study in magic and religion (Abr.ed. London, Macmillan, 1974. p.322) gives us some examples to illustrate this idea. "Thus, to begin with the savages who rank at the bottom of the social scale, we are told that the secrecy with which among the Australian aborigines personal names are often kept from general knowledge arises in great measure from the belief that an enemy who knows your name, has in it something which he can use magically to your detriment. 'An Australian black', says another writer, 'is always very unwilling to tell his real name, and there is no doubt that this reluctance is due to the fear that through his name he may be injured by sorcerers'."

⁴The same idea is presented by PORTER (p.235): "(....) her (Martha's) image as the Earth-mother who teems with fertility and sex appeal is destroyed (....) once George has destroyed the baby, Martha is infertile and childkike".

⁵For W.FLEMING JR. in *Tragedy in American Drama*, "the sacrifice has been made. The child is dead. The child which they believed unified them, yet because of its non-existence separated them, has been ritualistic killed, ironically bringing them together, perhaps in love". (Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. p.237. Ph.D., University of Toledo, 1972.)

2.6 BURIED CHILD

Even though more than five decades have passed between O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*,* the theme of infanticide reappears with the same vigour. And, if, on the one hand, both authors have dealt with the same theme using their own particular formula, on the other, they both point out to realistic devices when treating the kindermord theme. Unlike Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* or *The American Dream* where the theme is in a way "metaphorical" or even in Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth* or O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* where infanticide in its strict sense is not present but there are variants of it, now, in Sam Shepard's play, infanticide in its strict sense is again present.

*Sam Shepard (1943-). He entered the theatrical world as an actor with a troupe called the Bishop's Company Repertory Players. In 1963 he left the company to seek his fortune as an actor in New York City. A Rockefeller Foundation gave Shepard the freedom to write full time. London audiences became acquainted with Shepard's work through Off and Off Off Shaftesbury Avenue productions of *Melodrama Play*, *Chicago*, and *La Turista* in the late 1960's. In 1971 Shepard moved to England, and remained there for four years; after returning to the United States, he settled in California and became playwright-in-residence at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco. Among his plays we have *Killer's Head*, *Suicide in B-Flat*, *Cowboy Mouth*; but his first real success in terms of commercial theater is *Buried Child*.

Buried Child won the Pulitzer Prize for drama on April 16, 1979. And is considered experimental theater, a new kind of drama which emerged in the seventies, off-Broadway, influenced by the Absurdists.

It is a three-act tragicomedy about a decayed rural American family who bears guilty secrets of incest and infanticide. Dodge, in his seventies, is the father, whose life does not exceed the physical space of a decayed living-room, and whose only apparent wish is to remain there facing the T.V. and drinking whiskey. Tilden and Bradley are his sons; the first one, unable to get around by himself returns to his parents' house while the last one, an amputee, feels himself incapable of leading a life without his parents being around.

During one evening, Vince, Tilden's son, and his girlfriend Shelly arrive to visit them after a period of six years without stopping by, but nobody seems to recognize him. Shelly then, forces them to recollect the whole story of their past lives and brings to the surface the fact that an infanticide has been committed. Dodge has drowned his son (who is actually Tilden's). This infanticide has remained secretly kept within the members of the family for so many years that nobody seems to remember that the incident has really happened. But, gradually, references to the buried child are made until, at the end of the play, the whole story of the childmurder is revealed.

Before presenting the theme of infanticide in *Buried Child* it becomes necessary to focus on the father/son's relationships in this play. In the same way that *The American*

Dream showed the disintegration of the ideals of family life, here too the family relationships are somewhat shattered and they could have led to possible childmurders. If they haven't actually happened, implicitly the wish still remains. Therefore, it is worthwhile mentioning that since the first act, what becomes apparent is the parents' relationship with their sons, especially the father's involvement with them.

The first son to appear on stage is Tilden, (their oldest one). Dodge's relationship with him is not a standard father/son kinship. The father does not seem to care about the son up to the point that he wishes him dead. If this is not actually any kind of childmurder, it can otherwise be considered a variant to it. If infanticide has not taken place, the father now regrets it.

TILDEN

Well, you gotta talk or you'll die.

DODGE

Who told you that?

TILDEN

That's what I know. I found that out in New Mexico. I thought I was dying but just lost my voice.

DODGE

Were you with somebody?

TILDEN

I was alone. I thought I was dead.

DODGE

Might as well have been. What'd you come back here for?¹

Similarly, his relationship with Bradley, his next oldest son, is in a way awkward. Dodge rejects his son and this feeling of rejection moves on until the father denies

that Bradley could even be his son. This denial can also be considered a kind of "metaphorical" murder because there is an implicit wish that the son does not exist in his life, does not belong to him. And, in the same way that an infanticide severs all the ties between parents and children, the denial of a son also destroys the spiritual bonds between father and son.

DODGE

He was born in a goddam hog wallow! That's where he was born and that's where he belongs! He doesn't belong in this house!

HALIE

(she stops) I don't know what's come over you, Dodge. (....) You've become an evil man. You used to be a good man.

DODGE

Six of one, a half dozen of another.

HALIE

You sit there day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off til all yours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood!

DODGE

He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's buried in the back yard! (p.23-4)

But, if in Dodge's feelings toward his sons an implicit desire for committing a murder is present, this wish for destroying his own children becomes much more explicit when Dodge himself says: "You tell Bradley that if he shows up here with those clippers, I'll kill him!" (p.15). Therefore he states that if it becomes necessary he will take over a much more practical task. Murdering his own son is also in his plans and he admits it.

Besides the two actual sons, there are two more being mentioned in the play. Ansel, and another one who is always referred to as being the "buried child".² Ansel, as it ironically happened in Albee's plays, is also shown as a prototype of the American Man. He is strong, intelligent, a hero, as his mother says. The buried child, in turn, is ironically mentioned by Dodge in the first act: "(....) my flesh and blood's buried in the backyard" (p.24). It is ironical that Dodge denies his two actual sons whereas the son who is not really his, and whom he has killed, is being worshipped as being his flesh and blood.³

The second act introduces Vince, Tilden's son, who comes to his grandparent's house after a long period of absence, but nobody seems to recognize him.⁴ So, all his expectations of finding his family in the same way as when he last left home become frustrated. Some kind of hidden curse seems to envelop all the members of the family preventing them to recognize Vince as either their son or grandson. Therefore, he feels a total stranger in his own environment.⁵

Dodge, the grandfather, is the first person Vince meets, but no matter how hard the boy tries to show he is his grandson, Dodge does not recognize Vince as being related to him.

VINCE
Grandpa?

DODGE looks up at him, not recognizing him.

DODGE
Did you bring the whiskey?

VINCE looks back at SHELLY then back to
DODGE.

VINCE
Grandpa, it's Vince. I'm Vince. Tilden's
son. You remember?

DODGE stares at him.

DODGE
You didn't do what you told me. You didn't
stay here with me.

VINCE
Grandpa, I haven't been here until just now.
I just got here. (p.33)

Vince tries to convince Dodge about their grandfather/
grandson relationship but it does not seem easy for Vince
(the grandson) to achieve such a connection. Vince aims to
come closer to his "grandpa" Dodge, who in return, wants
to keep his distance. Even the fact that Vince calls him
"grandpa" displeases him.

VINCE
Grandpa—

DODGE
Stop calling me Grandpa will ya'! It's
sickening. "Grandpa". I'm nobody's
Grandpa! (p.36)

The situation is reiterated when Vince meets his fa-
ther. Again there is a son who wants his father's recogni-
tion and a father who just stares without saying anything,
without accepting him as a son.

VINCE
(to TILDEN) Dad?

TILDEN just stares at VINCE.

(....)

VINCE
(to TILDEN) It's Vince. I'm Vince.

SHELLY
 (to VINCE) This is your father?

VINCE
 (to TILDEN) Dad, what're you doing here?

TILDEN just stares at VINCE (....) (p.37)

This lack of recognition is also present in the play, whenever the topic of the "buried child" comes to the surface. If the characters in the house refuse to acknowledge Vince as a member of the family, they also refuse to acknowledge the buried child's existence in the family, pretending they all have forgotten him. So, the same position in regard to both Vince and the "buried child" is repeated. Neither of them have been recognized or else remembered by any of the members of the family.

DODGE
 (....) My flesh and blood's buried in the back yard!

(....)

TILDEN
 You shouldn't a told her that.

DODGE
 What?

TILDEN
 What you told her. You know.

DODGE
 What do you know about it?

TILDEN
 I know. I know all about it. We all know.

DODGE
 So what difference does it make? Everybody knows, everybody's forgot. (p.24)

Therefore, in a way, since the moment he entered his grandparents' house, Vince has been treated as a surrogate buried child. As the buried child had been deprived of belonging to the family, now Vince receives the same treatment; his rights of being a son are also being denied. He has lost his identity in the presence of this family but he thinks it is his task to unravel the mystery that has been inexplicably transferred to the house and its members. So, in order to disentangle the enigma that hovers over the house, Vince feels the necessity of leaving it to clear matters up.

VINCE

Shelly, I gotta go out for a while. I just gotta go out. I'll get a bottle and I'll come right back. You'll be o.k. here. Really.

‡

SHELLY

I don't know if I can handle this Vince.

VINCE

I just gotta think or something, I don't know. I gotta put this all together.

SHELLY

Can't we just go?

VINCE

No! I gotta find out what's going on. (p.42)

Vince's girlfriend, Shelly, also tries to clarify the chaotic situation by asking Tilden questions about his supposed son.

SHELLY

(pointing to VINCE) This is supposed to be your son! Is he your son? Do you recognize him? I'm just along for the ride here. I thought everybody knew each other! (p.37)

If, at first, Tilden remains passive, just staring at Vince, later on he takes a more positive stance and admits the idea of having had a son. "I had a son once, but we buried him" (p.37). So, it is Tilden who first reveals the existence of a child, admittedly his, who was buried. Dodge's only reaction is to cover the situation. He does not want Tilden to mention its existence, so using an unreal argumentation he tries to convince Tilden to remain silent.

DODGE

You shut up about that! You don't know anything about that! *That happened before you were born!* Long before! (p.37-8)
(Italics are mine.)

As the play develops, the situation becomes more complex since now there is not only Vince's problem of being a stranger for both his grandfather and father, but at the same time another event emerges. The subject matter of a child who has been buried comes to the surface. It is a past incident from their lives that starts to gain importance. But, present and past situations can be related and parallels can be established between the two sons, since both of them have been deprived of something. On the one hand there is Vince, whose right of being a son is now being denied and on the other hand there is the "buried child" whose right to live was once destroyed. Besides, both of them have been apparently forgotten and therefore are not recognized as sons.

Tilden is the first character to call to our mind the fact that there has been an infanticide in the house. Dodge has committed it and now Tilden reports it to Shelly. At first he does not feel confident enough so he just mentions

the fact that there is an awful thing he should not tell her. But, little by little the whole story of a tiny baby who was drowned is told:

TILDEN

I just told you. You don't understand anything. If I told you something you wouldn't understand it.

SHELLY

Told me what?

TILDEN

Told you something that's true.

SHELLY

Like what?

TILDEN

Like a baby. Like a little tiny baby.

SHELLY

Like when you were little?

TILDEN

If I told you you'd make me give your coat back.

SHELLY

I won't. I promise. Tell me.

(....)

TILDEN

We had a baby. (motioning to DODGE) He did. Dodge did. Could pick it up with one hand. Put it in the other. Little baby. Dodge killed it.

SHELLY stands.

TILDEN

Don't stand up. Don't stand up!

SHELLY sits again. DODGE sits up on sofa and looks at them.

TILDEN

Dodge drowned it.

SHELLY

Don't tell me anymore! Okay?

TILDEN moves closer to her. DODGE takes more interest.

DODGE
Tilden? You leave that girl alone!

TILDEN
(pays no attention) Never told Halie.
Never told anybody. Just drowned it.

DODGE
(shuts off t.v.) Tilden!

TILDEN
Nobody could find it. Just disappeared.
Cops looked for it. Neighbors. Nobody
could find it.

DODGE struggles to get up from sofa.

DODGE
Tilden, what're you telling her! Tilden!

DODGE keeps struggling until he's standing.

TILDEN
Finally everybody just gave up. Just
stopped looking. Everybody had a different
answer. Kidnap. Murder. Accident. Some
kind of accident.

(....)

DODGE
Tilden! Don't tell her anything! Don't
tell her!

TILDEN
He's the only one who knows where it's
buried. The only one. Like a secret
buried treasure. Wont't tell any of us.
Won't tell me or mother or even Bradley.
Especially Bradley. Bradley tried to force
it out of him but he wouldn't tell.
Wouldn't even tell why he did it. One night
he just did it. (p.47-8)

Consequently, Tilden is the first character to start the unburying of the buried child despite Dodge's frequent reactions against it. He has taken the first step to unravel the mystery that has been hanging over that house for so many years. Now, two opposing forces can be noticed: Tilden's and Dodge's. The former feels encouraged to relate the

whole event of the killing of the child whereas the latter struggles to keep it secret or else to pretend nothing has ever happened in the past. Dodge even admits the idea of a non-existing past in his own life.

SHELLY

You're whole life's there hanging on the wall. Somebody who looks just like you. Somebody who looks just like you used to look.

DODGE

That isn't me! That never was me! This is me. Right here. This is it. The whole shootin' match, sittin' right in front of you.

SHELLY

So the past never happened as far as you're concerned?

DODGE

The past? Jesus Christ. The past. What do you know about the past? (p.54)

The recurring theme of the existence of a buried child appears again, now in the last scene. Shelly insists upon knowing what is apparently being covered by Dodge. First, she reports back to the past; she has seen a picture of a baby who does not seem to belong to its mother. Then, she becomes obstinate about the story Tilden has told her the previous night about the child Dodge killed and, once more, stands upon discovering the truth.

SHELLY

Was Tilden telling the truth?

DODGE stops short. Stares at SHELLY. Shakes his head. He looks off stage left.

SHELLY

Was he?

DODGE's tone changes drastically.

DODGE
Tilden? (turns to SHELLY, calmly) Where
is Tilden?

SHELLY
Last night. Was he telling the truth about
the baby?

Pause.

DODGE
(turns toward stage left) What's happened
to Tilden? Why isn't Tilden here? (p.55)

But as it has always been happening when the subject is brought out, Dodge does not want to share his private and hidden matters with the girl; therefore, he makes her stop talking about it by changing the topic of conversation.

Despite Dodge's requests, Shelly tries, no matter how, to elucidate the hidden truth about the child. It has lain so strongly covered for so many years that perhaps even the members of the family do not believe in its existence. There has been an undesirable child, whose life has been abruptly cut. Now the family pretends nothing has ever happened. By denying the crime they also deny the existence of the child itself.

SHELLY
I know you've got a secret. You've all got
a secret. It's so secret in fact, you're
all convinced it never happened. (p.63)

But Dodge goes through a changing process, from not wanting to tell Shelly anything about the past to a wish to share with her all the things that have happened before, and starts telling her the complete story about the child, this time disregarding the appeals of the others.

DODGE

She wants to get to the bottom of it. (to SHELLY). That's it, isn't it? You'd like to get right down the bedrock? You want me to tell ya'? You want me to tell ya' what happened? I'll tell ya'. I might as well.

BRADLEY

No! Don't listen to him. He doesn't remember anything!

DODGE

I remember the whole thing from start to finish. I remember the day he was born.

(....)

BRADLEY

(to DODGE) We made a pact! We made a pact between us! You can't break that now!

DODGE

I don't remember any pact.

BRADLEY

(to SHELLY) See, he doesn't remember anything. I'm the only one in the family who remembers. The only one. And I'll never tell you! (p.64)

Since the first act there are some clues or elements about a dead child in the play and, as the scenes advance, this mysterious incident is cleared up. It is now, when Dodge feels the necessity for revealing the whole story, that the theme of childmurder reaches its climax and the whole truth is entirely disclosed. It also becomes clear that the main reason for Dodge killing the child lies in the fact that there has been an incest much more deeply buried than the infanticide itself and which everybody pretends to hide. Actually the child was his wife and his son Tilden's, in a similar incestuous situation as presented in *Desire Under the Elms*. But here, unlike in O'Neill's play, Dodge is unable to endure the situation and realizes the only solution

is to kill the child who is causing the disharmony in the house and thus restore the previous harmony. But as he realizes this harmony has been impossible to achieve, since normality has never been reached, he feels compelled to reveal everything to Shelly.

DODGE

(....) See, we were a well established family once. Well established. All the boys were grown. The farm was producing enough milk to fill Lake Michigan twice over. Me and Halie here were pointed toward what looked like the middle part of our life. Everything was settled with us. All we had to do was ride it out. *Then Halie got pregnant again. Outa' the middle a'nowhere, she got pregnant.* We weren't planning on havin' any more boys. We had enough boys already. In fact, *we hadn't been sleepin' in the same bed for about six hears.*

HALIE

(moving toward stairs) I'm not listening to this! I don't have to listen to this!

DODGE

(stops HALIE) Where are you going! Upstairs! You'll just be listenin' to it upstairs! You go outside, you'll be listenin't to it out side: Might as well stay here and listen to it.

(....)

DODGE

(....) Halie had this kid. This baby boy. She had it. I let her have it on her own. All the other boys I had had the best doctors, best nurses, everything. This one I let her have by herself. This one hurt real bad. Almost killed her, but she had it anyway. It lived, see. It lived. It wanted to grow up in this family. It wanted to be just like us. (....) *It wanted to pretend that I was its father.* She wanted me to believe in it. Even when everyone around us knew. Everyone. All our boys knew. *Tilden knew.*

HALIE

You shut up! Bradley, make him shut up!

BRADLEY
I can't.

DODGE
Tilden was the one who knew. Better than any of us. He'd walk for miles with that kid in his arms. Halie let him take it. All night sometimes. He'd walk all night out there in the pasture with it. (...) He'd make up stories. Even when he knew it couldn't understand him. (...) We couldn't let a thing like that continue. We couldn't allow that to grow up right in the middle of our lives. It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was cancelled out by this one mistake. This one weakness.

SHELLY
So you killed him?

DODGE
I killed it. I drowned it. Just like the runt of a litter. Just drowned it. (p.64-5)
(Italics are mine.)

While all the metaphorical unburying process of the "buried child" has taken place inside the house, Vince, outside the house, has also gone through a changing and unearthing process. Now, an opposite situation takes place as Vince enters the house; at the beginning of the play he arrived as the grandson begging for recognition. Now, he comes back different. Everybody recognizes him but now it is his turn to play the same game with them.

DODGE
Where's my goddamn bottle!

VINCE
(looking in a DODGE) What? Who is that?

DODGE
It's me! Your Grandfather! Don't play stupid with me! Where's my two bucks!

VINCE
Your two bucks?
(....)

HALIE
 Vincent? Is that you Vincent?

SHELLY stares at HALIE then looks out at VINCE.

VINCE
 (from porch) Vincent who? What is this!
 Who are you people?

(....)

HALIE
 (moving closer to porch screen) We thought
 you were a murderer or something. Barging
 in through the door like that.

VINCE
 I am a murderer! Don't underestimate me
 for a minute! I'm the Midnight Strangler!
 I devour whole families in a single gulp!
 (p.66-7)

Therefore, as Dodge has unburied the whole past of the "buried child" now it is Vince who has also gone through this unearthing process moving backwards in his family past. This discovering process of his family, this unburying of his whole past through a kind of revelation in which he visualized his whole race behind him, made Vince change and acquire a new identity which now he seems to incorporate and at the same time to be incorporated in the house.

VINCE
 (....) I studied my face. Studied everything about it. As though I was looking at another man. As though I could see his whole race behind him. Like a mummy's face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time. In the same breath. In the windshield, I watched him breathe as though he was frozen in time. And every breath marked him. Marked him forever without him knowing. And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changed to his Grandfather's face. And it went on like that. Changing.
 (p.70)

Nobody and nothing else seems to be important to him except for the house he has inherited and in which nobody will remain. All the lifeless creatures that have lived in the house do not seem to remain there anymore so that a new order of things can be established by its newcoming inhabitant.

VINCE

(....) This my house now, ya' know?
All mine. Everything. Except for the
power tools and stuff.

(....)

VINCE

My Grandmother? There's nobody else in
this house. Except for you. And you're
leaving aren't you? (p.71)

Not even the "buried child" who was responsible for the family curse that has remained for such a long time will continue to be there, for Tilden actually unburies the child or what has been left of child and carries it inside.

TILDEN appears from stage left, dripping with mud from the knees down. His arms and hands are covered with mud. In his hands he carries the corpse of a small child at chest level, staring down at it. The corpse mainly consists of bones wrapped in muddy, rotten cloth. (p.72)

So, all the guilty secrets vanish and life is restored when the buried child is unearthed and, in the same way, the whole atmosphere of death that had penetrated the house and its people along the years has vanished when finally nobody but Vince remains.

Alvin Klein states that "*Buried Child* is a myth-shattering family necrology. Moral and religious values have rotted

completely having been pretty rotten in the first place, and anarchy is the answer".⁶ The destruction of the ideal family which is present in *The American Dream* seems to pursue all the plays being analyzed; in a scale which varies from *Desire Under the Elms* to *Buried Child*, the same topic appears. The ideal of family life seems to be threatened little by little, reaching its top in *Buried Child*. Here, disintegration of the family reaches such a degree that nobody is able to recognize each other. Ultimately, there seems to be no sense of family alive. But, in spite of his stating that the answer for this play is anarchy, we think that there is an opening inside anarchy in the sense that a new order of things is to be established. For considering what Halie says to Dodge,

HALIE'S VOICE

Dodge? Is that you Dodge? Tilden was right about the corn you know. I've never seen such corn. Have you taken a look at it lately? Tall as a man already. This early in the year. Carrots too. Potatoes. You oughta' take a look. A miracle. I've never seen it like this. Maybe the rain did something. Maybe it was the rain. (p.72)

one sees that there is a cathartic-like ending, but with a cyclical movement towards life again, once the whole mysterious atmosphere seems to vanish when Vince reaches a new stage in his life away from the death and the horror his heritage had provided him with. He seems ready to cultivate fertility which now surrounds him.

In this last play, the pattern of the scapegoat is again present in the figure of the buried child who has been

killed to atone for the faults of the whole family. He has been drowned to cleanse the sinful atmosphere out of which he had been conceived, and thus to enable the members of the family to restore their place and its members to fruitfulness.

NOTES

¹ SHEPARD, S. *Buried Child & Seduced & Suicide in Bb*. New York, Urizen Books, 1979. p.25. All quotations refer to this edition and will be followed by the page number.

² Throughout the play the name of the dead son, the buried child, is never mentioned. The custom of abstaining from mentioning the names of the dead comes from antiquity as J.G.FRAZER comments in his book *The Golden Bough*: "(....) the custom of abstaining from all mention of the names of the dead was observed in antiquity by the Albanians of the Caucasus, and at the present day it is in full force among many savage tribes. Thus we are told that one of the customs most rigidly observed and enforced amongst the Australian aborigines is never to mention the name of a diseased person, whether male or female; to name aloud one who has departed this life would be a gross violation of their most sacred prejudices, and they carefully abstain from it. The chief motive for abstinence appears to be a fear of evoking the ghost, although the natural unwillingness to revive past sorrows undoubtedly operates also to draw the veil of oblivion over the names of the dead". (Abr.ed. London, Macmillan, 1974. p.331.)

³ As in Shepard's play the buried child has been buried in the backyard where the crops grow, J.G.FRAZER states that: "In Modern Europe the figure of Death is sometimes torn in pieces, and the fragments are then buried in the ground to make the crops grow well, and in other parts of the world human victims are treated in the same way". (p.498)

⁴ Vince seems to represent the ironical prodigal son which the Bible refers to in Luke 15 § 11-32. Unlike Vince, the prodigal son is recognized by his father as he comes back home after a period of absence. "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."

⁵ According to T.HOFFMAN in *Famous American Plays of the 1970s*. (New York, Dell, 1981. p.25-6), "Shepard's dramatic mode is the All-American nightmare (....) His characters also laboriously try to consume the world, get lost in its mysteries, and discover you can't go home again because the mutant cells of the image you left behind have multiplied into cancerous growths".

⁶ KLEIN, A. *Tackling Shepard's Ominous 'Buried Child'*. s.n.t. 1 p. Photostatic copy.

3 CONCLUSION

We have sought in this thesis to reveal the theme of infanticide in modern American drama. We hope to have shown, through a textual and mythological approach, how this theme, in all its hideousness, is recurrent in O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* and *Strange Interlude*, in T. Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth*, in Albee's *The American Dream* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and in S. Shepard's *Buried Child*. Notwithstanding each author's original formula of dealing with childmurder, the importance and recurrence of the mythological aspect in all the plays allowed us to tie them together not only under the same theme but also under the same motif of the sacrificial scapegoat.

Besides this important mythological figure, so apparent in all the plays, each playwright has given his own vision concerning this issue. This is why it becomes necessary to make a synthesis of the mentioned plays showing how they are related in synchronical and diachronical bases.

Synchronically speaking, *Desire Under the Elms* presents Abbie as both the mother and authoress of a crime performed against her recently-born son. Infanticide has been committed because of Abbie's desperate effort to show her stepson she truly loves him. Once the child represents Abbie's materialism and selfishness, it has to be murdered

so that both materialism and selfishness will be eliminated and love can finally be conquered. So, in *Desire Under the Elms*, the archetypal figure of "life-death-resurrection" is clearly manifest. Resurrection is achieved once the child is used as a scapegoat so that both Abbie and her stepson Eben can find a new life by means of a true discovery of love.

The other O'Neill play that follows the same pattern of *Desire Under the Elms* is *Strange Interlude*. Here it is also the mother, Nina, who performs the abortion against her unborn child. Insanity, the mental disease which supposedly hovers over her husband's family is to continue in her son. Therefore, as Nina wants to stop the curse of insanity and does not want it to reach her son, she feels compelled to destroy it. But here again, the abortion (seen as a variant of infanticide) of the child, brings the mother a positive and hopeful consequence: a new and healthy child comes into Nina's life in order to possibly satisfy her needs of becoming a mother. And once again the cyclical figure appears for it is through death that Nina achieves a new hope in life, through her newly born child.

Regarding the two plays by O'Neill, Tennessee Williams' *Sweet Bird of Youth* takes a new direction in the sense that the archetypal pattern of "death-life-resurrection" will not be completed. The venereal disease which Chance has infected Heavenly with is the cause for Heavenly undergoing an operation which leaves her sterile. And sterility is also seen as a variant to our theme once it is through it that all of Heavenly's future possibilities of becoming a mother are

destroyed. Sterility only brings defeat and spiritual death.

Both Edward Albee's plays belong to a different kind of drama for they follow in the tradition of the Theater of Absurd. Even so, in relation to the theme studied, *The American Dream*, also shows the same incompleteness of the cycle "life-death-resurrection". An apparent unimportant reason leads the parents to mutilate their adoptive child. A surrogate child comes in the shape of a young man who is being worshipped as the American Dream. Actually, he does not fulfill the characteristics which would make him a real American hero once his only qualities are physical. So, here again resurrection is by no means achieved. The physical death of the first adoptive child is now spiritually present in the young man. What the young man in this play conveys is nothing but a parody of the American Man actually represents.

In Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, the theme of infanticide is again shown differently than in *The American Dream*, for even though both plays present the child as something metaphorical, as a device to satisfy their needs of becoming parents, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, infanticide leads the main characters to a positive relationship. After Martha and George have killed their idealized child, all their dreams seem to have gone away; nevertheless both husband and wife are ready to face life together, away from all their previous misunderstandings. Reconciliation and therefore a new life awaits them. It is the death of their metaphorical child which brings a new opportunity for revival of their married life.

Finally, Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*, although belonging to experimental theater, also adopts this traditional and universal theme. An incest, committed by the mother and her son, leads the father to drown the recently born boy. These two facts have been strongly hidden by all the members of the family until Vince comes back home. He, with the help of his girlfriend, unravels the mystery; and it is after the unburying of the drowned and buried child that Vince reaches a new life away from death and decay, while the other members of the house do not.

Diachronically speaking, it can be observed that ranging from *Desire Under the Elms*, a realistic tragedy, based on the Greeks, to the experimental tragicomedy *Buried Child*, all the playwrights have provided us with such situations that the attempts to show a possibility of life, through the birth of a child, become frustrated by a series of different causes: Abbie's materialism and selfishness in *Desire Under the Elms*, the curse of insanity in the Evans' family in *Strange Interlude*, the venereal disease which Chance passed on to Heavenly in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, the child's apparent weird attitudes in *The American Dream*, the revelation of the fictional son in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and at last, incest in *Buried Child*. These are basically the causes why infanticide, or in some cases variants of it, becomes the immediate alternative. So, in all the plays, the myth of life has been destroyed because of some kind of negative result that the child would lead to. In this way, it becomes necessary to eliminate the child and therefore the evil which it might bring.

Therefore, on the first level, infanticide is seen as an opposition to the myth of life thus constituting an "anti-myth". Moreover, at the end of almost all the plays, there is a cyclical movement towards myth again, that is, towards life.

But it is from infanticide and its results that some characters extrapolate the "parabolic" situation which the crime provided them with and reach a higher and more positive level in their lives either through the recognition of love and the disregard of materialism in *Desire Under the Elms*, through the reconciliation between husband and wife in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* or through the achievement of a new life either physical (through another child) in *Strange Interlude* or spiritual in *Buried Child*.

It is also important to show that the movement towards myth is not always a commonplace. There are some other ending situations in which the characters do not fully face myth. There are plays such as *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *The American Dream* in which the negative aspect in the characters' reality is emphasized. As, for example, in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, the characters, unlike in the other plays, do not suffer a renewal in their lives; the only thing they seem to undergo is spiritual death. Nevertheless, here can also be found a subtle positive aspect in the characters' spiritual death; it is the recognition of their mistakes which unchained death. Ultimately, the characters are aware of the facts which have made them incapable of regaining life again. So, both positive and negative aspects harmonize but the former are most stressed, once at the end of the play

the characters show an impossibility of achieving resurrection; the only thing they face is defeat.

Similarly, *The American Dream* apparently presents a kind of positive ending, as the prototype of the American Man appears to be. After infanticide has been committed, life seems to be reachable again through the figure of a young man; but this young man or what he ironically represents, (The American Adam) is a parabolic figure for he does not represent life but he assumes the role of the mutilated child. Thus, there is a backward movement not towards life, but towards death, once the young man identifies himself with his murdered twin brother.

Let us now try to bring together the different trends by presenting a panoramic table of the six analyzed plays containing infanticide, its causes and consequences.

1. <i>Desire Under the Elms</i>	Abbie's materialism and selfishness	Infanticide	Revelation of love between lovers
2. <i>Strange Interlude</i>	Mental disease	Infanticide	New life through another child
3. <i>Sweet Bird of Youth</i>	Venereal disease	Infanticide	Spiritual death
4. <i>The American Dream</i>	Child's unexpected attitudes	Infanticide	Parody of the American Adam
5. <i>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</i>	Revelation of the existence of the child	Infanticide	Reconciliation between husband and wife
6. <i>Buried Child</i>	Incest	Infanticide	Vince's new life

So, two well defined trends are noticed at the end of all the six plays. Firstly, there are some plays as *Desire Under the Elms*, *Strange Interlude*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *Buried Child* in which there is a cyclical movement in the sense that life (which had once been cut off through the murder of a child) by the end of each play is experimented by its main characters. Therefore, life that had once been interrupted seems to come back again as the characters reach a higher stage in their lives away from all the negative aspects that once involved them.

There are two other plays, *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *The American Dream* in which this archetypal circle-life figure towards the myth of life seems to be incomplete. Neither protagonist reaches a positive outcome in his life. There seems to be some sort of parabolic structure until the end of both plays which hinders the characters to achieve life again.

These two trends, in relation to the theme of infanticide, make us return to our initial questions, as to the reasons that have spurred these playwrights to project the theme of infanticide in their works.

We hope that the aim we have been pursuing has been attained and that the different questions set in the introduction have been satisfactorily answered by explaining each playwright's approach to the theme. The different outcomes show that O'Neill, Williams, Albee and Shepard, although condemning the crime, convey that mankind is not irredeem-

able, for hope is still there. And, in the same way that myth remains a lasting dimension of all human life, the theme of infanticide continues to challenge the imagination of writers and playwrights, in their effort to understand and explain the world we live in.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- 1 ABRAMS, M.H. *A Glossary of Literaty Terms*. 3.ed. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971. 193 p.
- 2 AESCHYLUS. *The Oresteian Trilogy*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1965. 203 p.
- 3 ALBEE, E. *The American Dream*. In: *NEW American Drama*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1966. p.19-60.
- 4 _____; *The Zoo Story*. Chicago, New American Library, 1961. 127 p.
- 5 _____. *Quem Tem Medo de Virginia Woof?* São Paulo, Abril Cultural, 1977. 252 p.
- 6 _____. *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* New York, Atheneum, 1978. 242 p.
- 7 BARNET, S. *A Short Guide to Writing about Literature*. 2.ed. Boston, Little, Brown, 1971. 192 p.
- 8 BARROWS, M.W., ed. *Contemporary American Drama*. New York, Macmillan, 1964. 342 p.
- 9 BATESON, F.W. & MESEROLE, H.T. *A Guide to English and American Literature*. 3.ed. London, Longman, 1976. 334 p.
- 10 BENEDIKT, M., ed. *Theatre Experiment; an anthology of American plays*. Garden City, Doubleday, 1967. 370 p.
- 11 BLACK'S Law Dictionary. Rev.4.ed. St.Paul, Minn., West Publ., 1968. 188 p.
- 12 BOGARD, T. & OLIVER W.I. *Modern Drama; essays in criticism*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1965. 393 p.
- 13 BOND, E. *Saved*. New York, Hill & Wang, s.d.
- 14 BRECHT, B. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. London, Methuen, 1973. 95 p.
- 15 _____. *Teatro I: Ti Coragem e os Seus Filhos, A Boa Alma de Sé-Chuão*. Lisboa, Portugália, 1961. 313 p.

- 16 BRECHT, B. *Teatro II: O Círculo de Giz Caucasiano, Ascensão e Queda da Cidade de Mahagonny*. Lisboa, Portugália, 1963. 240 p.
- 17 BROCKETT, O.G. *The Theatre; an introduction*. 3.ed. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974. 566 p.
- 18 BROUSSARD, L. *American Drama; contemporary allegory from Eugene O'Neill to Tennessee Williams*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1962. 145 p.
- 19 BRUSTEIN, R. *Crossed Purposes*. *The New Republic*, 184 (5):21-3, 1981.
- 20 BUARQUE, C. & PONTES, P. *Gota d'Água*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 1977. 168 p.
- 21 CAMPBELL, W.G. *Form and Style in Thesis Writing*. 3.ed. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1969. 138 p.
- 22 CARPENTER, F.I. *Eugene O'Neill*. New Haven, Twayne, 1964. 191 p.
- 23 CLARK, B.H. *Eugene O'Neill; the man and his plays*. New York, Dover Publ., 1947. 187 p.
- 24 COHEN, H., ed. *Landmarks of American Writing*. Washington, D.C., Voice of America, s.d. 435 p.
- 25 COOLIDGE, O. *Eugene O'Neill*. New York, C.Scribner, 1966. 223 p.
- 26 CROSSAN, J.D. *The Dark Interval; towards a theology of story*. Allen, Texas, Argus Communications, 1975. 134 p.
- 27 CURRAN, R.T. *Insular Types: puritanism and primitivism in Mourning Becomes Electra*. *Revue des Langues Vivantes*, 41:371-7, 1975.
- 28 CURRENT Biography Yearbook. New York, Wilson, 1979. 504 p.
- 29 DONAHUE, F. *The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams*. New York, F.Ungar, 1964. 243 p.
- 30 DOWNER, A.S., ed. *American Drama and its Critics; a collection of critical essays*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1967. 258 p.
- 31 ELAM, K. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. London, Methuen, 1980. 248 p.
- 32 ENGEL, G. *Estrutura e Redação de Dissertação e Tese*. Curitiba, Ed.Autor, 1982. 55 p.

- 33 ESSLIN, M. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Rev.enl.ed. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968. 462 p.
- 34 EURIPEDES. *Alcestis, The Medea, The Heracleidae ...* Ed.D.Greene and R.Lattimore. New York, Modern Library, 1956. 439 p.
- 35 _____. *Medeia*. In: _____. *Teatro*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização, 1977. p.101-85.
- 36 FENNEL, P.J. *Sam Shepard; the flesh and blood of theatre*. Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1982. 418 p. Ph.D., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1977.
- 37 FLEMING JR., W.P. *Tregedy in American Dream; the tragic wiews of Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Edward Albee*. Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. 287 p. Ph.D., University of Toledo, 1972.
- 38 FRAZER, J.G. *The Golden Bough; a study in magic and religion*. Abr.ed. London, Macmillan, 1974. 971 p.
- 39 GASSNER, J., ed. *Best American Plays*. Fifth series, 1958-1963. New York, Crown, 1973. 678 p.
- 40 _____. *Eugene O'Neill*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota, 1965. 48 p.
- 41 _____. *O'Neill, a collection of critical essays*. Englewood-Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1964. 180 p.
- 42 GOETHE, J.W. *Faust*. Basel, Verlag Birkhäuser, 1944. 368 p.
- 43 _____. *Fausto*. São Paulo, Abril Cultural, 1976. 280 p.
- 44 _____. _____. São Paulo, Inst.Progresso Editorial, 1949. 351 p.
- 45 GOTTFRIED, M. *Teatro Dividido; a cena americana no Pós-Guerra*. Rio de Janeiro, Bloch, 1970. 489 p.
- 46 GUERIN, W. et alii. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. New York, Harper and Row, 1966.
- 47 GUERNSEY JR., O.L. ed. *The Best Plays of 1966-1967*. New York, Dodd, Mead, 1967. 498 p.
- 48 _____. *The Best Plays of 1969-1970*. New York, Dodd, Mead, 1970. 476 p.
- 49 HAAS, R. *Eugene O'Neill*. *Studium Generale*, 21-19-35, 1968.

- 50 HART, J.D. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*. 4.ed. New York, Oxford University Press, 1965. 991 p.
- 51 HINCHLIFFE, A.P. *The Absurd*. London, Methuen, 1977. 106 p.
- 52 _____. *British Theatre 1950/1970*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1974. 205 p.
- 53 HOFFMAN, T. *Famous American Plays of the 1970s*. New York, Dell, 1981. 460 p.
- 54 HOLY Bible. Camden, N.J., T.Nelson, 1970. p.irr.
- 55 HURRELL, J.D. *Two Modern American Tragedies*. New York, Scribner's, 1961. 153 p.
- 56 IBSEN, H. *Six Plays*. New York, Modern Library, 1957. 510 p.
- 57 KALEM, T.E. City Coyotes Prowling the Brain. *Time*, 117 (1):92, Jan.1981.
- 58 KLEIN, A. *Tackling Shepard's Ominous 'Buried Child'*. s.n.t. 1 cópia fotostática.
- 59 KROLL, J. California Dreaming. *Newsweek*, 97(1):63, Jan.1981.
- 60 LABELLE, M.M. Dionysus and Despair: the influence of Nietzsche upon O'Neill's drama. *Educational Theatre Journal*, 25:436-42, 1973.
- 61 LESKI, A. *A Tragédia Grega*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1976. 268 p.
- 62 LUCAS, F. A Obra e a Crítica; a função da literatura e da crítica. *O Estado de S.Paulo*, São Paulo, 31 jan. 1982. p.8.
- 63 MIZENER, A., ed. *F.Scott Fitzgerald; a collection of critical essays*. Englewood-Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1963. 174 p.
- 64 MOISES, M. *Dicionário de Termos Literários*. 2.ed.rev. São Paulo, Cultrix, 1978. 520 p.
- 65 MYTHOLOGY. Lincoln, Cliffs Notes, 1973.
- 66 NELSON, B. *Tennessee Williams; the man and his work*. New York, I.Obolensky, 1968. 364 p.
- 67 THE NEW Encyclopaedia Britannica. Macropaedia. Chicago, 1979. v.15.

- 68 NIETZSCHE, F.W. *Assim Falou Zaratustra*. São Paulo, Círculo do Livro, s.d. 334 p.
- 69 NORONHA, M. *Direito Penal; dos crimes contra a pessoa, dos crimes contra o patrimônio*. 10.ed. São Paulo, Saraiva, 1975. 545 p.
- 70 O'NEILL, E. *Three Plays*. New York, Vintage Books, 1959. 376 p.
- 71 ORTEGA & GASSET, J. *A Idéia do Teatro*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1978. 101 p.
- 72 PICHOS, C. *La Littérature Comparée*. e.éd. Paris, A.Colin, 1967. 215 p.
- 73 PICKERING, C. *The Works of Eugene O'Neill; a Greek idea of the theatre derived from the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. 253 p. Ph.D., East Texas State University, 1971.
- 74 PORTER, T. *Myth and Modern American Dream*. Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1969. 285 p.
- 75 POULARD, R. *O'Neill and Nietzsche; the making of a playwright and thinker*. Ann Arbor, Xerox University Microfilms, 1978. 232 p. Ph.D., Loyola University of Chicago, 1974.
- 76 A RICH crop of American Playwrights. *Times*, London, Aug.21, 1977. p.17.
- 77 RICHARDS, S., ed. *The Best Short Plays 1970*. Philadelphia, Chilton Book, 1970. 410 p.
- 78 SARTRE, J.P. *Théâtre*. Paris, Callimard, 1947. 297 p.
- 79 SHEPARD, S. *Buried Child; Seduced; Suicide in B^b*. New York, Urizen Books, 1979. 155 p.
- 80 STRINDBERG, A. *A Dança da Morte*. São Paulo, Abril Cultural, 1977. 211 p.
- 81 STROUPE, J.H. Eugene O'Neill and the Problem of Masking. *Lock Haven Review*, 12:71-80, 1971.
- 82 TAYLOR, J.R. *A Dictionary of the Theatre*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1970. 304 p.
- 83 TISCHLER, N. *Tennessee Williams: rebellious*. New York, Citadel Press, 1961. 319 p.
- 84 UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ. *Biblioteca Central. Normas para Apresentação de Trabalhos*. Curitiba, 1981. 183 p.
- 85 WILLIAMS, T. *Sweet Bird of Youth; A Streetcar Named Desire; The Glass Menagerie*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1971. 313 p.