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WAR THEMES AND MYTHS IN MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA BY EUGENE O'NEILL

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Abstract: Preoccupied with the theme of war in *Mourning Becomes Electra* Eugene O'Neill wondered "what war" to use and chose the American Civil War, as the only possibility that fits as the background for drama of murderous family love and hate! The Trojan War was rather unfamiliar to the American audience, the American Revolution too far off and associated with romantic school history. The Civil War satisfied a need for distance and perspective and served a double extension back to the past, the nineteenth century New England (a region appealing for its historicity and historical guilt) into the timeless realm of Greek myth. The story focuses on episodes of the lives of the Mannons, an eminent and wealthy New England family, the members of which try to come to terms with the fact of death and the forces surrounding human life. The titles of the three Parts refer to Ezra Mannon's "homecoming" from the Civil War and the physical and/or psychological worlds of the rest of the family who, either as "hunted", or «haunted, in vain try to survive after his death that ends Part One. The conflicts of the Mannons, in the entire trilogy, are portrayed through an admirable dramatization of their remote or recent part, which is continuously reenacted in the present. Although O'Neill's insistence on following the classical prototypes throughout the work is undeniable, he seems to depart from the classical influence as the trilogy progresses, and, while "Homecoming" is patterned closely to its Greek prototypes and *The Hunted* follows their essential outlines, the myth of a different modernized Electra is created in *The Haunted*.