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A MODERN OPPORTUNIST

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AILEEN O'CONNOR CRONIN

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CARLOTTA MONTEREY:
A MODERN OPPORTUNIST

By

AILEEN O'CONNOR CRONIN

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

CARLOTTA MONTEREY:
A MODERN OPPORTUNIST

By

AILEEN O'CONNOR CRONIN

Carlotta Monterey was born in 1888 and died in 1970. Her life illuminates important social and intellectual currents in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. One can trace the emergence of modern America from the Victorian era through this prism. She was involved in the theater and other creative pursuits, which gives a further glimpse into the arts and social circles of the major creative personalities of the day. Married four times her last two husbands were artistic geniuses. She collaborated with both Ralph Barton, noted New Yorker caricaturist and Eugene O'Neill, prize winning American playwright in their personal and professional lives. Carlotta's diaries give first hand accounts of the experiences of a strong willed woman who attempted to live authentically in a time quite different than the present for that of a woman. Carlotta had more intelligence, influence and significance than heretofore realized, and in her person one can better understand the social and intellectual history of America.

Dedicated To My Beloved Husband George

And My Three Sons

George, Kean and Patrick

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invaluable help, I am deeply grateful to my husband, George Bader Cronin and our three sons, George, Kean and Patrick.

PREFACE

My curiosity about Carlotta Monterey began ten years ago when I first encountered the intriguing and flamboyant Carlotta in an American Drama Seminar at Michigan State University. I was immediately impressed by her accomplishments, her relationships, and by the sheer force of her personality. I decided then that she would make an excellent research subject. My investigation of Carlotta Monterey began modestly as a term paper; ultimately, it developed into a decade--long project, culminating in a biographical dissertation for the American Studies program at Michigan State. The initial study focused on Carlotta's life as the controlling wife and savvy widow of the playwright, Eugene O'Neill. In addition to being his collaborator, she altered the canon of American Drama by rearranging the chronology of O'Neill's play A Long Day's Journey into Night. After his death, Carlotta had the play produced twenty-five years before his explicit instructions. Her decision in defiance of her late husband's wishes evoked considerable criticism, and Carlotta seemed to feel a need to justify her actions by claiming that O'Neill had decided to delay publishing in deference to a request from his eldest son. While the claim is probably spurious, Carlotta's actions had a decisive effect. The production of Journey in 1956 served to bolster O'Neill's waning popularity, awarding the playwright a posthumous Broadway sensation and his fourth Pulitzer Prize (Sheaffer 634-635).

As I delved farther into Carlotta's life, it became clear that she had

distinguished herself as far more than O'Neill's surviving spouse. Carlotta was not content to be an enabler of male genius; she fought for personal autonomy as she struggled to arbitrate the terms of partnership. Even within the context of her relationships, she emerges as an independent creative force who played an active role in determining her legacy. Carlotta was ambitious, shrewd, sexually liberated and disciplined; her multidimensional character poses a commanding presence as seen in her childhood, chosen career, multiple marriages, and finally as O'Neill's assertive executrix.

Carlotta was born in 1888 and her life unfolded as major political and social forces reshaped the cultural landscape of the United States and Europe. Her father immigrated to California as the inventions of the Industrial Age transformed the American economy, marking a "turbulent transition from conditions of an agrarian society to those of modern urban life" (Hofstadter 70). The family moved to San Francisco, a city that eagerly grasped the spirit of freedom and creativity that would signify the modern age. San Francisco was the birthplace of Isadora Duncan, who envisioned "the dancer of the future: the free spirit, who will inhabit the body of the new women" (Duncan 63). Carlotta came of age as many young girls began to see themselves as "new women." Many modernist women sought liberation in the intellect. One of the most notable and influential was Gertrude Stein, who cultivated the genius of a legion of men (among them Picasso, Matisse, Hemingway, Cecil Beaton, Virgil Thompson, and Richard Wright) along with her own unique literary brilliance. " 'A rose is a rose is a rose,' she wrote, with the "philosophic kick of a nursery

Wittgenstein" (Pierpont 34). As Claudia Roth Pierpont observes, "She was host, sponsor, critic, instigator, frequently foe, and sometimes friend again of some of the century's finest provocateurs, and it was often hard to tell whether her life was a party or a revolution" (35).

If Stein's life was a revolution, it was in her openly lesbian lifestyle as well as her artistic astuteness. Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas were formally "married" in the summer of 1910 (Pierpont 41). They were scarcely alone as "the love that dare not speak its name, " in the late 19th century when Oscar Wilde was imprisoned for sodomy (although female homosexuality was never illegal under British law) became more vociferous in the early twentieth century. Like Stein and Toklas, Elisabeth "Bessy" Marbury and "Ella "Elsie" de Wolfe lived together for many years, although they were far more discreet about the precise nature of their relationship. Eugene O'Neill would become a client of Marbury's American Play Company. As described by Louis Sheaffer in O'Neill: Son and Playwright:

> The company was headed by Elizabeth Marbury, among the first career women, who had launched herself in the 1890s as the American representative of various British and Continental playwrights. A person of culture and fastidious tastes, though built on rude beer-barrel proportions, Miss Marbury was at home in society and artistic circles on both sides of the Atlantic, maintaining offices in London and Paris as well as in New York. She was to play a fateful role in O'Neill's life in the mid-1920s by reintroducing

him to an actress, Carlotta Monterey, who had appeared in one of his Broadway productions (448).

The prosperous 1920s, the Jazz Age, transformed the character of the United States and Europe; in fact, Europeans of all social classes looked to the New World as the symbol of the modern age. Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic against what seemed like improbable odds and immediately became a "symbol of the 'high courage and dash of young America,' as a representative of America's unrestrained energy" (Eksteins 268). Jazz music embodied that energy and had the remarkable power to transcend lines of race and social class. Traditional notions of gender and sexuality were continually being shattered as "repression" became a stigmatized vestige of the old social order. Historian Modris Eksteins astutely observes that:

> The twenties, as a result, witnessed a hedonism and narcissism of remarkable proportions. Freudian psychology was eagerly grasped as a justification for this denial of repression, and it became thoroughly unfashionable to be "repressed." The senses and instincts were indulged, and self-interest became, more than ever before, the motivation for behavior (256).

The driving force in the dynamics of hedonism was the "disequilibrium" that emerged in a world that had survived the Great War. "Old authority and traditional values no longer had credibility. Yet no new values had emerged in their stead" (Eksteins 256). While those who had profited from the old order may have lamented the loss of their status and security, groups that had been

disenfranchised by virtue of race, class, gender or even artistic sensibility, eagerly sought to shape new values that would replace the old.

Freud's position as the arbiter of liberation was actually paradoxical. Women and homosexual men were amongst the most fervent enthusiasts of the new order, yet Freud saw only the most traditional role for women; women who sought expression beyond the circumscribed role of wife and mother were, according to Freudian theory, "neurotic," as were men who found erotic attraction in other men. Perhaps few at the time actually delved into Freud's newly translated works. In the hectic and hedonistic postwar prosperity, "denial of repression" held far greater attraction than the murky realm of what Freud considered neurotic impulses. Freudian theory became the "new fashion," but the artists and intellectuals who embraced it often repudiated its influence. The Surrealists were particularly receptive--to the new theory, yet were adamant in rejecting that aspect of Freudianism that demanded analysis and therapy. Rene Magritte summed up the philosophy: "Under all circumstances we will refuse to explain precisely what will not be understood" (Belton 26).

Robert Belton traces the symbolism used by the male Surrealists to the publication of Freud's Totem and Taboo, published in 1914 "when most of Western civilization was preoccupied with the war to end all wars" (25). In this treatise, Freud "posited a primordial, universally occurring series of events," which began with a powerful male leader with exclusive possession of the women of his tribe, who is eventually murdered by his sons. Consumed by collective guilt, the sons endowed a totem with the qualities of the murdered

father. The totem was usually an animal, consumed and eaten at year's end so the tribesmen might assume the lost father's power, absolve their guilt, and commemorate their own act of liberation all at once. At all other times of the year, disturbing the totem was taboo. Freud insisted that, "the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex" (Belton 25). So too did all neurosis.

Contemporary critics agree with Belton that, "Of course, the primordial totemic banquet was not at all universal" (25). Marianne Krull, for example, notes that, "It is striking how often Freud in his theoretical writings keeps generalizing his own, quite specific experiences, implying that they are valid for all human beings" (112). Many of Freud's contemporaries also dismissed the idea as "implausible" that his theories were universal. However, in Belton's words, Freudian theory became the "new fashion."

Eugene O'Neill denied the influence of Freud on his work. In Son and Artist, Sheaffer reported that in response to Freudian interpretations of Strange Interlude, O'Neill stated, "I feel that, although [Strange Interlude] is undoubtedly full of psychoanalytic ideas . . . any artist who was a good psychologist could have written 'S.I.' without ever having heard of Freud, Jung, Adler & Co." (244) . Several years later, he changed the story slightly, asserting that, "I most certainly did not get my idea for Nina's compulsion from a dream mentioned by Freud in A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis," while conceding that Jung's Psychology of the Unconscious may have had some influence (244-245). At the same time, he declared:

> But the "unconscious" influence stuff strikes me as always extremely suspicious! It is so darned easy to prove! I would say that what has influenced my plays the most is my knowledge of the drama of all time--particularly Greek tragedy--and not any books on psychology (245).

In O'Neill's personal life, Carlotta Monterey had a substantial influence. Her own role in the cultural revolution of the first half of the twentieth century was, like Freud's influence, paradoxical. Freud himself might have approved of the fact that, after meeting the playwright, "Monterey had agreed to give up her career to become the next Mrs. Eugene O'Neill" (Strum 279). However, Carlotta relinquished her career but never her independence. In essence, her life was symbolic of the conflict that was inevitable in a world where "Old authority and traditional values no longer had credibility. Yet no new values had emerged in their stead" (Eksteins 256).

The most extensive exploration of Carlotta's life appears in Sheaffer's O'Neill: Son and Artist. Their home life and entertainment of guests, and Carlotta's role in O'Neill's career, is portrayed in narratives in Conversations with Eugene O'Neill, notably those of Ward Morehouse and Croswell Bowen. Actress Ilka Chase, who had appeared in a play with Carlotta and who had observed her with O'Neill, thought, "Carlotta wanted to possess her men and be everything to them . . . She had a sense of mission and wanted to help him achieve himself" (Lewis 397). Charlie Chaplin, who married O'Neill's daughter Oona, thought Carlotta wanted "to be all sufficient to a man of genius, while she herself shone

in his reflected glory" (297). In relating these observations, Alfred Allan Lewis concluded that, "Superficially worldly, Carlotta was the most old-fashioned of women" (397). In contrast to O'Neill's first wife Agnes, who "spent much of her married life fighting O'Neill's devouring presence to try to preserve an identity of her own," Lewis believed that Carlotta "wanted to find her identity in a sexual partner" (397).

A comprehensive exploration of Carlotta Monterey suggests that, similar to the critics who conveniently found a Freudian basis for O'Neill's plays or the paintings of the Surrealists, characterizing Carlotta as "the most old-fashioned of women" because of her dedication to O'Neill's career fails to capture the multitude of dynamic forces that shape a human character, whether in literature, in art, or in life. Carlotta was simultaneously a participant and observer in the cultural drama that enfolded in the twentieth century. Dr. Donald Gallup, curator of the Collection of American Literature at Yale for thirty-three years, and Carlotta's confidante, was in contact with her until her death in 1970. A gracious host who provided encouragement for my project, he believes there is a need for a more extensive look at Carlotta Monterey, both as individual and as a collaborator. Arthur and Barbara Gelb, co-authors of O'Neill, agree that Carlotta merits a work of her own. Indeed, Barbara Gelb authored My Gene, a one act, one-woman play which starred Colleen Dewhurst as Carlotta.

To date, Louis Sheaffer provides the most comprehensive and most reverent treatment of Carlotta. Much of Carlotta's early life is chronicled in Sheaffer's papers, which he bequeathed to Connecticut College upon his death

in 1993. The collection is a treasure of photographs, letters, newspaper clippings, and notes written by Sheaffer. The Billy Rose Theater Collection at Lincoln Center offered a wealth of information about Carlotta on Broadway, in scrapbooks filled with memorabilia of her acting career. For the years Carlotta spent with cartoonist Ralph Barton, my chief source was Bruce Kellner's The Last Dandy Ralph Barton: American Artist 1891-1931. The Daybooks of Carl Van Vechten, 1923-1930, in the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library, also afforded intimate glimpses into Carlotta's life with Barton and as an actress on Broadway. My research also encompassed the letters and cablegrams included in O'Neill papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, to whom Carlotta willed her papers. Carlotta's diaries, stored at the Beinecke were particularly helpful in reconstructing the O'Neill years.

The papers of Saxe Commins, O'Neill's editor at Liveright and subsequently at Random House, are housed at Princeton University, and sealed by his widow who kindly allowed me access to the materials. Other than Professor Jackson Bryer of Department of English at the University of Maryland, and noted O'Neill scholar, I was the only person privy to their contents previous to her death. I was also fortunate to hear first hand accounts about Carlotta from Dorothy Commins, Saxe's widow, a candid and articulate women in her mid-nineties. Commins was not a fan of Carlotta; she blamed the estrangement of Saxe and O'Neill on Carlotta's interference. According to Commins, Carlotta "bewitched" O'Neill. More favorable toward Carlotta was José Quintero, director

of many of O'Neill's plays. Quintero was fond of Carlotta, and related stories that offered further insight into her character.

F. Scott Fitzgerald once stated, "biography is the falsest of the arts" (Milford xi). It is indeed difficult to capture the essence of another, especially one who lived in a radically different time and place. Nancy Milford spoke of her own experience in approaching Zelda, the biography of Fitzgerald's wife: "I had somewhat innocently--if a passionate curiosity about another's life is ever innocent--entered into something I neither could nor would put down for six years, and in that quest the direction of my life was changed" (xiii). When Carlotta entered my imagination, she had a similar impact. Carlotta was a compelling figure whose biography becomes her.

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Chapter One

Beginnings

1868 - 1907

Carlotta Monterey (Hazel Neilson Tharsing) was born in San Francisco on December 28, 1888. San Francisco at the time was a cultural Mecca, attracting an impressive array of talent from abroad. Sarah Bernhardt performed with the Comedie Francais, the London Lyceum Company of Ellen Terry and Henry Irving performed classic and modern plays, and Italian and German opera companies brought the great traditions of Europe to the West Coast of the New World (Serroff 21). Amongst the young San Franciscans introduced to the culture of Europe was Isadora Duncan, born ten years before Carlotta. Duncan envisioned a new art form and a new woman who would embody the spirit of American independence. Upon reading the "prophetic love for America" expressed by Walt Whitman in the lines, "I hear America singing," Duncan had "the Vision of America dancing":

> This music would have a rhythm as great as the undulation, the swing or curves of the Rocky Mountains. It would have nothing to do with the sensual tilting of the Jazz rhythm: it would be the vibration of the American soul striving upward through labour to the Harmonious life. No more would this dance that I visioned have any vestige of the Fox Trot or the Charleston--rather it would be the living leap of the child springing toward the heights, toward its

future accomplishment, toward a new great vision of life that would express America (Duncan 47).

The revolutionary dancer who exhorted women (and men) to free themselves of physical, emotional, and intellectual restraints was only shortsighted in failing to realize the power of the "sensual tilting of the Jazz rhythm." Ultimately, both jazz and modern dance would emerge as distinctive American art forms. Also uniquely American was the drama of Eugene O'Neill. According to John Patrick Diggins, "Eugene O'Neill had a unique perspective on American history," in which "modern economics evolved from an evangelical zeal to save as well as sell; hence religion could scarcely subdue the amoral behavior of the market or even offer deep conviction rather than spiritual comfort; in his play Days without End, religion is a refuge of humanity's 'spiritual cowardice' " (Diggins 70). The sentiment is redolent of Karl Marx's declaration that "religion is the opiate of masses;" indeed, socialism was extremely popular with the intelligentsia in the first decades of the twentieth century. O'Neill was an anarchist, rejecting even the idealism of socialism as an antidote to what he saw as pervasive greed and materialism. As viewed by Diggins:

> Echoing Thoreau's sardonic strictures, O'Neill saw the gold rush of 1849 as the moment in history in which America revealed its desire to grasp and claim and its eager willingness to shake dirt as a gambler shakes dice. As did Shakespeare, O'Neill looked to the family to tell the story of a country's history, and he was as passionately caught up in the fate of America as Shakespeare was

in the destiny of England and equally troubled by the themes of ambition, power, and success (71).

The era into which Carlotta Monterey was born, nearly three decades before she would meet the nihilistic master playwright, seemed to embody all that O'Neill believed was wrong with America. Mark Twain had dubbed the last years of the nineteenth century, "The Gilded Age" the title of his own novel published in 1873. In Twain's astute and cynical view, the acquisition of wealth had become the American dream of the Industrial Age to the detriment of intellectual and moral pursuits. Twain may have viewed himself as a victim of the Industrial Age. Despite his overwhelming popularity, "he was regarded in many quarters as an imprudent if gifted writer for boys" (Douglas 160). To Ann Douglas, the disregard for the intellectual capabilities of Mark Twain, along with contemporaries like Herman Melville and Walt Whitman (who had inspired Isadora), reflected a lack of awareness by Americans of their own cultural heritage: "America was apparently still too involved in its explosive gestation process to do its own cultural thinking or recognize those in their midst who had already done so" (Douglas 160). Ironically, one admirer of Twain's was Sigmund Freud, who included Mark Twain as the lone American on a list of his ten favorite authors.

Industrial Age America was the milieu into which the Tharsing family emigrated from Denmark. In 1868, Hazel's father, Christian Neilson Taasinge, joined the millions of Europeans who saw the newly developing country as a land of unprecedented opportunity. Boatloads of new arrivals were quarantined at

Staten Island until they were finally allowed to pass through customs. The registration process was complicated by the language barriers between the immigrants and the customs officials, and in their zeal to simplify their task (and get the immigrants through customs as fast as possible), the customs officers often Americanized the spellings of names. Thus, the Dutch Taasinge became Tharsing, although it would hardly matter to Christian's adventurous daughter who saw nothing glamorous about being Hazel Neilson Tharsing. As a fledgling actress, Hazel sought a more alluring identity, Carlotta was chosen because it was "suitable to her Latin appearance," and Monterey "came from the town in California" (Sheaffer 222). O'Neill saw the gold rush of 1849 as a pivotal moment in American history, and his future wife took her name from the land where it took place.

Christian Tharsing settled in Alameda County, California, where he became a landscape gardener and fruit farmer (Sheaffer 218). The technological boom that took place in the United States both before and after the Civil War included agricultural inventions that assisted Tharsing, and others like him who saw crop cultivation as an investment, to explore entrepreneurial as well as agrarian ventures. During the 1870s, Tharsing bought 160 acres of land in Stanislaus County and planted an orchard that he successfully farmed for eight years. As railroads became a mainstay of American life, he shipped boxcars of green fruit to eastern markets. He practiced new fertilization and irrigation methods, experimented with hybridization with Luther Burbank, and invented the process of bleaching dried apricots, peaches, and pears. The burly Tharsing had once

traveled the world as a Danish seaman; now he was a gentleman farmer who embodied the American entrepreneurial spirit.

Massive improvements in transportation and communications during the last half of the nineteenth century were the forces driving the new American commerce. In Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century, Warren Susman declared that the communications revolution played a key "role in creating a new social order" (xxi). The emerging middle class was "of special significance because the culture of abundance was originally the culture of this new class":

> Any study of the culture of abundance begins with the obvious cultural consequences of the new communications. It is not simply that these inventions made abundance available to many and made possible increasingly effective distribution. Consciousness itself was altered; the very perception of time and space was radically changed (xx).

Railroads became the basis of the new industrial economy. Tharsing took full advantage of the rails, with their "effective distribution," and his business became more diversified. It was all part of an agrarian revolution characterized by the "dominant tendency to urge the farmer to think of himself as a businessman and to emulate the businessman in his methods of management and marketing" (Hofstadter 126). Historically and geographically, Tharsing was perfectly placed; taking full advantage of the available new technologies, he produced and marketed his goods with considerable acumen and ingenuity.

The prosperous Tharsing was a 40-year-old childless widower when he met 18-year-old Nellie Gotchett. Nellie was of Dutch and French extraction and the second youngest of eight children. Nellie's strong-willed mother was in a perennial search for upward mobility; she encouraged her daughter to marry Tharsing for security. It was not a happy union. As described by Sheaffer, "security was all she found, for little if any affection developed on either side" (218). Unfortunately, "Nellie was, however, as fertile as the California earth, and Chris had to do little more than look at her before she became pregnant" (Sheaffer 218). Nellie's remedy for this situation was to induce a series of miscarriages through horseback riding. Her riding attire, which consisted of men's jeans, had already made her the neighborhood scandal, and Nellie was determined to escape the domesticity in which she felt trapped. Only one pregnancy eluded her efforts. Hazel Neilson Tharsing was born shortly after Christmas 1888.

Donald Gallup, long time friend, and author of Pigeons on the Granite: Memories of a Yale Librarian, agreed that the Tharsing marriage was not a happy one. When Hazel "was about five or six, her parents decided upon a divorce" (Gallup 296). Following the divorce, Nellie left for San Francisco, and asked her sister, Mrs. John Shay of Oakland, to care for Hazel. Shay agreed and Hazel lived with her until she was thirteen. Nellie would come to visit sporadically, but was not an early presence in her daughter's life. According to Sheaffer's description of Nellie, "Although unexceptional-looking, she made the most of herself by dressing with smart simplicity and attracted men with her

vitality, her zest for living" (219-220). Once transformed into Carlotta, her more attractive daughter would follow a similar path.

Early photographs of Hazel, as seen in the Sheaffer collection at Connecticut College, show a lovely little girl with black hair and dark eyes that would become her trademark. With a Clara Bow-like mouth, slightly pouty, she learned to pose for the camera at an early age. Hazel had serious problems with her eyesight. At five years old, she had her first major eye operation. She refused to wear glasses publicly. To compensate for poor vision, she would hold "her head back, and her chin up, a position that gave her a rather arrogant air and that possibly, as a result of the impression she made on people figured to some extent in the formation of her personality" (Sheaffer 220). Hazel's poor vision also provided a vehicle for propensity for dramatization. Between 1902 and 1905, Hazel attended Saint Gertrude's, a Catholic boarding school in Rio Vista, California. According to Gallup she was an exceptionally bright student, disciplined and aloof and at the top of her class. She was also a budding actress both onstage and off. Hazel liked to unnerve her classmates by describing in graphic detail an eye operation she had undergone. "The doctor according to her account, removed an eyeball, placed it on he cheek before doing some scraping and cutting in the socket, and then returned the eye to its place" (Sheaffer 220). Whether the delicate surgery took place as described is highly questionable. A schoolmate recalled that, "Hazel always made a mystery of things" (Sheaffer 220).

At seventeen, Hazel sailed abroad at her father's bidding and spent the next

five years studying in Europe. This began her lifelong love affair with the continent. According to both Sheaffer and Gallup, she immersed herself in the culture. She took conversational French and ballet classes in Paris and singing and acting courses in London, including studies at Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's Academy of Dramatic Arts, which was later to become the Royal Academy. What seems to have been an idyllic period in Hazel's life was abruptly interrupted 1907 by an unsolicited intrusion from her mother.

During Hazel's early childhood and adolescence Nellie had been removed both emotionally and geographically. When Nellie moved to San Francisco after receiving a settlement from Tharsing in the divorce proceedings, she was able to invest in her future. In the beginning she purchased dilapidated residences, fixed them up, and sold them at a profit. She also rented commercial properties, doing quite well in realizing equity and cash flow. All the while Nellie ran a successful boarding house in which she catered to her customers as a domestic. In her multiple roles as domestic, decorator, and developer, Nellie's existence paralleled her former husband's as farmer and entrepreneur. Both had careers that were rooted in traditional class and social roles, yet the rapidly changing environment of the late nineteenth century enabled them to move beyond a circumscribed social sphere. In running a boarding house, Nellie adhered to socially acceptable class and gender roles. She profited from the "details of home and work and community, of preparing food, keeping warm, passing time after work and keeping busy" (Trachtenberg 161). She prospered in a time that "high culture--the culture of the intellectual, the artist, the writer, the

thinker--made little direct impression on popular life" (161). In her work as cook, housekeeper and landlady, ministering to the needs of her boarders and suitors, Nellie appeared to conform to Robert H. Wiebe's description of the "traditional image of women as tender mothers, angels of mercy" (Wiebe 122). At the same time, Nellie's succession of lovers, foisting her daughter on relatives while she lived an independent lifestyle, and her acumen in the real estate market were not among the traditional feminine virtues.

In her analysis of the separate spheres allotted men and women in the United States and the criticism this duality evoked among feminists and their supporters in the nineteenth century, Linda K. Kerber attributed the gradual entry of women into the public sphere to a rather unlikely source for a feminist scholar: capitalism. In addition to creating a world in which the old order was rapidly disintegrating and very little seemed to be stable:

> The capitalist revolution also had deeply unsettling implications for women. As patriarchy eroded, social reality involved unattached individuals, freely negotiating with each other in an expansive market. The patriarchal variant of separate spheres was not congruent with capitalist social relations; capitalism required that men and women's economic relations be renegotiated.
>
> Capitalism had the potential to enhance the position of women by loosening patriarchal control of property and removing factors that shielded property from the economic pressures of the marketplace (Kerber 185).

By the mid-nineteenth century, married women's property acts gave married women the right to hold and control their own earnings and property. However, as Kerber observes, "The statutes created a vast new group of property--holding but unenfranchised citizens; married women's property acts unintentionally but inexorably created an internally contradictory situation that was ultimately resolved by the vote" (185-186). As a single and formally untrained woman, Nellie was severely limited in the wages she could earn as part of the labor force. As a capitalist without a husband's attempts to keep her at home she thrived. Sheaffer noted that "Nellie also profited from her love affairs" (218). She enjoyed a series of lovers and, "Her lovers--only in succession, never concurrently, for Nellie was too practical to be promiscuous--were usually men of some means; one of her longest affairs was with the leading undertaker of Sacramento" (Sheaffer 220).

Nellie's approach to her daughter might be construed as "capitalist" as well: She came to see her daughter as a commodity. Unbeknownst to Hazel, Nellie submitted a picture of her only child to the sponsors of the Miss California beauty contest in 1907. Nellie obviously chose the right photograph; Hazel was chosen to represent the Golden State in the Miss America contest. Apprised of the upcoming pageant, Hazel briefly returned home to compete in the national finals. She was named first runner-up.

When Hazel was first notified that she had been named Miss California, she sent the San Francisco Call a cablegram from London on May 4, 1907:

> Many thanks for the honor conferred on me. I think you could

> easily have found more beautiful girls right at home. Of course, I feel tremendously flattered. Thank the Judges for me. I was surprised when I got my mother's cablegram about my winning. Mother thinks I am better looking than I am. I will send the photographs you ask for. Be sure to let the Sisters at Rio Vista Convent know about this. They will be pleased.

For a brief moment, Hazel thought of becoming a nun. Interestingly, she shared this short-lived aspiration with O'Neill's mother, who had also attended convent school. Hazel confessed that:

> I was attracted by the color of it--the music, the rituals, the nuns' dress--it was theater to me. But the mother superior was wise. She told me, when I was about to graduate, to spend a year at home, and if I still felt the same, to come back to them" (Sheaffer 221).

Instead, Hazel found theatre in the pageantry of a beauty contest. Immediately following the Miss America contest, Hazel returned to Europe accompanied by her mother. She would find even more theatre in Europe. On May 29, 1913, a momentous event occurred on a Paris stage that according to many culture critics marked the birth of the modern age. It was the opening night performance of Le Sacre du Printemps. Many luminaries tried to describe the event, from composer Igor Stravinsky and choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky, to Carl Van Vechten and Gertrude Stein. As astutely noted by historian Modris Eksteins, "Their accounts conflict on significant details. But one thing they all

agree on: the event provoked a seismic response" (10).

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Chapter Two

Transitions

1907-1920

Upon her return to the continent Hazel added fencing to her lessons in singing, acting, and elocution. While abroad, she met her first husband, John Moffat: "John Moffat was then in Parliament, and someone had told him that he too should take up fencing and speech lessons" (Gallup 296). A native of Glasgow, Scotland, Moffat was fifteen years older than Hazel. He was a lawyer with interests in the Gold Coast Amalgamated Mining Company of South Africa, one of the richest companies in the world (although before meeting Hazel, Moffat had lost a fortune by speculating in mining stocks). As a descendent of the Coates thread family, "Moffat's mother was a member of the two millionaire families" (Gallup 297). Moffat hoped to recoup his losses with the help of his family's prodigious funds (Sheaffer 221).

John invited Hazel to Scotland where the Moffats had "a large estate, with forty gardeners" (Gallup 296). Her experiences with the Moffat family included such traditionally aristocratic activities as fox hunting, polo, golf, tennis, and lavish parties. Hazel saw her participation as an opportunity to hone her social graces and heighten her aesthetic sense. In this milieu, she "met extraordinary people then . . . and would be seated next to famous men and became an expert conversationalist" (Gallup 296). At Moffat's prodding, Hazel enrolled in Mme. Yeatman's Finishing School on Avenue Victor Hugo in Paris. Mme. Yeatman's

was attended by an international array of affluent and influential young women on the international scene, offering Hazel even more opportunity to learn cosmopolitan manners and charm.

Hazel attended Mme. Yeatman's for only a term and a half. She and John Moffat returned to New York, where they married on March 31, 1911. After the marriage they returned once again to Europe, spending the next year traveling abroad. When asked why she wanted to marry, Hazel's response was, "I like Jack" (Gallup 298). She also admitted to liking his position and money. However, Moffat's income was far more variable than Hazel had expected from a Coates thread scion, and Hazel was not willing to withstand financial adversity. Shortly before their separation, the couple returned to Oakland, California, "where they finally became dependent on Nellie Tharsing after Moffat was cut off, by World War I, from his funds in England" (Sheaffer 221). They divorced in 1914, the year the United States entered the Great War. The divorce was ostensibly amicable but Moffat was despondent. In the divorce trial Hazel testified that her husband had threatened to kill himself by jumping from their fifth floor window in a London hotel. She also stated that on another occasion, he had threatened to shoot her. Moffat made several attempts at reconciliation, but Hazel remained unmoved. He was not the only ex-husband to remain in love with her, and toward the end of their lives, the two had an "affectionate correspondence" (Sheaffer 222).

> In her one-act play, My Gene, Barbara Gelb summed up Hazel's thoughts about her first marriage: I married at 20 a very wealthy

> Scotsman, and we lived in Europe for several years. As a young bride I had the best of everything--clothes, servants, admiration. When I divorced John, he said, 'I want you to be happy and to have your independence' (Gelb 22).

Following the divorce, Hazel attended acting classes at the University of California at Berkeley. Once again she aspired to a stage career, and within months she moved to New York, where Hazel Neilson Tharsing Moffat was transformed into Carlotta Monterey. The transition to a new persona necessitated altering certain significant facts of her background, which presented no problem for the aspiring star. Carlotta had an uncanny ability for re-inventing herself and an acute awareness of the conflicting forces of her personality. A school friend had called her "a girl of strong emotions," and in her first interview as an actress, Carlotta agreed, confessing that:

> It seems that I am always vacillating between extremes, and never choose a compromising and restful middle course. There are times when I feel within me a calling for the primitive, the wild and the elemental in nature and in art. Then at times I crave the very reverse, the exquisite and the ultrarefined . . . It is not pleasant to be a living pendulum swinging between two natures (Sheaffer 222).

The interview headlined, "A Girl of Extremes," appeared in the New York Tribune on April 18, 1915, following Carlotta's debut in a "sex farce" entitled Taking Chances. The critic for the Sun appeared less interested in Carlotta's emotions or her acting. He reported that she appeared in "an almost negligible

negligee in the last act and made a seductive picture" (Sheaffer 222).

In negotiating her first stage role, Carlotta displayed the legacy of her entrepreneurial parents. First, she hired an agent. Through him she met Lee Shubert who auditioned her and promptly cast her in Taking Chances. Shubert originally offered the newcomer $250.00 a week, but Carlotta managed to charm Shubert and negotiate the terms of her contract. In Shubert's words, the final deal was: "I'll pay you $350 a week for a three-month run; if the run is longer than that, $450 a week--with a contract for two or three years" (Gallup 299).

Taking Chances premiered at the 39th street Theater in March 1915 where it ran for 85 performances. Carlotta's negligee notwithstanding, the reviews were tepid. Carlotta played opposite Lou Tellegen, another newcomer, who Carlotta found very attractive. The two novice actors began an affair that lasted until Tellegen married someone else. An undated theatrical scrapbook item headed "Broadway Beau", at the Billy Rose Theatrical Collection in Lincoln Center, suggests that Carlotta was planning a lawsuit in "solace for a lacerated heart." She claimed to have letters spanning two years that would figure heavily in the case. Nothing came of Carlotta's threats, which may have been little more than a theatrical ploy.

Carlotta's less than auspicious debut with Chances was followed by The Bird of Paradise. Laurette Taylor and Lenore Ulric had won acclaim for the role of Luana, but Carlotta failed to live up to their legend (Sheaffer 222). Only the San Francisco Bulletin hailed the return of their native daughter with headlines proclaiming: "San Francisco Girl Returns as Star in Beautiful Play/Takes Lead in

the Bird of Paradise/Stage Name Hides Identity of Beautiful Girl of this City." The role did little to bolster Carlotta's career, though it did play a role in her second marriage.

Melvin C. Chapman, Jr., was a 20 year old law student from Oakland; whereas Moffat had been fifteen years older than Carlotta, Melvin was seven years younger. Their relationship was somewhat complicated and a touch bizarre. Melvin was the son of Nellie's long-time lover, and as a law clerk in his father's firm, he had worked on Carlotta's divorce case from John Moffat. Chapman Senior had wanted to marry Nellie, but his son found her too "bossy" and gave his father the ultimatum of choosing between marriage to Nellie and keeping his son's affections. Melvin Junior had no objection to the continuation of the liaison outside of marriage, nor had his father any objection to Junior courting Carlotta. According to Melvin Junior, "Nellie persuaded me to do it, but I was already infatuated and thought I loved her" (Sheaffer 223). Carlotta simply wanted a child. Lou Tellegen "had advised her that she would never be a good actress until she became a mother" (Sheaffer 223). Carlotta took his advice to heart.

The couple was married on October 12, 1916; their daughter, Cynthia Jane, was born 10 months later. Carlotta was as ill suited to motherhood as her own mother had been. Within a year she left Chapman. Cynthia was given to Nellie to bring up. Ironically, Carlotta left her own daughter with a relative just as young Hazel had been left with her aunt, only this time, designated caregiver was the mother who had rejected her. In an interview for the San Francisco Call, Nellie

told readers, "[My daughter's] love for art destroyed her love for home and family" (Sheaffer 223). Chapman sued for divorce in 1923, at Carlotta's request, when she wanted to marry cartoonist Ralph Barton.

As World War I drew to a close, Carlotta was back on the stage, optimistic about revitalizing (or more accurately, realizing) her career. The Modern Age had taken a firm hold on the social and intellectual climate of Europe and the United States. To Modris Eksteins, it began that fateful night when the cream of Paris society turned the premier of Le Sacre du Printemps into a cultural brawl. In Gertrude Stein's account, the audience was so raucous the music could not be heard. In Carl Van Vechten's account, the patron behind him was so excited by the pagan ritual, "he began to beat rhythmically on the top of my head with his fists." Overcome with emotion himself, Van Vechten "did not feel the blows for some time. They were perfectly synchronized with the beat of the music [emphasis added]". Eksteins points out the contradiction: "In this account the music obviously, could be heard" (14). Van Vechten elaborated that the ballerina who danced the role of the chosen maiden "executed her strange dance of religious hysteria on a stage dimmed by the blazing light in the auditorium, seemingly to the accompaniment of the disjointed ravings of a mob of angry men and women" (13).

As perceived by Eksteins, the critical feature of the riotous evening was that, "The audience was as much a part of the famous performance as the corps de ballet" 13). The milestone event provides an excellent marker for exploring the way in which Carlotta Monterey fashioned her life, from her choice of exotic

name to her choice of Eugene O'Neill as husband:

> That boisterous evening rightly stands as a symbol of its era and as a landmark of this century. From the setting in the newly constructed, ultramodern Theatre des Champs-Elysees, in Paris, through the ideas and intentions of the leading protagonists, to the tumultuous response of the audience, that opening night of Le Sacre represents a milestone in the development of "modernism," modernism as above all a culture of the sensational event, through which art and life both become a matter of energy and are fused as one. (Eksteins 16).

Eksteins shares with many historians the belief that the Armistice of 1918 brought a spirit of promise and great hope to the world. In his memoir, The Awakening Twenties, Gotham Manson documented the prevailing ebullience: "Flooding the beings of many young men and young women was the sudden feeling that the opportunity to rebel and to fulfill themselves had indeed come. Youth was being given back to us" (5). As the railroad and telegraph had broken down geographic barriers in the sprawling agrarian society a generation earlier, improvements in railroad and bus service, the advent of the radio, and the new cinema which rapidly became as popular in rural as urban areas, broke down cultural barriers. Even in the heartland, which had traditionally been the mainstay of traditional values, young people (and often their elders) were listening to jazz, dancing the Charleston, and exulting in a climate of "liberation" (Eksteins 258) .

Within this climate of optimism, Carlotta was determined to resume her career. Her return to the stage, however, was disappointing, characterized by roles in weak vehicles and discouraging reviews. According to Sheaffer, she did manage to sign a five-year contract with Chamberlain and Layman Brown, a highly reputable theatrical talent agency. All that resulted was a series of second-rate character parts. All Night Long was essentially a vaudeville skit; it opened on June 19, 1918, and closed after only four performances. This inauspicious return was followed by Mr. Barnum, which opened on September 9, 1918 at the Criterion Theater, with Carlotta atop a black stallion. She had slightly better luck in Be Calm Camilla, which introduced her to producer Arthur Hopkins and set designer Robert Edmund Jones. These established luminaries helped focus the limelight on Camilla, and in turn on Carlotta. She received decent reviews for her role of Celia Brook, although she was better acclaimed for her sex appeal than her acting. Camilla opened at the Booth Theater on October 31, and ran for 84 performances.

Although steadily employed, Carlotta was increasingly disenchanted with the course of her career. She deemed 1919 -1920 a "heartbreaking season." In an undated letter among her papers at the Billy Rose Theatrical Collection, she revealed to Lee Shubert the depth of her discouragement:

> I'm getting older every day and can act just as well as these others. Then, why won't you help me? I admit I have no written contract--I don't want one! But I'd rather go hungry than be humiliated any longer by playing such rotten parts--when I know I can do better

things if given a chance.

This "heartbreaking season" included A Sleepless Night, directed by Shubert, which ran for 71 performances after opening at the Bijou Theater on February 18, 1919. Carlotta had planned to tour with the production, but plans for touring foundered and Carlotta was temporarily sidelined with an emergency appendectomy. Her next vehicle was ironically titled The Ruined Lady. The New York Times simply listed her character, Olive Gresham, without even a mention of her name.

As her career faltered, Carlotta began to reinvent herself once again and seek other venues of marketability. Her personal redesign was unfolding in the midst of a culture that was rapidly reinventing itself. The theatre itself was changing. In literature, there was a decisive shift against rhetoric. To the writers and culture critics of the era, "Slogans, glorified statements, magniloquent claims of virtue and victory idealized and sentimentalized the War and in the process ruined the language" (Watkins 46). During this time, "Ezra Pound defined the good writer as one who 'uses the smallest number of words' " (Watkins 48). Pound, along with contemporaries T.S. Eliot and Ernest Hemingway irrevocably altered the course of American literature. Eugene O'Neill would alter the course of American drama.

No writer detached language from rhetoric as radically as Gertrude Stein. Stein had originally studied psychology with William James at Harvard, then in a dramatic twist left her native America to join her brother on the Left Bank of Paris in 1903. As recounted by Claudia Roth Pierpont, "It was at that moment, when

modern art was being born, that the Steins began to buy the best and most shocking paintings; before long, the best and most unshockable people were stopping by to view their riotous thick-hung walls--and were staying for dinner" (33). Gertrude was on the cutting edge in language as well as art: "Before James Joyce--as she volubly insisted all her life--before Dada or Surrealism, before Bloomsbury or the roman fleuve, Gertrude Stein was inscrutable, and, above all, dauntingly unreadable" (Pierpont 34). Stein's first writing effort was a novel she had been working on when she went to join her brother in Paris. She never tried to publish the manuscript and probably never had the intent. It was the story of a love triangle that had been tormenting her when she decided to emigrate. Pierpont observes that she made no apologies for its content: "although not explicitly erotic, it was plainly open about the fact that all three members of its sexual triangle were women. No explanations, no apologies, no wells of loneliness" (38). Pierpont credits its author for "the Jamesian acuity of its psychological portraits" (39). She might have developed the genre, but Stein preferred a world of "obvious, superficial, clean simplicity" to expressions of murky passions. Although Stein herself attributed it to a "puritanic horror" of passion, it was far more consistent with the dawn of the modern age.

In 1922, Ernest Hemingway told Sherwood Anderson that "Gertrude Stein and me are just like brothers" (Pierpont 43). With Stein as his mentor, Hemingway developed his characteristic terse writing style. At a time when Freudian interpretations abounded in literature and art, Hemingway, by means of Stein's influence, had adapted the psychological tenets of William James. In

James's theory, emotions were not a response to an event, the traditional order was wrong: "the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike, or tremble because we are sorry, angry, or fearful" (Crunden 43). The somewhat simplistic theory had a much more profound impact on literature than it did on psychology. It fit perfectly with a philosophy that abhorred rhetoric: "The tired adjectives of external descriptions could disappear and in their place a writer could substitute images of motor behavior that suggested emotions but never actually said an individual was sad, terrified, or lonely" (43). The idea traveled to Paris through Gertrude Stein, and through Hemingway, came full circle back to the New World. Inevitably, "such notions changed the ways Americans thought, talked, and wrote" (Crunden 43).

Unlike Stein, Virginia Woolf deplored Hemingway, in particular, his "exaggeration of male characteristics" (Pierpont 43). According to Pierpont, "Woolf suggested that any woman who wrote in a terse, short-winded style was probably trying to write like a man" (44). Woolf is typically included in feminist anthologies, notably for the philosophy she expressed in A Room of One's Own. In her classic work, Woolf insisted that it was the duty of women to chronicle their experiences from their own perspective, asserting that, "it remains obvious, even in the writing of Proust, that a man is terribly hampered partial in his knowledge of women, as a woman in her knowledge of men" (Woolf 125). Only when women claimed space for telling their stories would an accurate story be told.

At the same time, Woolf was writing in an era when the focal point was language rather than content. Woolf considered Stein's "contortions" of the English language a "generational misfortune," claiming that "those who struggled toward the liberation of language--like herself and Stein and Eliot and Joyce--were found to fail as often as they succeeded" (Pierpont 38). However, the difference between Woolf and Stein is not in language but in philosophy: "But at the heart of their difference is the fact that Woolf didn't see why a woman should want to do anything like a man; feminine generosity was life itself, and the necessary source of male achievement. One could hardly get further from Stein's perception of the sexes' division of properties" (Pierpont 44). Stein herself fostered male genius at the same time as she nurtured her own. She had a "room of one's own" in her prestigious Paris salon.

Salons had originated in Europe, but they were flourishing in America at the dawn of the Jazz Age. Mabel Dodge was amongst the arbiters of modernism, and she was celebrated as a denizen of Greenwich Village and Provincetown. Eugene O'Neill was her associate in both bohemian venues. They inhabited a world where artistic innovation blended with a seemingly endless series of sexual (and often bisexual) alliances. Christine Stansell sums up the philosophy of the milieu inhabited by Dodge, O'Neill, Alfred Steiglitz, Emma Goldman, and the coterie of artistic, social, and political rebels who shaped the culture of the modern age: "The bohemians believed they stood at the beginning of an arc through American time" (338). In retrospect, they were correct.

Mabel Dodge and Emma Goldman were two of the most radical voices in

the political realm. Many women were actively working to transform the society that deprived them from entering the public sphere. Advances in women's higher education in the 1870s produced a literate generation acutely aware of the injustices that pervaded the purportedly democratic society. Many eagerly joined the Progressive social reform movement, whose most illustrious member was Jane Addams, founder of modern social work. The Progressive movement, like every reform movement, had its "extremists." As chronicled by Karen Manners Smith:

> Most reformers were content to work within the exiting social and legal systems, but a handful of rebels made it their missions in life to defy society's most basic conventions and to challenge time-honored assumptions about women and women's roles. This small group of writers, artists, philosophers, and radicals proposed sweeping social changes that most turn-of-the-century Americans regarded as threatening and outrageous, if not downright revolutionary (398).

Included in Smith's list of revolutionaries are Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Emma Goldman, Margaret Sanger, and Isadora Duncan. Their scandalous activities coincided with the emergence of the first wave of feminism to sweep the United States. The first group to call themselves "feminists" organized in Greenwich Village in the 1910s. Their members included writers, journalists, professionals, social workers, and labor leaders, and they chose to name their group "Heterodoxy" to underscore the unorthodox character of their ideas.

Heterodoxy is an appropriate title for what was an unquestionably diverse group. Their members encompassed a wide array of political leanings, ethnic and national backgrounds, and social and political interests. A host of renowned speakers addressed the group including Margaret Sanger, Helen Keller, Amy Lowell, Emma Goldman, and an international roster of advocates for peace and reform (Schwarz 19). The topics ranged from the Russian Revolution to infant mortality and education at home. Judith Schwarz notes that, "In fact, it seems that few topics affecting women throughout the world were overlooked" (19). When asked what Heterodoxy talked about, member Inez Haynes Irwin responded: "It talked about everything."

According to Schwarz, the Great War played a key role in winning the vote for women. Ultimately, it was less the heroic actions or speeches of radical groups of women "that finally won women the vote as much as it was the role of women workers during the war, plus the 'mounting crescendo of suffrage work under the leadership of the National Suffrage Association' " (Schwarz 46). In the political as well as the social and economic spheres, the "war to end all wars" had generated a spirit of optimism and renewal. As viewed by Nancy F. Cott in The Grounding of Modern Feminism:

> As 1919 began, despite curtailment of civil liberties there was eagerness and optimism in the air about use of the state in creating a new democratic order. From all corners--politicians, professional associations, churches, research agencies--came proposals for new social order, for a "second Reconstruction." The position of

> labor appeared strong at the culmination of a decade of workers' collective protests. The National War Labor Board, pressed by the WTUL (Women's Trade Union League], unprecedented efforts to equalize women's pay. The bastions of the male workplace and the polling place seemed simultaneously to be falling (62-63).

The beginnings of a new social order were apparent to European observers. Frenchman Lucien Romier declared in 1927:

> The United States seems to be today the only great county whose citizens declare incessantly their love for the society to which they belong, work together enthusiastically for its betterment, and, in a world made pessimistic to the core by social problems, reveal themselves to be optimists on social issue (Eksteins 268).

Along with other observers of the time, Romier cited the independence of American women, their lack of fear toward men and their rejection of patriarchy as "eminently modern and liberating" (Eksteins 269). In direct opposition to this view was Sigmund Freud. Gertrude Stein, according to Ann Douglas "was aware of him as her greatest adversary" (134). In fact she and her brother Leo parted when he decided to enter psychoanalysis and embrace the Freudian credo. Douglas has an intriguing perspective on the duality of Stein and Freud:

> As Jews, Freud and Stein were both self-conscious outsiders to the world of late-Victorian culture in which they were reared, yet Freud was the culmination of its patriarchal impulse as surely as Stein was the culmination of its equally powerful matriarchal thrust. What

> Freud loathed above all else in American culture was its "dominating women"; in his view, they treated American men as wolves do sheep and constituted an "anti-cultural phenomenon" (134).

Romier and Freud observed the same phenomenon, yet to one it was "eminently modern and liberating," while to the other it was anti-cultural. Freud hated American popular culture, which he decried as "feminine," yet by all accounts, he played a key role in creating the mass culture and hedonism he deplored. Carlotta seems to have vacillated between allying herself with the "patriarchal impulse" or the "matriarchal thrust." It was around the time of Romier's writing that Carlotta Monterey met the playwright Eugene O'Neill.

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Chapter Three

New York

1920-1925

Amidst the radically shifting cultural landscape, Carlotta chose a rather conventional path. Perhaps she recognized that her acting talent was modest in comparison to her talent for cultivating the affections of men. In the early 1920s, she met James Speyer, an elderly Wall Street banker, widowed and childless. He was a dominant figure in the founding of the Museum of the City of New York and served as its finance chairman. A descendent of a wealthy, cultured Jewish family, he became a longtime companion of Carlotta's. Their relationship was to precede and succeed her third marriage. Speyer provided a trust fund for Carlotta, a lifetime annuity of $14,000 a year, a generous sum at the time. Neither one wanted to marry, and in an undated letter found in her papers at the Billy Rose Theatrical Collection, Carlotta was enthusiastic over the companionable agreement:

> Mr. Speyer and I are great friends. He's thirty years older than I am! But the only man I have ever really respected. He is a darling--the kindest--most unselfish, most charitable man I have ever met--and clever--and has a keen sense of humor--and above all--gentle! I adore him--but no marriage! Ours is a beautiful and most thoroughly satisfying friendship of course his being a millionaire and I am an exactress-these damned foul society reporters bleat! I

suppose they must earn their hirings.

In an age when advertising was in its infancy, Carlotta looked to Madison Avenue and supplemented her annuity with modeling assignments. With her dark good looks, Carlotta was very photogenic, and actually better suited to the frozen still of a camera lens than to a director's cue. Far more successful as model than actress, Carlotta appeared in the leading womens' magazines, such as Vogue, Vanity Fair, and Town and Country, as well as in the tabloids and dailies which abounded in the twenties. Carlotta's papers at the Billy Rose Theater Collection are replete with clippings and scrapbooks filled with photos from modeling shoots. Carlotta also modeled for fashion catalogues, in particular, the prestigious Best & Company.

Feminine fashion underwent a radical change in the early 1920's, even beyond Isadora Duncan's exhortation for women to shed their corsets and wear natural dress. The garment district on Seventh Avenue quickly adopted Henry Ford's new mass-production techniques. During World War I, the clothing business standardized the sizes of men's uniforms; women's off the rack clothing followed suit. According to Ann Douglas standardization had a dramatic effect on the made-to-measure method. Earlier in the twentieth century there were no fashionable, ready-to-wear stock sizes. However, "by the end of the war, full-scale mass-production techniques were being applied to civilian clothing and the United States had taken the lead in the world's clothing market" (188). There was a major shift in merchandising and marketing as "not just clothing production but fashion design was shifting its headquarters from Europe to New

York" (Douglas 189). Seventh Avenue joined with Madison Avenue as advertising merged with couture. In essence, it was a merger of media and materialism:

> The acceleration of precise information conveyed via telegraphs, cameras, telephones, big daily newspapers, advertising, movies, radios (and later television)--in short, the phenomenon of media and photo-media that palpably speed up not just our work but our minds, our very consciousness, the acceleration of culture--was an American obsession, if not an American monopoly (Douglas 190) .

Like her father, Carlotta had a knack for placing herself in the midst of industrial change. She was now involved in the predominant industries of the day: entertainment, fashion and advertisement. Her work as actress and model synthesized in January of 1922 by virtue of the play Danger. Once again Carlotta received tepid reviews, but was rewarded with a magazine layout. In the January issue of Vanity Fair, her face stared haughtily from a photograph captioned, "Carlotta Monterey plays a lady of unhappy morals in Danger, an unhappy melodrama with a happy ending." With a jab at the mediocre fare on the current stage, the article headlined: "Our Somewhat Tragic Stage--If You Don't Know What To Do With Your Play, Make It A Tragedy With A Happy Ending." Carlotta followed one mediocre play with two others, Bavu and Voltaire. All three plays were directed by Arthur Hopkins who had previously worked with Carlotta in Be Calm, Camilla. Although the plays were little more than

disastrous, through Hopkins' influence, Carlotta got a tremendous break.

Arthur Hopkins was instrumental in casting Carlotta in the most prestigious role of her career, The Hairy Ape, by Eugene O'Neill. It originally opened at the Provincetown Playhouse on March 9,1922, with Mary Blair as the pivotal character Mildred Douglas. Blair had played the part in Provincetown, but Hopkins felt that she lacked the glamour and intrigue necessary for a successful Broadway run: "He insisted on replacing Mary Blair in the role of Mildred Douglas with a beautiful actress whom he admires. She was Carlotta Monterey" (Gelb and Gelb 501).

Hopkins' instincts proved correct. Carlotta received favorable reviews. According to The Globe review on April 19, 1922: "Carlotta Monterey is simpler and clearer than Mary Blair, as the artificial lady of the promenade deck." Good reviews coupled with an appearance in a controversial play by a promising playwright enhanced her reputation. Just as, Ape was attracting attention, Carlotta broke into the inner circle of the Provincetown Theater Group and moved into the company of the new intellectuals.

Like the women of Heterodoxy, many artists, intellectuals, and musicians found their refuge in Greenwich Village. There was nothing mysterious about its allure. While noting that, "In its picturesque decrepitude, part slum, part shabby-genteel, the Village was curiously isolated from the roaring modern city that surrounded it," Lloyd Morris succinctly sums up the charm of the Village: "Life in the Village was simple and cheap. It was a place where people were free to 'be themselves' " (302).

Similar to the Impressionists and Surrealists in Europe, "It was the painters who first proclaimed a revolution in the arts" (Morris 302). Photographer Alfred Steiglitz displayed the works of a new generation of painters, and observers flocked to see "the craziest painters in America." In her sculpture studio on West Eighth Street, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney exhibited the works of unknown young artists, already determined to establish a museum dedicated solely to American art. Eight revolutionary painters distinguished themselves by their depictions of the seamy side of American life and became known as "the Ashcan School." The work of Gertrude Stein's friends, Picasso and Matisse, along with those of other radical Europeans such as Duchamp, Leger, and Brancusi, were introduced to American audiences, who were baffled by the peculiar lines of cubism, futurism, and post-impressionism. The radical new styles of painting made their debut in New York at the International Exhibition of Modern Art, which opened at the Sixty-ninth Regiment Armory on Park Avenue in Winter 1913. The response was not quite as jarring as the premier of Le Sacre du Printemps, but according to Lloyd Morris, it was not far off the mark:

> The famous tenor Enrico Caruso went to the armory, delightedly drew caricatures of cubist art and scattered them to a boisterous crowd. From early morning until late at night the exhibition was jammed with visitors, puzzled or exasperated or enthusiastic. Whatever their emotions, nearly all of them emerged in a belligerent mood. Even those who denounced the show most bitterly acknowledged that it was dynamite (304).

All of the arts were in the process of being freed from academic constraints. It is doubtful that Caruso's talents as a cartoonist equaled his prodigious vocal gifts, but caricature as a creative art form, would come into its own in the 1920s. Comic strips had become extremely popular, as "Popeye and Krazy Kat and others were transforming the already combustible American language into a series of linguistic explosions" (Douglas 451). John Held, Jr., known for his angular figures, the "most famous illustrator of the Jazz Age." Traditionally considered a secondary or "low brow" art form, caricature was like jazz: innovative, original, and packed with spontaneous energy.

Caricature was Ralph Barton's chosen medium. Bruce Kellner, who chronicled Barton's life, notes that The Hairy Ape brought Ralph and Carlotta together: "Ralph Barton surely saw her in the production on Broadway, probably several times, for he was immediately smitten with her when they met on the May 7th" (95). Barton had attended several productions of Ape, more taken by Carlotta's charm than the play. Infatuated by the actress, he implored his friends to provide him a formal introduction. They finally met on May 7, 1922, at Nicholas Muray's Greenwich Village studio. Muray was known for his dynamic gatherings of New York's elite. It was Barton's business associate, Gerald Kelley, who actually introduced the pair. Kelley (who held an influential position with the Metropolitan Museum of Art) had helped Barton in the past by sponsoring, gratis, Barton's first art exhibit, in 1914, at the Broun Gallery on Fifth Avenue. Now he did Barton a social favor. Barton was instantly mesmerized. Carlotta's exotic features provided an artistic as well as a sexual attraction.

Barton was commonly regarded as a Lothario. He wrote his mother that from the day they first met "an amazing understanding has existed between us. We have been together almost constantly" (Kellner 95).

According to Kellner, a scant three months before Barton's fateful introduction to Carlotta, he was commissioned to create an intermission curtain caricaturing well-known show business personalities for the Broadway extravaganza Chauve Souris. He developed the concept of depicting a typical Broadway first night audience. Row upon row of the faces of every imaginable celebrity of New York and Hollywood peered out at the audience. The work was mounted on canvas and covered the entire proscenium of the Forty-Ninth Street Theater.

Barton's work was a tremendous sensation. The caricatures of one hundred thirty five celebrities overshadowed the show. People actually went to the play to "see" the intermission. John Barrymore, George M. Cohan, Lillian Gish, Al Jolson, Dorothy Parker, Eugene O'Neill, and Herbert Hoover, were only a few of the diverse group of notables caricatured on the curtain. As the lampooned audience stared back at the live one, it had a powerful impact. The audience applauded and cheered vociferously, no doubt gratified to see the rich and famous and powerful made slightly ridiculous. The project took Barton only one month to complete. He could not begin to accommodate the siege of commissions he received from his inspired portrayal of the foibles of the elite.

When Barton met Carlotta he was still married to Anne Minnerly, a model for fashion magazines and artists. She was his second wife and the mother of

one of his two young daughters. She sued for divorce and eventually married e.e cummings. Carlotta was also nominally married to Melvin Chapman, Jr., who sued for divorce at Carlotta's request in 1923 (Sheaffer 223). Barton and Carlotta lived together for almost three years before they were married on March 17, 1925.

Ralph Barton suffered from what is known today as bipolar depression, but is more aptly described by its original name: manic-depressive. Carlotta was briefly able to allay his anxiety, however, she was only a temporary buffer against his depression. He worked in creative spurts and maddening dry periods. Carlotta tried to encourage him, sometimes managing to nag him into a fairly recognizable routine. Adding to Barton's angst were his insecurities about his talent and chosen medium. He feared his art was lightweight, nothing more than a throwaway art form. Unfortunately, he failed to realize that caricature had been exalted in the modernist cultural climate. Rather than indulging in a second-rate form of expression, he was in excellent postwar company in depicting the realism and humanism of existence. What Sinclair Lewis was exposing in Main Street, Sherwood Anderson in Winesburg, Ohio, F. Scott Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby, and Theodore Dreiser in An American Tragedy. Barton was capturing in his satirical drawings.

Barton achieved his greatest success in conjunction with the work of author Anita Loos. Loos' classic work, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, had been illustrated by Ralph Barton. The story that has since become a cultural icon began as a modest series of articles in Harper's Bazaar. The saga of Lorelei Lee was a

gentle spoof of the twenties and its resident vacuous flappers and it became an immediate hit.

According to Loos, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes was inspired by "the dumbest blond of all, a girl who had bewitched one of the keenest minds of our era--H.L. Mencken" (3). Lorelei Lee was packed into monthly installments, and for the first time ever, men were reading Harper's Bazaar. Loos recounted that, "James Joyce, who had begun to lose his eyesight, saved his reading for Lorelei Lee. And George Santayana, when asked what was the best book of philosophy written by an American, answered Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (8). By the end of 1925, the story was published in hard cover; it sold out immediately, as did a second printing of sixty-seven thousand copies. Barton received a five-percent royalty, which netted him over fifty thousand dollars before the close of the year. He had surpassed John Held Jr. as the highest paid illustrator in America.

Barton's personal life was not quite as successful. Carl Van Vechten, dance and music critic for The New York Times and noted Jazz Age Renaissance man, was a close friend of both Ralph and Carlotta. His Daybooks describe the disintegration of their marriage, as well as bizarre examples of their tempestuous relationship. Carlotta's exhibitionism was not restricted to the stage. On September 29th, shortly before the couple divorced, Van Vechten recorded:

> 6:30--Dinner with R. Barton and Carlotta Monterey. Marinoff goes to theatre. I stay there and after the Bartons have talked for 3 hours about whether they will live together any more they take off

> their clothes and give a remarkable performance. Ralph goes down on Carlotta and she expires in ecstasy. They do '69' etc. I leave about 12:30.

In November 1925, Carlotta arrived early from an out of town audition and found Ralph with another woman. She immediately packed her bags and moved to the Madison Hotel, relating, "I forgave him. But I just couldn't forget it, and so we broke up" (Kellner 130). He pleaded with her to reconsider. Aline Fruhauf, a fellow artist and mutual friend of the couple tried to engineer a reconciliation. On one such occasion Aline met with a frazzled but resolved Carlotta:

> Her black hair was long again at that time, sweeping almost her-- entire back. She was dressed in a black kimono. Frustration and disappointment were mixed and she told Aline there was nothing to be done; the marriage was over. 'I just hope to God he's happy!' she said, pacing the floor and weeping (Fruhauf 132).

Carlotta survived the breakup with characteristic resilience. Barton, the manic-depressive, did not. On May 19, 1931, Barton shot himself in his penthouse apartment on East Fifty-seventh Street. He had meticulously arranged his surroundings, written a note which he headed "OBIT," and left a copy of Gray's Anatomy on his bed, opened to show illustrations of the human heart. In his "OBIT," Barton expressed that everyone who knew him would "have a different hypothesis to offer to explain why I did it," adding that they would invariably be wrong. Barton attributed his suicide to his "melancholia," and worsening manic depressive symptoms, which "has prevented my getting

anything like the full value out of my talent, and the past three years has made work a torture to do at all" (Sheaffer 374). In one passage, he confessed:

> In particular, my remorse is bitter over my failure to appreciate my beautiful lost angel, Carlotta, the only woman I ever loved and whom I respect and admire above the rest of the human race. She is the one person who could have saved me had I been savable. She did her best. No one ever had a more devoted or more understanding wife (Sheaffer 374).

When she heard the news of Barton's suicide, Carlotta seemed shocked to find herself in the midst of the "OBIT." According to Carl Van Vechten, "She couldn't understand why he'd dragged her into it. Barton, she insisted, hadn't loved her in years." Van Vechten "thought it a clear case of ego, of his wanting all possible attention at his death. He resented her marrying someone more famous than himself and wanted to upset them" (Sheaffer 374). Carlotta was visibly upset; O'Neill was "more than normally taciturn" (374). Barton had laid out thirty-five dollars for his maid, which appeared to be all the cash he had left. By 1931, times had changed drastically from the optimism and glitter of the Jazz Age. In recounting the wake of Barton's suicide, Van Vechten added, "Don't forget, too, that the Great Depression was on--people weren't in the mood for his sophisticated art. The market for his stuff had shrunk, and he could see only lean times ahead, so he decided to go out in a splash of publicity" (Sheaffer 375). If the mood was no longer right for Barton's witty caricatures, it was perfect for O'Neill's somber plays.

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Chapter Four

Interim

1925-1931

Three times divorced, tired of the stage and life on the road, Carlotta was thirty-eight years old, and keenly aware that her theatrical career would never award her a major triumph. She decided to take a brief vacation from New York and summered in Belgrade Lakes, Maine at the home of Elisabeth Marbury in 1925.

Bessy Marbury was an internationally known theatrical broker, with offices in America and in Europe. She liked Carlotta's company and according to Sheaffer, wanted to adopt Carlotta as her sole heir. By that time, Marbury was a gargantuan woman in her seventies. Her long-time companion Elsie de Wolfe, had fashioned her own career as an interior decorator, serving an upscale clientele. Marbury was concerned about Carlotta's post divorce depression. She urged her to socialize, advising her, "You're always sitting at home. Why not meet interesting people?" (Gallup 200). Carlotta complied.

Marbury boasted an intriguing and brilliant coterie. Amongst her most famous clients were Oscar Wilde, Somerset Maugham, George Bernard Shaw, James Barrie and, of course, Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill had been dissatisfied with his previous representation, and signed a contract with Marbury's American Play Company. At Marbury's prompting, O'Neill also was staying at Loon Lodge in the Belgrade Lakes, with an entourage that included his wife, Agnes and their

sizable extended family. They represented only a small portion of Marbury's summer salon of imported guests.

Marbury and de Wolfe represented a lifestyle that had become acceptable, if not fashionable, in sophisticated circles. The denial of repression that characterized the postwar period ushered in a trend toward sexual experimentation, including homosexuality and bisexuality. Until the early twentieth century, intense relationships between women had been viewed as "romantic friendships," based on "the Victorian insistence that women were not naturally sexual" (Faderman 31). Two women living together were viewed as "devoted companions," rather than sexual partners. This traditional assumption changed radically with the popularization of Freud; by the 1920s, two women living together were assumed to be sexually involved.

Virtually all aspects of modernism have been traced to the World War I era in some way. Whether the significant factor is presumed to be the dissonance of Stravinsky; the natural movements of Isadora Duncan; the stylized paintings of the Cubists and Surrealists; the psychological theories of James, Freud and Jung; the Bolshevik Revolution; or the Great War itself, there is no doubt that seismic events in the 1910s created shock waves that transformed the new century. The inevitable result was that, "By the 1920s, young American intellectuals, bohemians, and generic nonconformists were determined to rout with a vengeance the last vestiges of Victorianism in the country" (Faderman 64).

Lillian Faderman disagrees with culture critics who trace the development of a lesbian or bisexual subculture in the United States directly to World War I. In

Europe, the war probably did have a direct impact. In her landmark novel, The Well of Loneliness, Radclyffe Hall tells how many English lesbians supported the war-effort through jobs such as ambulance driving, where they met other women who shared their social and sexual interests. American women were much less directly involved in the war. However, the war had an indirect impact on the trend toward sexual experimentation: "In the midst of women's Freudian enlightenment about the putative power of sexual drives, two million men were sent overseas and many more were called away from home for the war effort. It has been speculated that women turning to each other faute de mieux, found they liked sex with other women just fine" (Faderman 64).

Radclyffe Hall was forced to wage a legal battle in England over The Well of Loneliness (ironically argued in the same courtroom where Oscar Wilde was convicted of sodomy). The novel was published in the United States in 1928, and immediately "became a huge succes de scandale" (Faderman 65). In America, even Hemingway portrayed characters who might be (or were) lesbians. The "boyish" Brett Ashley in The Son Also Rises (1926) is thought to be based on Djuna Barnes, who made no secret of her sexual orientation. Writing in the Ladies Almanack in 1928, Barnes declared, "In my day I was a Pioneer and a Menace" (Faderman 62). Hemingway was more explicit in A Farewell to Arms (1929), where Catherine Barkley's nurse friend Fergie is in love with her. Similarly, in the short story, "The Sea Change," a woman tries to explain her sexual involvement with another woman to a male friend. Sherwood Anderson also portrayed American women "experimenting" with lesbianism in his

novels Poor White (1920) and Dark Laughter (1925).

On Broadway, love between women was praised by critics, applauded by audiences, and vilified by proponents of the existing social order. In October 1926, The Captive, a "much praised 'highbrow' French import" by Edouard Bourdet opened to critical acclaim and standing-room-only houses. Emily Wortis Leider wryly notes that the star of The Captive, Helen Menken (married to upcoming actor Humphrey Bogart), "played her role in exceedingly white makeup, to heighten her character's unnaturalness" (156). A former president of the Colonial Dames of America labeled the lesbian-themed play "an affront to American womanhood" (156).

On February 9, 1927, the headlines of the New York Herald Tribune proclaimed: THREE SHOWS HALTED, ACTORS ARRESTED IN CLEAN-UP OF STAGE (Leider 155). The targets of the Broadway clean up were The Captive, The Virgin Man (a "lightweight comedy" about the attempted seduction of a Yale undergraduate, which was saved from closing by the scandal), and a play irreverently entitled Sex, starring a former vaudevillian named Mae West. The tremendous impact the star of Sex had on American culture could only have happened in the wake of modernism. Of all performers, West was the most outspoken (and outrageous) in repudiating repression; like the modernist writers, she understood the power of gesture and word, and above all, she embodied Modris Ekstein's assertion that modernism had irretrievably blurred the lines between life and art. When George Davis proclaimed West "the greatest female impersonator of all time," she confessed that she was indignant at first, but later

decided, "I guess he meant it as a compliment and I can kind of see what he meant, I guess, I lived like a man, in some ways-decided what I wanted and went after it" (Leider 159).

For many women, living "like a man" and going after what they wanted meant flaunting their defiance of heterosexuality as well as other social conventions. Faderman reports that:

> By 1922, as Gertrude Stein's "Miss Furr and Miss Skeene" indicates, such women were already calling themselves "gay" as homosexual men were. But whether they identified as "gay" or were "just exploring," those who wanted to experience the public manifestations of lesbianism looked for recently emerged enclaves in America. The era saw the emergence of little areas of sophistication or places where a laissez-faire "morality" was encouraged, such as Harlem and Greenwich Village, which seemed to provide an arena in which like-minded cohorts could pretend, at least, that the 1920s was a decade of true sexual rebellion and freedom (67).

Born on June 19, 1856, Elisabeth Marbury could have been grandmother to the "flaming youth" who represented the Jazz Age in the popular mind. Alfred Allan Lewis emphasizes that, Bessy Marbury and Elsie de Wolfe "belonged to that generation of women who were born and became adults during the reign of Victoria" (xii). Indeed, in 1885, when the Criminal Law Amendment Act decreed consensual sex between male adults an illegal act, one of Queen Victoria's

ministers remarked that there was no reference to acts of "gross indecency" between adult females. Her Majesty is said to have answered curtly, "No woman would do that" (Lewis 180). It was during this time that Marbury and de Wolfe set up housekeeping together in 1887. The two women were known as "the bachelorettes," a term devoid of sexual connotation. To their own peers, they were "devoted companions"; to subsequent generations, "they would become a sapphic legend" (Lewis xiii). Unlike Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas, Marbury and de Wolfe never flaunted the sexual nature of their relationship, nor did they confess the details of their intimate life to friends. To Lewis, the exact nature of their relationship is unimportant. The important thing is that, "Elisabeth and Elsie loved each other and, for more than thirty years, had a rare camaraderie in which they commingled on every level that was significant to them" (xiii).

In aggressively pursuing a career as a theatrical agent, Marbury unquestionably defied the expectations of her Victorian upbringing. Oscar Wilde was one of her most successful clients and he had helped de Wolfe in her first career as an actress, and later, in fashioning her exquisite taste as a decorator. Both women gave Wilde scant mention in their memoirs, and Lewis proposes that both had been somewhat traumatized by the circumstances of his downfall. At the time, Marbury made it clear that her sympathies were with Wilde. When George Alexander closed his production of The Importance of Being Earnest, Marbury unleashed her scorn on the actor-manager for his cowardice: "He lacked the courage to continue, for like many others he was afraid of public opinion and dared not be classed with the few friends who stood loyally by Wilde

even in his darkest moments" (Lewis 182). At the same time, Lewis notes that no matter how strong her moral convictions, Marbury was foremost a businesswoman: "Personal disapproval was not a bar to her doing business, any more than it would have been for a Morgan, Frohman, Vanderbilt, or any other male entrepreneur" (182). While expressing her contempt for Alexander, she was negotiating with him to produce The Prisoner of Zenda.

Like her male counterparts, Marbury kept her professional dealings distinct from her personal feelings, as the incident with Alexander shows. However, some of the attitudes she expressed publicly clearly reveal contradictions between the lifestyle she chose and the one she was brought up to value. Initially, she opposed suffrage for women. When the vote was won, she was nominated as a New York State Democratic National Committeewoman in 1920. A woman's group fought albeit unsuccessfully to have her replaced (Strum 26). At the height of her career she expressed the extremely traditional view that, "There is only one real success for a woman. That is to marry happily and have children and a home" (Strum 26-27). Whether she was expressing a real or imagined personal longing or simply did not identify with the concept of "woman" is a matter of conjecture. Marbury is consistently described as having a sharp, intellectual, "masculine" mind and a deceptively matronly appearance. As described by Strum:

> She was . . . "grandmotherly" in an era when masculine women were flaunting their masculinity a la Gertrude Stein and Willa Cather. Elisabeth Marbury dressed conservatively, after the

> women's fashion of the time, in dark high-necked, long-sleeved dresses and little hats (28).

If Marbury differed from Stein in her dress and demeanor and rejection of overt gender transgression, the two shared an affinity for surrounding themselves with the brilliant minds of the day. As an agent, Marbury considered it her duty to serve the best interests of her clients, however, her relationship to O'Neill suggests that her cultivation of her clientele extended beyond professional bounds. Having O'Neill as a guest was a plum for any ambitious hostess or host. By the mid-1920s, name was synonymous with the latest theatrical fare. Gorham Munson recalls:

> To the theater Eugene O'Neill was bringing new life. My generation saluted The Emperor Jones as a minor classic in modern drama, and we ranked The Hairy Ape as a powerful fable of alienation. In 1924 we were positive that Desire Under the Elms was the work of an arrived playwright who could be ranked with such playwrights as Hauptmann, Sudermann, Strindberg, Andreyev. The American theater, we knew, was at last grown up (291-292).

Marbury had invited the O'Neills to tea and extended an invitation to Carlotta to sip tea, pour, and help with conversation. Marbury complained that the O'Neills were very difficult to entertain. "He never opens his mouth, and his wife never shuts hers" (Gelb 12). Carlotta recalled a dreadful occasion where Agnes had been particularly annoying. Agnes was a free spirit and former habitué of Greenwich Village; a true 1920's bohemian, she felt that no topic was

taboo and presumed that her conversation partners shared her philosophy. The moment they met, Agnes exclaimed: "Oh, you are Carlotta Monterey! I've been wanting to meet you" (Gelb 12). She then proceeded to quiz Carlotta relentlessly, about her sex life. Carlotta was aware "there had been a good deal of rather unpleasant publicity in the newspapers about my divorce from Ralph Barton," and saw Agnes' behavior as, "Really, such bad taste" (Gelb 12).

Carlotta had actually met Eugene once before, on opening night of The Hairy Ape. He had paid her little attention, and she still remembered the slight. Carlotta had not been his choice to play Mildred Douglas, and he barely acknowledged her. At this second introduction she reminded him of his bad manners:

> You're the rudest man I've ever met. When I went into that play of yours, I didn't want to. I had just finished one thing and wanted to go out to California and see my mother and daughter. But Hoppy (Arthur Hopkins) kept after me, so I did it, with hardly a rehearsal, and you never had the decency to thank me (Sheaffer 216).

O'Neill hastened to explain away his seemingly abrupt manner. When they first met, he was understandably preoccupied. His mother had died February 28, 1922, and her body reached New York on the same evening Ape opened. His brother, Jamie, was responsible for tending to her remains. According to Saxe Commins, O'Neill's editor and friend, "they found Jim in a drunken stupor, incoherent, almost unconscious, and with difficulty they located the mother's coffin" (Commins 22). Carlotta became more sympathetic as O'Neill related his

story. The year 1922 had been a difficult one for him. He had met, for the first time, Eugene Jr., the son from his brief first marriage to Kathleen Jenkins. His second marriage to Agnes Boulton was foundering, and his brother was deliberately drinking himself to death.

Carlotta was charmed by O'Neill's candor and guileless charm. Marbury asked Carlotta to take him down to the bathhouse for a swim, an incident Carlotta remembered with great humor. Her icy demeanor began to melt. In her words: "Well, he went to the bathhouse and the only suit he could find was a woman's. Oh, my, it was the most ridiculous thing; it was much too large for him, but that didn't seem to bother him--he wanted his swim. I thought to myself, he can't be so stuck on himself if he'd do something like that" (Sheaffer 216).

On this meeting, Carlotta had made a distinct impression. O'Neill, wrote in his Work Diary on July 15th, in the boxed configuration he saved for noteworthy occasions: "Met Carlotta Monterey 1st time since a moment's introduction at "Hairy Ape" rehearsals!" And again, on July 23rd, squared off, "See Carlotta again!"

Although Carlotta insisted to Van Vechten that Barton had not loved her for some time, he was still sending her impassioned correspondence at the time she met O'Neill at Belgrade Lakes. He inundated her with letters and telegrams, pleading for reconciliation. In May, Carlotta received two telegrams:

MISS YOU CRUELLY LIFE A MESS WITHOUT YOU RALPH

COULD ANYTHING INDUCE YOU FORGET FORGIVE REJOIN

ME HERE NEXT BOAT MISS YOU NEED YOU LOVE YOU

RALPH

Then on May 28th 1926, Barton wrote a full-length letter with the same supplicating tone:

> I think I made a hideous mistake in letting you get away from me. I am horribly afraid that the old nonsense about there being one woman in the world for each man is not, after all, nonsense. I am beginning to cringe under the thought that I need desperately what was fine between us and that I can never find it again. This is what you said would happen and I believe you were right. If it turns out that you were, I don't think I want to live any more . . . I am not worthy generally . . . My life in every way a mess without you. I wish to heaven I had you back, hopeless as it seems. I can't write anymore. I love you and I am certain that you love me and I wish you would come here to met at once, forget, everything. Every sane person we know would be delighted. As for me, I think I will shoot myself with a French pistol. I don't like it at all without you. Ralph.

Although Carlotta assumed the facade of a blithe spirit, she was unsettled. She may have toyed with the idea of reconciliation at some point. Her letters were destroyed and Barton's disturbed state of mind makes it difficult to discern the real from his imaginings. A brief note found in his unpublished letters does suggest that Carlotta may have had second thoughts:

I have read over six letters of yours and destroyed them. They tore me to pieces, but I am going to bed happy. Our separation was as you say a 'cheap, Greenwich Village act' Good night, my old lady. You are wrapped all round me. I love you. Ralph

Barton continued to foster hopes as of his letter to Carlotta on July 14:

Dear Old Lady:

I wish you had obeyed that impulse but perhaps it will be better to do it not so impulsively. The next time will be the marriage--we have had our love affair.

The day she received this declaration, Carlotta met O'Neill once again. Psychotherapy at the time was primitive in its knowledge of bipolar depression, and Carlotta was probably ignorant of the fragility of Barton's mental condition and of the danger of encouraging what would inevitably be false hopes. A telegram sent on July 19th suggests that Carlotta had evoked some sense of optimism about their relationship:

LIFE NOT MESS LIFE BEAUTIFUL SHADE YOUR EYES FROM A SECOND ACT FOOTLIGHTS AND HAVE LOOK AT IT WILL YOU MARRY ME RALPH

Again on July 29th, Barton wrote a heartbreaking letter, revealing his misplaced optimism, which Carlotta, no doubt, encouraged:

What an imbecile I was--but what a good husband I shall make you after this! We are coming together again--we have never been apart. Then you will feel what I am trying to say now. It will be far

better than it ever could have been before.

This was Barton's last letter to Carlotta for almost five years. She sent him a telegram the same day telling him it would never be. On July 28th, Barton's final telegram to her read: "ALRIGHT, BUT WE WILL NEVER BE HAPPY APART WRITING LOVE RALPH."

Carlotta ultimately replaced Ralph Barton with an equally needy lover, Eugene O'Neill. In Robert M. Crunden's description, O'Neill may not have had a diagnosable psychiatric disorder like Barton, but he was hardly a paragon of emotional health:

> Of all the alienated outcasts who made up the ranks of American modernism, no one was so extreme a case as O'Neill; he was also the most important figure for whom Roman Catholicism provided cultural roots and a frame of reference against which a person could rebel . . . O'Neill seemed to have been born into a world fraught with religious, sexual, and social friction, one where he had no fixed place (401).

O'Neill's father had been a "hard-drinking, sexually rapacious Irish immigrant actor," and his mother a "genteel lace-curtain Irish-American wife, who, feeling betrayed and declassed by the life she had inadvertently chosen . . . took refuge in morphine" (Crunden 401). For years, O'Neill was unable to comprehend "why this person, on whom he was so dependent, behaved in such a disoriented way" (401). Rather than attempt to bring up her son in an unstable environment, Ella O'Neill sent him to two Catholic boarding schools, a period the

playwright would later recall as his "rigid Christian exile". During his boarding school years, O'Neill responded to his surroundings as many introspective young people would do: he withdrew. As he matured, he grew increasingly alienated, "and his alienation fed directly into the originality of his art, just as it had done for Pound, Stein, and the rest" (Crunden 402).

One of the consequences of O'Neill's alienation from his classmates as boarding school was that even in adulthood, he had difficulty relating to children (Crunden 402). The living arrangements in Maine exacerbated his lack of ease around children and made it almost impossible for the playwright to work. The household was rife with noise and distraction. In addition to his own two toddlers, he housed Eugene Jr., and Barbara Burton, Agnes' daughter from a previous marriage. Not surprisingly, he blamed them for ongoing frustrations, declaring, "I could do with less progeny about, for I was never cut out seemingly, for pater families and children in squads, even when indubitably my own, tend to get my goat" (Sheaffer 213). At Marbury's suggestion, O'Neill built a one-room lean--to a good distance from the lodge. In relative solitude, his work could progress undisturbed, but the summer was still ruffling his nerves. Commenting on the situation, Florence Reed, a friend, recalled: "Agnes' house always seemed to smell of diapers and lamb stew, and there was always a lot of noise from the kids. It drove O'Neill almost out of his mind" (Gelb and Gelb 617).

O'Neill's marriage was a great source of conflict, and the conflict reflected the old order against the modern age, the "patriarchal impulse" against the "equally powerful matriarchal thrust" as symbolized by Freud and Stein. A

Provincetown acquaintance, Eben Given, characterized O'Neill's relationship with Agnes:

> Agnes thought she was as much entitled to live her sort of life as O'Neill was to live his; O'Neill considered this outrageous. He wanted to be coddled, waited upon, and obeyed; he believed the importance of his work entitled him to such deference. More than anything else, he wanted Agnes to find her exclusive reason for existence in him and his work. He was shattered at each new indication that Agnes was not as single-minded as he wished her to be (Gelb and Gelb 517).

At the same time, O'Neill's rejection of children and his desire to be the exclusive focus of a woman's life does not conform to the patriarchal notion of the traditional family. Part of a Long Story, Agnes's poignant memoir of her courtship and marriage to O'Neill, ends with a telling account of the birth of their son, Shane. Agnes wondered as Eugene pulled up a chair, and said hesitantly: "It'll be us still . . . from now on Us Alone . . . but the three of us . . . A sort of Holy Trinity, eh Shane?" (Boulton 331). Shortly, thereafter, Shane's crib was banished to the basement to muffle his intrusive cries.

Carlotta Monterey represented a sharp contrast to Agnes Boulton O'Neill. Whereas Agnes was described as "slovenly," Carlotta was impeccable. Florence Reed, who owned a beachfront house not far from the O'Neill compound, observed Carlotta and her penchant for order: "She was miraculously immaculate, and a wonderful housekeeper. There was nobody like her" (Gelb

and Gelb 616). She had obviously inherited her mother's meticulous sensibility. O'Neill was attracted to Carlotta's sense of style and decorum, and in Miss Marbury's guest, he saw an antidote for his domestic woes. Carlotta saw a vulnerability in the playwright that others took for sardonic self-assurance. Instinctively, she capitalized on his dependency and initial infatuation. If O'Neill wanted a woman who would "find her exclusive reason for existence in him and his work," Carlotta wanted to be the exclusive focus of a successful man, and she set herself to the task of ensuring that O'Neill found her essential to him.

The summer people of Belgrade Lakes were well aware of the romantic intrigue being played out in their midst. Florence Reed and her husband Malcolm Williams attended several informal gatherings that summer, a few including both Eugene and Carlotta. To Williams, O'Neill was "absolutely the most withdrawn person I've ever known. People would drop by while he was sitting on the porch, and held remain in the corner, wet bathing suit, teacup shaking--you couldn't make him one of us" (Sheaffer 229). One day while O'Neill was visiting the couple, Carlotta stopped by with some friends. After they left, Williams remarked that Carlotta had pointedly tried to draw out the reticent playwright. Williams also noted that Carlotta had left a scarf behind. When his wife told him that she would have their maid return it the next day, Williams astutely replied: "Don't bother, she won't thank you for it. She'll be back for it herself tomorrow, when Gene is here" (Sheaffer 229).

Carlotta awarded O'Neill the undivided attention he craved. In a letter to Agnes dated December 29, 1927, O'Neill wrote, "Excuse me for speaking so

much about my plays. I realize it's tactless on my part. It's quite evident to me that you're not interested since you never mention them" (Commins xvii). With Carlotta, there would never be need for such apology. Like her neighbors, Agnes was not oblivious to the attraction between Eugene and Carlotta, however, she was initially unconcerned:

> Nothing was happening between them. I didn't worry about her because she didn't seem smart enough for him. I remember her telling us that she had read all of De Maupassant and how much she loved his stories--Gene and I just looked at one another. It seemed to me he was more amused by her than anything else. But I suddenly remember something he said--I guess this was after he began to have some feeling about her; He said that she had eyes like his mother's (Sheaffer 217).

With a child's insight, Agnes' daughter, who had been eleven years old in the summer of 1926, sensed what her mother did not. Years later, Barbara Burton remembered her feelings:

> I recall that at the end of the summer in Maine my mother gave me a five dollar gold piece and a box of candy and that I felt something sad about our parting which was beyond the sadness of saying goodbye. Looking back now I realize that the summer was probably the beginning of the end, so far as my mother's marriage to O'Neill was concerned. I recall a handsome, dark-haired woman coming to swim there once and that she wore a boyish, white,

> wool-knit bathing suit, with no overskirt, such as bathing suits usually had at the time. I felt there was something very glamorous about this woman, who, in retrospect, I know as Carlotta Monterey (Gelb and Gelb 617).

The summer romance continued on into the fall, when Carlotta moved back to New York and O'Neill visited her there. His emotional need evolved into an all-consuming desire, a hallmark of his successful relationships:

> All of his important friendships--as with Kenneth Macgowan and George Jean Nathan--as well as his marriage to Carlotta Monterey were based partly on a dependence, an unspoken request to be looked after and cared for. However outgoing he sometimes appeared, when he had been writing, he was not always aware of those around him (Commins xiv).

Another associate, Elizabeth Sergeant, felt that "Carlotta would bring more order into Gene's life, would make things easier for him. He had to live in a special, very isolated way, he had to work every day, and Carlotta, I thought would do her utmost to help him" (Sheaffer 282).

Carlotta had plans for a trip to Baden-Baden, late in September 1926. Carlotta's actions frequently had dual motives, and the visit to the famous spa was more than therapeutic: it was a shrewd tactical move. Carlotta had a definite plan in mind. As reported by Barbara Gelb "Staying out of touch for a few months worked wonders! By November, he was mine. We spent Christmas and New Year's together. By then he was in rehearsal for Strange Interlude"

(21).

Carlotta often went with O'Neill to public rehearsals for Interlude. At the time of the opening, they were finalizing plans for plans for an "escape." The couple had decided to sail for England and not return until they were married. On the day of departure, Carlotta boarded the ship early so as not to arouse suspicion. Waiting impatiently for Eugene, she began to be concerned. There had already been several blasts of the ship's whistle. When he finally arrived, all he said was "Hello, here I am." He proceeded to look out a porthole, and with tears streaming down his face he confessed, "It's a terrible thing, to leave behind so many you love, everything that means anything to you." "Well," Carlotta said to herself, "You've let yourself in for it this time. I could have strangled him!" (Sheaffer 292).

O'Neill's actions prior to his divorce from Agnes show that Carlotta was not the only schemer in the pair. O'Neill was perennially unsure of his success and his marriage to Agnes was fraught with arguments over money. Sheaffer astutely acknowledges that, "Carlotta's annuity seems, indeed, to have been no small part of her attraction for him" (299). If Agnes refused to grant him a divorce, O'Neill told critic Kenneth Macgowan confidently that he could "eventually starve her into it" (299). The ploy would take some time but ultimately would work:

> It would, of course, entail sacrifices. I'd have to keep my plays to myself for a few years . . . As far as finances go, I can hold out indefinitely. I've gathered a stake together over here, but quite

> outside of that Carlotta has enough income to keep us both in very decent comfort over here [Bermuda] where living is cheap (Sheaffer 299).

At the time, O'Neill had no premonition that Strange Interlude would net him a very substantial sum of money.

If O'Neill was insecure about his professional success, Carlotta was unsure of her success in securing the playwright for herself. Upon their departure for a trip abroad in February 1928, Carlotta recorded her anguish in her diary:

> We leave New York on the Berengaria (in the afternoon) for England.--Papa brings me flowers and comes to see me off--I have my personal maid with me--in a large cabin with a private bath. Harrison Tweed on the boat, too. Am nervous, afraid (of what I don't know) and feel terribly alone! As the boat is leaving Gene arrives looking as I feel! He looks out the porthole at the part of New York he used to know so well in his youth. Is emotionally disturbed as I am--finally, he takes me in his arms, holds me very close--says, 'I love you'--kisses me on the forehead and leaves.

Her entry the following day hardly suggests that her apprehension was relieved:

> Gene and I meet for luncheon, tea and dinner. Are both nervous and 'shaky'!--But, are very glad to be out of New York--the ship is rolling--cold and damp--to me everything has an unreal quality--not too pleasant! God help us both!

Carlotta reveals in her journal a pastiche of euphoria, guilt, depression, loneliness, anger, love, and hate for both partners and in particular for Carlotta, extreme anxiety. She was acutely aware that her status as O'Neill's "live-in lover" was precarious. She compensated for her insecurities with meticulous (if not maniacal) attention to herself and the object of her adulation. Once firmly established as O'Neill's mistress, she was convinced that she alone could bring out a human side of Eugene that most people could not. She wrote on February 24, 1928:

> Gene, at times, like a child, so astonished being done for and not asked for anything in return. From his reaction to common gracious courtesy I don't think he has experienced much general treatment in his life. It is good for him--shows him there are other sides of the picture--and that being polite, kind and unselfish does not mean you cannot love deeply--and suffer the torments of the damned for the beloved!

In addition to being the key to O'Neill's emotional life, Carlotta wanted to be central in the creative process as well. She saw herself as an integral part, a true collaborator in the O'Neillian oeuvre. O'Neill's private thoughts were made public in the Selected Letters of Eugene O'Neill. As he was finishing first draft of Interlude in 1927, Carlotta asked if she was featured in the work. His answer was characteristically ambiguous:

> No, there is nothing of us in it--at least, it was all planned out even before we met at Belgrade . . . This whole play is I, my experience,

you might say, but the characters in it individually more closely resemble in any, many men I have known. There is a lot of you in the woman, I think (come to think of it) and yet she is wholly unlike you. And there you are (Bogard and Bryer 235).

Carlotta may have been responsible for a more sympathetic feeling toward his female characters: O'Neill now posits "that the woman is the God-force, and in finding her, the man can achieve a sense of belonging he can obtain nowhere else in life . . . her possessive greed for his love provides his means of belonging" (Bogard 300). Although "possessive greed" does not sound like a compliment, Commins recognized that even his friendships with men like Kenneth Macgowan and George Jean Nathan were characterized by a type of dependence on people he saw as needing him. In the play, Nina Leeds represents the source of life and well being for the men. The men are attracted to her and find comfort in her, much as O'Neill had turned to Carlotta. In a letter to Carlotta, O'Neill echoed this idea: was as "if your presence became suddenly apparent and I could hear your voice saying that everything will come out as we wish it--And now I am full of faith again" (Bogard and Bryer 217).

Carlotta renewed a sense of faith in the Catholic rebel as his divorce from Agnes turned out to be protracted and rancorous. Agnes refused to file for months. The couple had signed a prenuptial agreement with an "escape clause" if either person fell out of love. However, with two children and a shaky financial future, Agnes was far less liberated than she had been in her heyday in Greenwich Village. Edgy about the slow resolution and given the Black Irish

moods he had inherited from his father, O'Neill was not always the best companion. His guilt and depression deepened, while Carlotta perpetually attempted to lighten his mood. In this state, they toured London, Paris, the Loire, Touraine, Biarritz, eventually renting a villa at Guethray.

At Villa Marguerite Carlotta and Eugene played at housekeeping. Fearful of scandal and the prying eyes of the press, O'Neill sent his address to only his closest friends. For O'Neill the master playwright, the situation with Carlotta was a potential bombshell. Carlotta herself was livid and Agnes was the source of her wrath. In a letter to Commins, on August 9,1928, she railed:

> I listen to tales of debts, confusions, and indecisions and really I can't understand such half wittedness! My parents would have had me locked up for weak mindedness had I ever seemed so uncertain of my desires and ways and means!--Oh--well,--someday there will be peace--and Gene and I will be able to take each other by the hand and go out into the sunlight and forget the 'miasma' of the past! (Commins 36-37).

Carlotta had not yet succeeded in her goal of dissolving the marriage completely but she did succeed in surpassing her predecessor in the goal of making O'Neill happy. In a letter to Kenneth Macgowan dated February 27, 1928, O'Neill was ebullient:

> I won't bore you be telling you again how happy and alive I am. Carlotta is marvelous. I really feel as I had never been in love before. Even in the matter of sex where I have had, God knows,

> sufficient experience hither & yon in the past. I have come to the conclusion that I never even dreamed of what it could be in the way of physical & spiritual expression before. This is a true revelation to me! (Bogard and Bryer 173).

Although O'Neill undoubtedly had "sufficient experience" in sexual realm, Sheaffer, in O'Neill: Son and Playwright, suggests that O'Neill's obsession with "fallen women" in his plays derives from a "traumatic" sexual initiation combined with a Catholic upbringing in a uniquely dysfunctional home. His brother Jamie once claimed that, "Gene learned sin more easily than other people. I made it easy for him" (101). However, despite his uninhibited pursuit of sexual pleasure, O'Neill was a product of his Catholic indoctrination, and a family in which his "lace curtain" Irish mother retreated from sexuality (indeed all feeling) in drugs.

Corwin Willson, O'Neill's classmate at Harvard recalled that Gene invariably told stories of varied experiences with "sexually aggressive nymphomaniacs" and prostitutes:

> But what was significant about those exciting experiences of Gene's was his own passive role in them. It is my belief that Gene's abundance of early experiences with women in ways that psychically were without beauty and were actually degrading colored his entire attitude. His attitude toward women much resembled the indignant cry of the man who complained, "She gave me the clap." He never discussed homosexuality with me but he sure was hipped on what over-amorous women can do to a

rather passive man (Alexander 85).

O'Neill confided in Carlotta about his degrading sexual initiation. Jamie decided it was time his brother "became a man" and took him to a seedy brothel. The memory was still painful, Carlotta related:

> The girls were such terrible creatures they forced whiskey down his throat, with Jamie helping them, and they tore off his clothes--he was fighting them. He wasn't ready for that. He was reading a lot of poetry in those days. But later he made himself at home in them, the whorehouses (Sheaffer . . . Playwright 101).

O'Neill's introduction to sex emerges in Strange Interlude, as writer Charlie Marsden reminisces about a suspiciously similar event that he undertook at sixteen on a dare from his friends. Doris Alexander attributes the dichotomy between love and sex that repeatedly occurs in O'Neill's plays to his early experiences, carnal and familial: "For Eugene, sex (particularly as represented by a prostitute) became a symbol of the revolt from love--the pure love he had felt for his mother--and of a spiritual violation, a rape" (86). Because "he associates love with the mother--with the pure love for the mother--so his women often have to undergo a kind of spiritual identification with the mother before his heroes can accept their love" (86). Carlotta's professed dedication to O'Neill, and her willingness to make him the focal point of her life as Agnes would not, represents an idealized form of maternal love that O'Neill could never have received from a mother who took refuge in drugs.

O'Neill's mother had been numbed by narcotics and inhibitions whereas

Carlotta by her own admission was a creature of extremes. O'Neill himself was a contradiction. Doris Alexander views the rebellious persona O'Neill assumed in his youth as driven by dual needs for freedom and revenge: "freedom from the anxiety that had corroded his love for his parents after his exile to Mount Saint Vincent--revenge for all the suffering his love had caused him" (87). His own personality, by all accounts, expressed the duality of good and evil that characterized his plays. Agnes described the Mephistophelean side as "a strange being who was not the real Gene at all." Carlotta described a "peculiar mixture" that could be gentle and childlike, but could instantly transform itself and become "vicious, like a rattlesnake" (Alexander 89).

On a cruise to the Orient in the autumn of 1928, both sides of O'Neill came out in full power. First plagued by illness, there followed a calamitous drinking spree in Shanghai; after an argument, O'Neill hit Carlotta and called her a whore. She checked out of their hotel and he checked into the hospital. Mortified, he begged her to forgive him but his contrition was followed by a drinking binge. O'Neill's behavior exemplified Alexander's depiction of a person who consciously or unconsciously engages in guilt-provoking behavior and then indulges in guilt. Carlotta responded by leaving him surprised and miserable and alone in his stateroom on the SS Coblenz. On New Year's Day 1929 she booked passage on the SS President Monroe. O'Neill besieged her with telegraphed messages:

> I AM HALF MAD WITH UTTER LONELINESS WITHOUT FRIENDS, PLANS OR HOPES . . . I LOVE YOU . . . THE DOCTOR HAS MY PROMISE AND WILL KEEP IT . . . OF

> COURSE I WANT YOU AND NEED YOU AS MUCH AS I LOVE YOU . . . FORGET THE PAST AND START BUILDING SOLIDLY FOR THE FUTURE . . . (Bogard and Bryer 320-322).

They were reunited in Port Said. Second Officer George W Stedman, aboard the Monroe recalled it as quite a dramatic reconciliation:

> Their reunion was a combination of name-calling, insults, jumping down, screeching, hair-pulling, stamping feet, wrestling and finally winding up in a passionate embrace smothering each other with kisses and hugs. From then on they were like a couple of lovebirds (Sheaffer 322).

They finally decided to settle in Touraine, where they found a forty-five-room chateau named "Le Plessis." Carlotta reflected her mother's legacy in describing her search, discovery, and sentiments about Le Plessis in her April 17, 1929 journal entry:

> Looking for just that right chateau . . . some too grand, some too run down--My man must have a clean kitchen for his food--and he must be warm and comfortable and loved--so he can work! We see Le Plessis just right! Lovely stone walls, romantic tourettes, no electricity, no baths (as Americans know them), no heat, but fireplaces, only 'one' toilet so called 'modern')--(It proved to be otherwise) for 45 rooms! Being a Tory, a romantic woman--I loved this place. And strangely enough, so did Gene.

They moved into Le Plessis in early June. According to Sheaffer, Carlotta

loved the continental life and its aura of Old World aristocracy. She had the outward trappings of respectability but she was still not married to O'Neill. She mused in her diary in July 1929: "Monogrammed china arrives from Paris--and we're not even married! Is the lady too impatient?!" Shortly before their actual marriage she was still worried: "Gene talks to me very sweetly, and very seriously of our marriage--it is to be for each other until death! Thank God . . . I tremble when I hear this--can that mean--really, that this 18 months of humiliation, embarrassment and heart-ache is over!" On July 3rd, in the customary boxed-in style, O'Neill's answer appeared in his own journal: "Cable that Reno granted divorce yesterday! At last, thank God! Cheers!"

On July 22, 1929, Carlotta got her wish to become the wife of the great playwright Eugene O'Neill. She never forgot the experience that preceded it: "I was crucified for eighteen months nursing him body, soul and mind--being called a harlot and other names--by the so-called friends of Gene's--while they were sympathizing with the 'dear little woman' who had been left behind" (Bogard and Bryer 196). The next day, after a rainy drive from Paris back to Le Plessis, Carlotta underlined in diary, "Mr. and Mrs. Eugene O'Neill At Home."

Visitors to the O'Neill home during this period vividly recalled Carlotta's positive effect on the somber artist. Dr. Alvin L. Barach, who had treated Eugene in New York, observed that:

> Carlotta laughed a great deal and obviously enjoyed herself . . . When the conversation would take a serious turn she would excuse herself . . . It seemed clear that she didn't share O'Neill's interest in

> the big questions. She was gay and lighthearted, and I thought O'Neill loved in her the gaiety he lacked or had repressed in himself (Sheaffer 359).

Barach's first glimpse of her in driving up to Le Plessis was: "Carlotta, in a gold Grecian-style dress, draped against a post of the driveway" (Sheaffer 359). Other visitors saw a more prosaic side of the famous couple. Ward Morehouse, lamenting the maze of transportation routes he had to take to get to the house, reported in the New York Sun on May 14, 1930, that the playwright had no intention of permanently settling in France. When he finally found them, "They were standing at the doorway, he was clad in a heavy sweater and she was trim and smart in Parisian sports clothes, when the chauffeur whirled through the driveway in Carlotta's magnificent French car." O'Neill extended his hand, grinning, and assured him that, "we're coming back. And I may even get there for rehearsals" (Estrin 107).

They were basking in the success of Strange Interlude when Dynamo, a play O'Neill completed during the long, drawn-out conflict with Agnes, proved a failure. The peculiar symbiosis that marked the relationship of O'Neill and Carlotta emerged in a formal apology he wrote her on December 4, 1929:

> You are my life! And you must feel that even my work is a part of you too since it is the expression of the I who am you! If I am worried about it, over-anxious, it is because I do so want to justify myself in your eyes, to make you proud of me, to make you see how much you have done for me! I feel Dynamo, in a sense,

> wronged us--not because critics panned it, that means nothing, they have panned some of my best stuff, but because I felt myself it was a step back, not a step forward, and so did not represent what you are to me (Hallfmann 185).

While Dynamo was disastrous, O'Neill's next play would vindicate his talent. As early as April 1926, O'Neill wrote in his Work Diary: "Germ idea use Greek Tragedy plot in modern setting--made note." Ultimately, the Greek theme evolved into Mourning Becomes Electra. Three years later, O'Neill confided the idea to Carlotta; "This will be your play!"

Amazingly, O'Neill never mentioned the stock market crash in his working diary. The theatre district in New York was dubbed the "Groaning Forties" as shows closed nightly and theaters, nightclubs, speakeasies, and fell in the aftermath of "Black Tuesday" (Leider 200). According to Travis Bogard, in Contour In Time, "O'Neill had a tendency to look at life without reference to a society, to tell his story only in terms of personality" (Bogard 306). In contrast, ever practical--Carlotta was very aware of the financial crisis.

Stephen Black has written a combination biographical/analytical work: Eugene O'Neill: Beyond Mourning and Tragedy, and he studied the relationship between O'Neill and Carlotta. It would be almost predictable that she would only mention the Crash, but would take steps to mitigate financial damage. According to Black: "Carlotta's diary refers several times to the stock market crash in late October. Thanks to advice from Carlotta and Speyer, O'Neill made conservative investments and came through the storm in fairly good shape" (Black 367).

O'Neill finished the final draft of Mourning Becomes Electra on April 9, 1931, and mailed it off to the Theatre Guild. Three weeks later, he and Carlotta followed, ending their lives as expatriates as O'Neill had assured Ward Morehouse they would.

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Chapter Five

Relocations

1931 - 1936

O'Neill had told Ward Morehouse, as they stood outside the chateau, "I have not had any idea of living over here permanently. Nothing like that. No nonsense such as renouncing America" (Estrin 107). He had pointedly used the singular "I." Carlotta did not share his enthusiasm for returning to their homeland. On May 8, 1931, the day before she sailed for the States, she complained: "It seems we are always leaving some place and saying good-byes." She had tried to cure O'Neill's wanderlust by creating a perfect environment for his work, but he had never intended to stay abroad. By the end of May 29, she was extremely dissatisfied with the move, writing, "I am at loose ends--the tempo of living here is so different than it is in France! I feel a stranger! Gene tries to pet me out of my mood" Again, on June 19, she grumbled: "I wish he could relax a few months and forget moving for 2 or 3 months!"

Carlotta tried to find realization in her role as Mrs Eugene O'Neill, and by her own accounts, she did. In a letter to Kenneth Macgowan, written in the early 1930's, she told him:

> I am wife, mistress, housekeeper, secretary, friend & nurse so have no time to worry about my personality being submerged or my career being ruined. We were interested & amazed at the number

> of women in New York, who are eating their hearts out to be some one--to be talked about--to be alluring! They are rotten wives & bad mistresses & poor unhappy wretches (Bogard and Bryer 209).

Avowing her dedication, she assured him: "Being the type of old fashioned female who thinks marriage really means something (if not get out of it!) my great joy & work & thoughts are all here--(Bogard/Bryer 209).

Early in life, Carlotta had described herself as a person of extremes. At the time, she was determined to pursue an acting career; now she was assuming the role that would lead Alfred Allan Lewis to say, "Superficially worldly, Carlotta was the most old-fashioned of women" (397). One may speculate whether Carlotta was really expressing her "great joy" to Macgowan, or attempting to reassure herself that she made the right choice. During the 1920s, Jungian psychiatrist and feminist Beatrice M. Hinkle sympathized with the "rotten wives & bad mistresses & poor unhappy wretches" struggling to "be some one" in an essay published in the Nation. Although she conceded that on the surface such women might seem to be motivated by dissatisfaction in their personal lives, it was a more positive choice than submerging themselves in the demands of family life:

> These modern women are engaged in a real creative effort even though it may not be realized, for behind their stridency and revolt lies the great inner meaning of woman's struggle with the forces of convention and inertia. This is nothing less than the psychological development of themselves as individuals, in contra-distinction to

the collective destiny that has exclusively dominated their lives (Showalter 141).

Hinkle acknowledged that these women may not have fulfilled their life goals (although she noted that few men or women ever achieve full self-realization), but saw their attitude as "part of a great rolling tide which is to bring birth to a new woman. This new woman will possess an individuality which will enable her to stand by the side of man, strong and secure within herself" (Showalter 141). Hinkle's meaning was that the new woman would not have to fight for her individual will nor would she show the antagonism toward men that many early feminists had. Carlotta may have believed, or tried to convince herself, that she was so "strong and secure within herself" that making O'Neill the focal point of her life would not negate her own sense of self. And in a society where most women did not have careers, being the wife of a celebrity did endow her with a distinctive status. However, Carlotta's personal revelations suggest the assertion that she had "no time to worry about my personality being submerged or my career being ruined" was not entirely true.

If Carlotta was happy to be thought of in relation to famous men, it was definitely not in the headline that blared from the New York Times on May 20, 1931: "Artist in Note Mourns Loss of Third Wife, Carlotta Monterey, Now Wed to Eugene O'Neill." Ralph Barton had shot himself two days after the O'Neills returned to New York.

O'Neill and Carlotta originally planned to reside in New York, and Carlotta took out a three year lease on a sumptuous eight room duplex at 1095 Park

Avenue, immediately delving into her usual routine of renovation. At the same time, they rented a house, Beacon Farm, in Northport, Long Island. Including Le Plessis, they had leases on three separate residences. Carlotta was rapidly becoming aware that her dreams of permanence were no more than illusion.

Mourning Becomes Electra opened in New York on October 26, 1931. It received immediate critical acclaim and ran for five months and 150 performances, a good run for a serious play at a time when the Great Depression left Broadway houses dark or shuttered. Carlotta had a special interest in the play, which O'Neill had dedicated to her. He also inscribed his finished manuscripts with a paean to Carlotta:

> Your love, sustaining and comforting, as warm, secure sanctuary for the man after the author's despairing solitude and inevitable defeats, a victory of love--in-life--mother and wife and mistress and friend! And Collaborator, Collaborator, I love you! (Gelb and Gelb 735).

This sentiment marks a radical change in O'Neill's attitude. Years earlier he had complained to his friend, critic George Jean Nathan:

> I wonder why the hell it is that people . . . always believe that every artist's wife collaborated in his work and he couldn't have done it without her companionship when more often he is driven to work to escape from her? I'll be damned if I don't think it's the fool authors themselves who are responsible for this myth, what with their propitiatory dedications to their fraus stuck in the front of nearly

every book one comes across. (Maufort 123).

Carlotta reveled in O'Neill's apparent change of heart. He repeatedly dedicated his work to Carlotta. She eventually compiled a book, Inscriptions, which includes O'Neill's numerous, loving, and often, wrenching "propitiatory dedications." In fact, the inscriptions engraved in their wedding bands affirm their affinity. On plain gold rings were etched the lines for O'Neill's play Lazarus Laughed: "I am your laughter" was imprinted on Carlotta's band "and you are mine" cut into Eugene's (Scheaffer 332). Perhaps because he was characteristically somber, O'Neill considered laughter a spiritual, metaphysical link with the material world.

The success of Mourning Becomes Electra left the O'Neills exhausted. Ilka Chase had recommended the remote southern retreat of Sea Island, Georgia for a brief getaway. The rustic landscape reminded them of Le Plessis and they immediately bought a magnificent ocean front plot. In a especially dedicated copy of Mourning Becomes Electra, Eugene wrote: "To Ilka Chase who found our Blessed Isles for us, with the profoundest gratitude" (Gelb and Gelb 759).

Carlotta surpassed her mother in her ability to visualize how a new piece of property should take shape. In her approach to the Sea Island home: "Carlotta had a mental image of what she wanted to build down to the last towel rack before one brick of Sea Island house was put into place" (Gelb and Gelb 760). She noted in her journal on November 28, 1931:

Tell Abreau what I want! and he, being Spanish, loved it--austere

> Spanish house--thick brick walls painted white outside and inside -- cloisters--Gothic shaped doors, arches, tiled roof and floors (imported old tiles), etc., etc. It was also of paramount importance that it be a secluded dwelling: We discuss the necessity of a garden wall! With my European training I must have privacy!

The "garden wall" was actually an impenetrable eight-foot brick structure, which encircled the estate, endowing it with a fortress-like appearance. The result was an oddly eclectic structure reflecting feudal and monastic influences. To Carlotta, it was the ideal home for the great playwright: "O'Neill should have a home that is simple in every way but perfect--the perfection hidden beneath the simplicity! An artist's home!" In O'Neill's diary, he wrote that she was "overjoyed about the house," and "working on it harder than any laborer up there" (126).

Carlotta made a distinct impression on the locals. She would often dress completely in white, including white gloves, with a wide-brimmed sun hat and a veil over her face. Meticulously groomed, she was a curious mix of Tough Taskmaster and Southern Belle. In both her attire and decor, she was attentive to the most minute details.

In New York, Carlotta longed for O'Neill, writing "Miss Gene I am desolate." Her husband expressed his sentiments in an extremely revealing letter that should please the Freudian interpreters of his work:

> Mistress, I desire you, you are my passion, and my life-- drunkenness, and my ecstasy, and the wine of joy to me! Wife,

> you are my love, and my happiness, the word behind my word, and the half of my heart! Mother, you are my lost way refound, my end and my beginning, the hand I reach out for in my lonely night, from my ghost-haunted inner dark, and on your soft breasts there is a peace for me that is beyond death! (Gelb and Gelb 760).

As Doris Alexander observed, O'Neill "associates love with his mother" (86). Perhaps he considered Carlotta's devotion so pure she underwent the "kind of spiritual identification" Alexander insists is essential "before his heroes can accept their love" (86) . To read the line, "Mother, you are my lost way refound, my end and my beginning," is like eavesdropping on someone's innermost psyche. Critically, it is not surprising to read when one is familiar with his work or his childhood. O'Neill was forever in search of the love and security he never received from his addicted mother.

Entries in O'Neill's journal clearly show that he needed Carlotta: "Carlotta returns! So damned happy!" On June 22, he exclaimed, "We moved into our new home! (Wonderful feeling that this is house we have built--never built one before)." It was officially christened on June 27th: "We decided on the name for the house--'Casa Genotta' combination of Gene and Carlotta." Carlotta was extremely proud of the work she put into Casa Genotta, and O'Neill's ecstatic response. She obviously felt great accomplishment when she wrote, "I worked very hard designing, getting built, and furnishing this house. Then there was the garden to make--on a sand dune! It is really what I most wanted. A simple, comfortable very personal home! Gene has every comfort and also those things

to please the eye (I hope!)" (Bryer 209).

Life at Casa Genotta consisted of long work hours punctuated by solitary swims in the ocean, some gardening and walks along the sand dunes and deserted beaches. Having felt a bit landlocked at Le Plessis, the island reawakened O'Neill's love affair with the sea. Carlotta capitalized on his nautical leanings in the design of their new home, particularly in his study. Always the most important room in their numerous homes, the studio was a sailor's delight, built like the master cabin of an old sailing vessel.

Casa Genotta was featured in the January 1934 issue of Better Homes and Gardens. The highlight was O'Neill's nautical study and the title was "O'Neill Goes Mildly Pirate." The article shows a caricature of a diminutive peg-legged pirate in full tuxedo dress. Suggesting that O'Neill, under Carlotta's influence, was not quite the stark, unremitting realist his drama suggests, the feature portrayed a more romantic, even whimsical side to the reputedly brooding artist: "He might even enjoy the role of gentleman pirate. One is sure of this when he sees 'Casa Genotta' the house he has built on Sea Island off the Georgia coast" (19). The real character of the O'Neills was allegedly revealed by their chosen surroundings: "Sometimes the houses that people build are as revealing an indication of personality as their faces and gestures. We build what we are--or what we like to think we are" (19).

The sailor's study was as much a caricature as Barton's drawings. O'Neill obviously delighted in the joke (even if on him), and he did, in fact, seem far more light-hearted than the withdrawn, taciturn figure who sought solitude at the

lean-to on Miss Marbury's property. He told friends, "I get a kick out of this place I never got out of a home before. So does Carlotta. We have a creative sense about it--of having made it out of nothing, of helping it to grow. You never get the full benefit out of that when you buy a place" (Roberts 148).

Of course, Casa Genotta afforded O'Neill the privacy and cloister-like atmosphere he needed to write. Society still bored and drained him:

> Mingling with people and life . . . far from giving anything to an artist, simply takes things away from him, damned valuable things. If he hasn't everything in himself, he is no good. The life outside him can steal from him but it can't contribute a thing to him, unless he is a rank second-rater (Estrin 139).

Carlotta seems to be the key to the inner peace O'Neill experienced for the first time in his life. When asked by George Jean Nathan in 1932, what he would like more than anything else out of life, Carlotta was implicit in his response:

> I'll tell you what I want and it's the God's truth. I just want what I've now at last and for the first time in my life got! Life has certainly changed for me in the last year or so and for the first time in God knows how long I feel as if it had something to give me as a living being quite outside of the life in my work. The last time I saw you I told you I was happy. A rash statement, but I now make it again with a tenfold emphasis. And, believe me, it has stood tests that would have wrecked it if it wasn't the genuine article. I feel younger

> and more pepped up with the old zest for living and working than I have ever felt since I started working; I may seem to slop over a bit, but you don't know into what a bog of tedium and life-sickness I was sinking. I was living on my work as a fellow does on his nerves sometimes, and sooner or later my work would have certainly been sapped of its life because you can't keep on that way forever, even if you put up the strongest of bluffs to yourself and the world in general. Now I feel as if I'd tapped a new life and could rush up all the reserves of energy in the world to back up my work. Honestly, it's a sort of miracle to me, I'd become so resigned to the worst, so be a little indulgent and don't mind my unloading a little of the pop-eyed wonder of it at you! (Estrin 133).

Unfortunately for Carlotta, O'Neill's contentment at their seaside retreat was short-lived. By October he was becoming "depressed," and on November 12, Carlotta expressed her frustration about O'Neill's change in mood:

> He talks to me about being unhappy here!?! Mother of God, he has the ocean to swim--the beach to walk on--the ocean to fish in--male companionship to do these things with--he is protected from disturbance in his work--and he insisted I make a home here!

Carlotta's shock at O'Neill's failure to find satisfaction in their idyllic home emanated from an assumption that if she could create the perfect environment for her husband, she would hold the same exclusive place in his psyche that he held in hers. Dorothy Commins thought that:

> No doubt she felt a certain vanity at being Mrs. Eugene O'Neill, the wife of America's greatest playwright, but she does not appear to have capitalized on her position. Instead, she entered the silence with him. Her withdrawal to France, thence to Casa Genotta in Georgia was as complete as his (Commins xviii).

During this time, O'Neill was grappling with a very troublesome play. Carlotta was very much on his mind as he worked on draft after draft of Days Without End. When he first wrote the scenario in Bermuda in 1927, he quickly shelved it because he feared its highly personal, confessional quality:

> It's a funny coincidence. I had the idea all mapped out before I left Bermuda and before there was any suggestion of a smash in my domestic life (with Agnes). It was quite objective. And yet now it would appear as most subjective and autobiographical because of the turn events have taken. A strange business! Maybe something inside me was doing a brilliant clairvoyant job (Sheaffer 402).

Days Without End was the second play of a planned trilogy (Dynamo was the first) with the working title "Myths for the God-forsaken." Written between 1931 and 1933, the play tells of an ostensibly deeply committed couple in a "perfect" marriage, until the husband commits a single act of adultery and is consumed with guilt. "Just as Welded spoke of marital disharmony, and was a direct comment on O'Neill's marriage to Agnes, Days reflected not only discord and uneasy recollection, but also included the other woman" (Ranald 445).

O'Neill saw Days as his "ode" to Carlotta, celebrating their enduring love and perfect happiness. It was dedicated to her, as was Mourning Becomes Electra, however, this play was not a success. Selena Royale who played the role of the wife in Days knew how disappointed O'Neill was in the commercial and artistic failure." She related, "I think it was his poem to Carlotta, and he was very badly shaken by the reception" (Gelb and Gelb 783). Royale also felt that Carlotta regarded Days as "Gene's hymn of love for her" (Sheaffer 426).

O'Neill dedicated the play to Carlotta, using the lines refer to marriage as a sacrament in Act II: "If every other marriage on earth were rotten and a lie, our love could make ours into a true sacrament." He added: "And ours has hasn't it, Darling One!" (Ranald 162). He had rejected the sacrament of the Catholic church and instead sought redemption in Carlotta. Croswell Bowen observed that the play seemed to indicate that O'Neill saw Carlotta as a key to the spiritual certainty he craved: "Closer examination of the play in relation to O'Neill's personal life indicates that he may have been seeking a solution to his own spiritual doubts. In many ways the plot and its characters suggest himself and Carlotta--just as Welded reflected himself and Agnes" (Bowen 231).

While wrestling with the play, O'Neill had several talks with Father John Ford, a Catholic priest, who served as his consultant. He would often place urgent telephone calls to Fr. Ford, scheduling appointments, only to cancel them. Richard Skinner, drama critic for the magazine, Commonweal, affirmed that Carlotta shared in his spiritual quest: "It may interest you to know that his wife is working very hard to bring about his definite return to the Catholic church,

as she feels that that is his one salvation. As you know, he was born a Catholic but lost his faith rather early in life" (Bowen 232).

Like many people who reject the dogma of formal religion, O'Neill struggled to find spirituality. The notion of lost faith monopolized his thoughts in the search for a viable substitute. Simple answers eluded him. Asked later in life if he had returned to the faith, O'Neill replied, "Unfortunately, no" (Shaughnessy 26). By his own admission, however, theological questions permeate his work. He insisted that, "Most modern plays are concerned with the relation between man and man, but that does not interest me at all. I am interested in the relation between man and God" (Krutch xvii).

O'Neill's work on Days hit a complete impasse. He wrote to George Nathan on August 27, 1932, "I've hit a dead spot in the play and am not feeling like a writer at all. This happened before I began expanding the notes, so that's not to blame. One of those blind alleys, that's all" (Roberts 137).

Implausibly, O'Neill had a sudden urge to visit Pequot Street, New London, Connecticut, where he had lived as a child. Carlotta tried to dissuade him from confronting the ghosts of his past, but in the end she relented and accompanied him. New London had changed considerably from the town of his boyhood, and the house seemed to have disappeared. Finally, he saw a familiar looking place surrounded by new construction, which Carlotta remembers as resembling a little birdcage. The cottage seemed as forlorn as his memories and O'Neill immediately regretted the visit. However, the misguided trip inspired the playwright's next great success, Ah Wilderness! He later recalled, "Only once

before has a plot idea (Desire Under the Elms) come to me so easily. I wrote it more easily than I have written any other of my works. Ah, Wilderness! is direct autobiography in many respects, it was somewhat the story of 'the childhood I would have liked to have' " (Bogard 358).

> While he was working on the play, Carlotta was the only person who knew anything about it. She understood the need for caution: "This is the kind of play Gene has never before done . . . and must be the deadest of dead secrets--it may be done someday under a nom de plume" (Sheaffer 406).

Richard Dana Skinner, author of a book on O'Neill called A Poet's Quest, said of Ah, Wilderness!:

> This appealing and innocent and tender little comedy of adolescence is really much more important than it seems in the poet's unconscious scheme of things. It marked an end to that terrible fear which had made every symbol of youth appear like some hideous monster. It was unquestionably the beginning of a third and entirely new period in O'Neill's creative life, the period of full manhood of the soul (Estrin 218).

Croswell Bowen, author of the essay on O'Neill entitled "The Black Irishman" suggests it was Carlotta who mitigated this "terrible fear": "Perhaps Carlotta Monterey had become a mother to him, the 'mother' he had hailed in the inscription to Mourning Becomes Electra. Perhaps she had shown him that things would be all right. Perhaps she brought a new youth to him, who was just

44" (Estrin 218). In keeping with Virginia Floyd's analysis, if Carlotta had, through spiritual transformation, become his mother, then he was free to be the hero who could accept her love. Floyd attributes O'Neill's inspiration for Ah Wilderness! to the introspection that had taken place the previous year while working on the family background for the hero for Days, the "Play of Catholic Boyhood" (Floyd 160).

O'Neill completed Ah Wilderness! within weeks. The first draft was finished on September 27th, and Ah, Wilderness! opened at the Guild Theatre on October 2, 1933. Running for 289 performances, it yielded $75,000, a good sum at a time when Broadway was emerging from the Depression. O'Neill had debated over which play should debut first, Days or Wilderness!, and decided on Wilderness!, as he was still deeply uneasy about his "Catholic" play. He sensed that the drama would be "well hated by the prejudiced," and would arouse "much bitter argument" (Bowen 237). O'Neill was on the mark in presenting his comedy first. Days Without End was produced later by the Theatre Guild in December 27, 1933. It closed after only 57 performances.

Phillip Moeller, who had directed several of O'Neill's plays, worked with him on Days Without End. Carlotta and O'Neill had dinner with Moeller the night before the play opened in Boston. The next morning, New Year's Day 1934, he recorded his impression of the evening. Prefacing his comments, "A few notes of a conversation with Gene and Carlotta, after dining last night, which may be of interest to someone writing G's definitive biography fifty years hence," he wrote:

> It is obvious from what was said that Days Without End is more her

> play than his. They both, definitely, acknowledge this. She says G. was and is still a Catholic and that she hopes he will return definitely to the faith and that she would gladly go with him, whenever he is ready, but he must not be forced . . . I told him the play was difficult to do because of the closeness to himself in it and his personal sentiments. It was then they both agreed it was more her play than his . . . Madame was, again, amply rich in banalities--but her striving to hold it all together is somehow appealing and irritating at the same time . . . And the tragedy of the situation is that Carlotta doesn't realize that he hasn't really got what she wants to bring him. Psychologically, the relationship is tremendously fraught with possibilities. Will supernal ease and superficial comfort win out and will his writing, and the important element of it, survive? (Gelb and Gelb 779).

O'Neill was still attempting to write the third play in his "God-damn" trilogy, which included the ill-fated Dynamo and Days Without End. For his inspiration, he turned to 19th century New York society, finally entitling his end piece The Life of Bessie Bowen. According to an article in Vogue, at the time, Carlotta had a hand in the work: "Mrs. O'Neill is an assiduous and perspicacious collaborator in her husband's professional career". The piece affirmed Carlotta's powerful influence and included a full-page color portrait of the couple.

Bessie Bowen was based on the life of a female industrialist from New York named Kate Gleason. She was an extremely successful Irish woman who

used her business sense to control the men in her life, much as Nina Leeds and Christine Mannon used their sexuality. As O'Neill considered Carlotta his "Life-Force," so were Bessie, Nina and Christine, the maternal substitute for the "God-forsaken." The women were the center of all activity, and endowed with formidable sexuality (or occupational savvy). They were the objects of the love/hate energy that characterized all O'Neill's male characters. Bessie was finally put aside after much inconclusive drafting, although her demise inspired a much greater project that would carry through the O'Neills' remaining days at Casa Genotta.

In late 1934, O'Neill changed the Life of Bessie Bowen to The Career of Bessie Bowlan: "fresh slant on this--new title." By New Year's Eve, he was extremely frustrated with Bessie. He felt that she should be part of something on a larger scale. The first day of 1935 O'Neill mentioned the cycle that would preoccupy him for years to come: "Grand ideas for this Opus Magnus if can ever do it--wonderful character's!" Bessie was to be the focus of the seventh play in a massive cycle of American history entitled Tale of Possessors, Self-Disposed, an inter-generational study tracing the effect of parents on their children and grandchildren, with greed as the central theme. The title was inspired by the question asked by Jesus Christ: "What does it profit man to gain the whole world at the expense of his immortal soul?"

In A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions, O'Neill vented his obsession with the pathology of the family. The original aim of the cycle was to chronicle two American families, the WASP Harfords, and the Irish Melodys,

from the 1800s through the 1930s. Poet was set in 1828, and its successor, Mansions, followed from the years 1837 to 1842. Ostensibly concerned with tracing the path of American history, as seen in the context of an intergenerational study, O'Neill inevitably zeroed in on the topic he was obsessed: the vicious cycle of dysfunctional families. Although it was never realized as part of the cycle, Mansions was an important work in the progression of O'Neill's style. The expression of secret thoughts is reminiscent of Strange Interlude; the myth of the family is exploded much the same as in Mourning Becomes Electra; and the oblique autobiographical elements presage Long Days Journey Into Night. A Touch of the Poet anticipates O'Neill's last plays. Domestic relations take center stage in his compulsion to dramatize the painful experiences of family life. "The Mother" looms large in all human decisions. Anger at the family and guilt at that anger become antiphon and response, as recrimination and reconciliation occur with a dizzying effect. Affection in a relationship cannot exist without hostility. O'Neill was a devotee of Nietzsche, who concluded that Hell was "other people." O'Neill embodied the concept in his plays.

In both Poet and Mansions the female figure is omnipresent as Wife, Daughter, Mother, and Grandmother, the impressive (and repressive) incarnations of the female principle. The culmination of the story in Poet is played out in Mansions. Simon is the philosophical poet turned businessman. His mother, Deborah, and his wife, Sara, struggle for possession of soul, as Simon is torn between his intellectual, patrician mother and his earthy pragmatic

wife. The identities and roles of the women often blur, and Wife, Mother, and Mistress become interchangeable, as the three terms were used interchangeably in O'Neill's letters to Carlotta.

O'Neill thought that Carlotta could have played the role of Deborah Harford. In fact, Carlotta could have portrayed many of his female roles. Doris Alexander notes this explicitly:

> Eugene used his mother's beautiful copper-gold hair as the dominant characteristic of the mother image that all the men in Mourning Becomes Electra seek to recover. Significantly, at the time he wrote this play, he himself had found a woman strikingly like his mother, with her beautiful dark eyes, and even more important, a woman who could envelop him in the protective love he had felt about him when he was a little boy in his mother's arm: this was his third wife, Carlotta Monterey (20).

Carlotta was showcased in his dramas, as the thinly veiled synthesis of mother, wife, and mistress. In O'Neill's later tragedies, his notion of "woman" was central, and her life force was becoming increasingly more sinister and, in some cases, damning.

Work on the cycle was draining O'Neill, and Carlotta was not happy about the way it consumed his energy. She cautioned him that if he continued to delve into the Harford's family tree, he would run into Adam and Eve: "The Main thing worrying me is--now that Gene has started on plays that give him some scope for his ideas--his next will be a history of the human race" (Sheaffer 443). Her

overriding concern was for his health, which was showing signs of deterioration, mentally and physically. The mental strain provoked special anxiety; she was terrified that she would lose him to his "old ways" from which she felt she had redeemed him. In Carlotta's last diary entry of 1934, she summed up the closing year: "A strange year--one filled with worries--and anxieties of all sorts--Gene not well . . . resting and fussing about finances--worrisome--But--I have Gene! Thank God!"

O'Neill worked throughout 1935 on the Cycle, remaining on Island during the summer months. He was determined to make significant progress on the saga and he threw himself completely into his work. Carlotta felt shut out. While she tried to cope with the situation, her sense of the isolation was getting the best of her. She felt O'Neill was oblivious, writing "he has never known the depth of my loneliness or apartness here" (Sheaffer 457). However, the notation shows that Carlotta was not as sensitive to her tormented husband as she professed. O'Neill had always felt isolated and apart. As Robert Crunden observed, the "alienated outcast" O'Neill seemed to have been born into a world beset by various conflicts, "where he had no fixed place" (400). It is more likely that even his soul mate Carlotta could never have known the depth of his loneliness or isolation.

Carlotta may have felt lonely, but she spent her days entertaining a bevy of welcomed and unwelcomed guests. In the latter category were her stepchildren, her own daughter, new son-in-law, and Nellie. Amongst those she welcomed were Somerset Maugham, Saxe Commins, Theresa Helburn, Carl

Van Vechen, and Sophus Winther. Lawrence Langner and his wife also visited, accompanied by Carlotta's old friend, actress Fania Marinoff. Langner commented that Carlotta was "one of those rare women who was born beautiful and will remain so all her life," adding an observation so often repeated it may have been said from a template, "Gene has privacy for his work, and to this she dedicated herself with almost fanatic fervor." Of his own wife, Langner said, "Armina always returned from the O'Neill's with a feeling of inferiority, and would say, in despair, 'I'll never run a household as smoothly successfully as Carlotta' " (Bowen 237).

In reality, things were not running smoothly. O'Neill was consumed with his saga and Carlotta was bored, lonely, desperate for companionship, and exhausted by the weather. Although she fiercely denied it, Carlotta, like Gene, was afflicted with wanderlust. Carl Van Vechten astutely recognized that, "Carlotta loved to build homes. But after she had everything exactly as she wanted and running smoothly, she lost interest, she became bored, she didn't have enough to do. It wasn't only Gene who used to get restless" (Sheaffer 456).

On Christmas Eve, 1935, Carlotta found that her fears about O'Neill relapsing into his old ways were realized:

> Busy all day with the final distribution of presents. Receive telegrams and packages. Boll to dinner. After dinner give servants their presents then open ours! We have a bottle of champagne to drink to Christmas! Boll and Gene are very gay, play Roise, sing

and dance! I notice Gene keeps going upstairs – finally I go up to see if he is ill--I find him drinking out of a bottle of whiskey! I nearly wept. This is what I had suspected for weeks! He should never have had any beer or wine--it only leads to whiskey and whiskey leads to the usual excess sickness and God knows what! When he sees me he laughs and goes downstairs with the bottle. He and Boll finish the night drinking.

For the next few days, Carlotta was "doctoring Gene," who had not only returned to drinking but "had also recommenced smoking!" On New Year's Eve, she silently asked "Whither are we going darling? Which way? Try to remember how deeply I love you and always will--no matter what!" A few weeks later, O'Neill had deteriorated, as Carlotta reported, "I rise my usual hour--Gene drinking out of the bottle even before his coffee (I am frantic with fear and heartache) and he looks dreadful . . . Draper comes to hotel and takes him to the Doctors Hospital to get the whiskey out of him."

With Carlotta's help, O'Neill was able to pull himself together enough to produce a first draft of A Touch of the Poet in early spring 1936. He decided to spend another summer at Sea Island to work on the next play of the Cycle, And Give Me Death. However, the move was a mistake; the sultry, exceptionally hot summer exacerbated his blackening mood. He complained that, "Carlotta and I are neck and neck toward the Olympic and World's sweating record! We just continually drop and drip" (Sheaffer 454). By late summer, they had enough of the South. They received a fortuitous invitation from Washington University

professor Sophus Winther and his wife to spend some time with them in the Northwest. Carlotta and Gene eagerly left for Seattle.

They found themselves situated in a rented English-style house on Magnolia Bluff overlooking Puget Sound. O'Neill's study had a magnificent view of the Olympic Mountains and the Sea. Geographically and emotionally it was a long way from Casa Genotta, which had turned from dream house to nightmare. Months later when they sold the house it was up to Carlotta alone to dismantle the Georgian property, arrange for shipping and storage, and tend to all the arrangements. At the time, the labor seemed trivial in comparison to the essential tasks of tending her ailing playwright. They left Sea Island for the last time on October 4, 1936.

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Chapter Six

Tao House

1936 - 1944

The O'Neills captured headlines when they arrived in Seattle on November 3, 1936. The Seattle Times reported, "The dramatist, an erect, trim figure with graying hair and his beautiful brunette wife, both of who had come across the continent without being identified, stepped from the Empire Building at the King Street Station in Seattle to be greeted by Dr. Sophus Keith Winther of the University of Washington English Department." A week later, they were besieged by the press when O'Neill was awarded--the Nobel Prize in literature. The couple had come to the Northwest seeking seclusion, and they were inundated by telephone calls and telegrams as well-wishers from all over the country attempted to offer congratulations. There was no downgrading the significance of the prize, but they left Seattle quickly, surreptitiously fleeing to California for the holidays.

In California, Carlotta booked a suite at the Fairmont Hotel overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge. She spent the next few days scouring the neighboring counties for a home to rent and as usual, contemplated the prospect of building. However, Carlotta's architectural venture was cut short when, shortly before Christmas, O'Neill complained of severe stomach pains. He was rushed to the hospital, where he underwent an emergency appendectomy. The emergency procedure turned into a prolonged hospital stay during which he almost died from

post-operative complications. Carlotta dropped everything to tend to his recuperation. She rang in the New Year with an optimistic diary entry: "Hope this New Year gives us less worry & tensions & good health! Please God."

Impatient and overly protective, Carlotta demanded an adjoining private hospital room, with a "No Visitor" sign posted prominently on her door. She was tending O'Neill, battling depression, and feeling increasingly overwhelmed and discouraged. By Sheaffer's account, it was only O'Neill's health that worried her. Carlotta was extremely jealous and she was especially wary of the attractive young nurses fawning over her ailing spouse. She placed the blame for their present situation squarely on O'Neill:

> He wanted a place by the sea where the water wouldn't be warm in the summer or cold in the winter, and it would be sunny year around. He was looking for Paradise, that's what he wanted. I was continually picking homes because Mr. O'Neill, not being well--I am told that many ill people are the same--feel the weather, the climate is to blame: it is too damp or too dry, or it's too this or too that . . . so we would sell and go to the next place and make a home (Sheaffer 456).

O'Neill's health really was very precarious. His diary entry for January 12th makes it clear that attractive nurses were not the paramount threat:

> Merritt Hospital (Oakland) Dr. Rienle treatment (for prostate)--temp up to 102--chill--caffeine, adrenaline, codeine, morphine, atropine!--they give me the works! Carlotta & nurses up all night--Dr Dukes at

> 4 a.m. bad sinking spell with everyone worried but I feel too sick and ratty to give a damn whether I croak or not (O'Neill 277).

In early March, Carlotta checked O'Neill out of Merritt Hospital. Both he and Carlotta worried that he might never work again. She predicted that 1937 would be a year full of illness, worry and upheaval. She decided that it was up to her to get back to work, and shortly after she was designing and building a home. On April 22, 1937 diary entry she recorded:

> Gene and I go out to the Wood's house (where we will go to live June 1st while we are building our new house). Gene & I both love the Bryant property between Walnut Creek & Danville--about 2500 feet up on the hills looking across the San Ramon Valley to Mt. Diablo. It is more than we wanted (158 acres) and more expensive! Beautiful view & lovely rolling hills. While their new home was under construction they rented a twenty-two acre estate in the San Francisco Bay area.

Carlotta planned to build a Chinese inspired mansion. The problem with her exotic project was that, "I wanted to build a Chinese house, but I didn't have the money, so I built a sort of pseudo-Chinese house" (Gelb and Gelb 824). With the eye of a surrealist, she juxtaposed the Far East and the American West. The house was essentially a two-story modified California Spanish style structure with oriental interior and exterior accents. It was located 35 miles from San Francisco, etched into the side of a mountain some 2,800 feet up, with a superb view of Mount Diablo and the entire San Ramon Valley. It was

accessible only by a narrow winding road punctuated with three "Keep Out" signs, and at $150,000 (at a time when O'Neill's future was dubious) it was their most expensive project. O'Neill proudly wrote to a friend, "Carlotta is in a frenzy of creative activity over the new house. I needn't tell you, who knows her capability in this regard, that this means it is going be some house! And the site is the most beautiful view I have ever come across" (Gelb and Gelb 823).

Carlotta's flamboyance was captured in a bold assertive color scheme within and outside of the house. Constructed of white concrete blocks designed to replicate adobe, it was in O'Neill's words: "Carlotta's masterpiece", and his "final harbour" (Bogard 20). Red Chinese lacquer work doors and shutters, capped with a roof of pitch-black tile were mirrored in the azure blue of the Olympic swimming pool. Inside, the ceilings repeated the deep blue of the pool, accented by marine blue mirrors in the dining room. Most of the rooms had access to the outdoors through upper balconies, and the first floor boasted terraces, and a walled-in garden.

The O'Neills christened their new home "Tao House", which loosely translated means "the right way to live". Mai-mai-Sze, a Chinese friend, commented, " I don't think it was particularly apt but I thought, what does it matter, if it amuses them. The O'Neills have a naïve, romantic idea of China--the wisdom, the pageantry and so forth were superficially conceived and romanticized by them" (Gelb and.Gelb 825). Ironically, on her return to the state of her birth, Carlotta had unwittingly adopted the California approach to architecture and design. The early film stars and moguls had looked to the

castles and estates of Europe for style, and the result was a uniquely American blend of Old World aristocracy and nouveau riche.

O'Neill resumed a rigorous writing schedule, beginning his work promptly at 8:30 a.m., Carlotta no longer joined him for lunch but instead had a maid deliver a lunch tray to his study so as not to interrupt the momentum of his work. They shared dinner together, after which they would read, listen to music and discuss daily events.

As O'Neill adjusted to his new surroundings, Tao House began to appear in his work:

> How influential Tao House was on his writing can only be guessed. One or two things at least are fanciful. In the scene in the walled garden of More Stately Mansions, O'Neill requires a summer house with a doorway painted a Chinese lacquer red, the color he had seen on the doors of his home. In the play, the summer house, placed trimly in the walled garden, is not unlike the small box room in the Tao House garden which nestles against the high garden wall and is approached by small neat paths, as is required in the plan. One thinks as well of the mirrors that continually appear in the Cycle plays: Con Melody's tavern mirror before which he postures in shoddy magnificence and the large mirror in Simon Hartford's office before which he Simon and Sara make love. As in the tavern and the office, the mirrors of Tao House reflected the life he lived there. Before he came to California, O'Neill wrote that life

> is a solitary cell whose walls are mirrors. To a degree Tao House realized that image (Bogard 25).

As O'Neill worked on Mansions during 1938, Carlotta oversaw final details of the house. She recapped the year in her diary entry December 31st:

> Tao House under construction . . . When midnight strikes Gene takes me in his arms & tells me how much he loves me & if I love him as he loves me we together can take anything! I'll stick no matter what! Then I weep, like a fool, hanging on to him! God knows what! But I do know I love this mad Irishman!

While Travis Bogard noted the real and spiritual presence of Tao House in O'Neill's drama, Martha Bower observed a similar effect for Carlotta. According to Bower, "Documentation, taken from the O'Neill biographies, and observations of the Cycle women through the pre-writing, make a strong case for Carlotta's being the model for Sara Melody" (19). Bower traces Carlotta throughout the entire Cycle:

> The Cycle was an innovation for O'Neill--one different from heroines of most male writers in modern and contemporary American literature. There has been some speculation as to the source of O'Neill's forceful woman hero, who was closer to the typical modern male frontier type than to the traditional female heroine. Models for Sara, Leda and Lou can be found in few works of American drama and fiction authored by males. Historical sources for O'Neill's cycle women can be found in biographies of

Madame Stephen Jumel, Kate Gleason and Carlotta O'Neill (338).

Carlotta's marriage to O'Neill is mirrored in various husband and wife relationships as well. Bower noted, "characteristics that Simon and Sara, Ernie and Lou share with the O'Neill couple" (19). Even more compelling is that Deborah prefigures Mary Tyrone, as O'Neill dropped the Cycle plays, and turned more introspective in Long Day' s Journey Into Night. According to Bower, "O'Neill continues to drop clues which connect his mother with Abigail (Deborah)" 172):

> Mary's character bears strong resemblance to Deborah Hartford's in Mansions: O'Neill was actively revising Mansions, especially the mother/son scenes with Simon and Deborah when he was in the initial stages of creating Mary Tyrone and her relationship to her sons. The physical similarities and the destructive qualities that inform both characterizations are obvious. Mary controls her sons by keeping them on the end of a tether and connects them to the 'spare room' . . . Whereas Deborah actively sets out to manipulate Sara and Simon and their children, Mary's manipulation is subtle and indirect (Bower 265-266).

There is a "striking resemblance of Elizabeth Bowlan to Mary Tyrone to Deborah Harford" (Bower 287-88). One can also add, to Carlotta as well.

Carlotta accompanied O'Neill as he moved from the Cycle to his late great tragedies. Just as she was the model for specific characters in the Cycle, their marriage resembled the Tyrones. The parallel was not lost on Carlotta, who

protested, "You used our marriage, our feelings for each other. You were inventing your mother, giving her mannerisms, my quirks even my arthritis. I saw so much of myself in your portrait of Mary Tyrone. That role I really could have played" (Gelb 12).

O'Neill worked on the Cycle plays for four and a half years, constantly revising and editing. On June 5, 1939, he recorded in his work diary that he was "fed up" with his Cycle plays. He added that it "will do me good to lay on shelf and forget it for a while--do a play which has nothing to do with it." It is highly probable that Carlotta encouraged him to put Cycle aside, as she grew more disenchanted with the lack of a finished product. In deciding on his next project, he turned to his "Hell Hole" days, as a young man in New London. He had jotted down notes, and these notes contained the conceptions of two of his greatest tragedies: The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey Into Night. The sequel to Journey, A Moon For The Misbegotten was his final contribution to American drama.

O'Neill understood that the deepest dramatic conflicts occur between family members. His mother, father and brother became the key to self-acceptance and awareness. Carlotta did not relish her role in his Proustian exercise. She hated his bohemian past and had great disdain for his family. With O'Neill delving into his youth, Tao House was not "the right way to live" as Carlotta envisioned it.

Just as Iceman developed from the germ of the "hell hole" idea, his "young man in London" was the inspiration for A Long Day's Journey Into Night.

O'Neill was reluctant to share ideas for his play with anyone but Carlotta, but Carlotta was a reluctant confidante. As the drafts came in, she recalled that "the play upset me so I wept most of the time" (Sheaffer 517). In addition, "It nearly killed him to write this play . . . After his days stint he would be physically and mentally exhausted. Night after night I had to hold him tight in my arms so he could relax and sleep . . . thus the play was written" (Sheaffer 507). Describing both Iceman and Journey, she acknowledged, "The thing is he was writing about something that came from his very guts . . . he had to write this play" (Sheaffer 507).

Having expurgated his family in Long Day's Journey, O'Neill remained torn. He felt that he had treated his brother, Jamie, too roughly in Night, and had denied him the final absolution that was necessary for the playwright's own peace of mind. For a penitent to gain absolution, he must express genuine sorrow and regret. Jamie remained hardened and unrepentant throughout the long dark night of his soul in Journey. He required further expiation. His sins are requited by Josie, the ultimate mistress/mother/Magdalene/Madonna/mother confessor. He is finally "sort of at peace with myself and this lousy life--as if all my sins had been forgiven" (O'Neill 942). Josie utters the final words of the O'Neill canon, the "requiescat in pace" of Irish Catholic faith that had been so illusive: "May you rest forever in forgiveness and peace." Martha Bower remarked that, "The strong, dominant, big handsome woman of the Cycle was resurrected in Josie Hogan . . . O'Neill laid her to rest once and for with that play" (345). "May you rest forever in forgiveness and peace," was O'Neill's final

benediction.

Carlotta passionately hated his last play, Moon for the Misbegotten. She insisted it did not need to be written, and she despised O'Neill's brother and what he did to the memory of his mother following her death. To Carlotta, the work was ghastly, and she felt that it actually hastened Eugene's demise.

As O'Neill's writing career neared its end, Carlotta was finally tired of being nursemaid, secretary, and houseboy. The writing that had consumed O'Neill allotted them time apart and served as a focal point for their interactions. With no distractions to keep them apart, they argued constantly. On December 31, 1939, Carlotta emphatically declared, "It has been a most unpleasant year!"

Finances were part of the problem and Carlotta decided to sell the California property. Tao house was sold in January 1944, and at the end of February, they moved to a suite of rooms in a hotel on San Francisco's Nob Hill. Carlotta lamented the loss of the uniquely eclectic home, stating, "We stayed at Tao House for six years, longer than we lived anywhere else. Of course, there were many hardships, but it was a beautiful place and I hated to leave" (Gelb and Gelb 853). As with Casa Genotta, Tao House was sold for a substantial loss. Carlotta had inherited her mother's flair for design and decoration, but did not always profit from the sale of her real estate.

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Chapter Seven

Marblehead Neck

1944 -1953

The O'Neills lived in San Francisco until October 17, 1945, when they moved to New York. They rented a two-room suite at the Barclay Hotel until Carlotta secured a penthouse apartment at Eighty-Fourth Street and Madison Avenue. As usual, she began decorating the new living space, adorning it with mirrored walls, elaborate furnishings and oriental motifs. The terrace overlooked Central Park, with an immediate view of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The apartment was lavish, but it was the scene of loud and bitter arguments that were becoming legendary. After one especially vicious quarrel, Carlotta left, vowing not to return. O'Neill was despondent and called his friends for consolation. O'Neill's friends hated Carlotta, and after he broke his arm in a fall, they tried to convince him to leave her. He refused. Carlotta returned, and the couple reconciled. Deciding to move to Boston, they booked rooms at the Ritz-Carlton.

Marblehead Neck, located twenty-five miles outside the city, was a summer resort favored by well-heeled Bostonians. Carlotta purchased a tiny gray-shingled cottage perched on a bluff overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. She bought the property for $25,000, which ultimately rose to $90,000 with renovations.

Carlotta described both her mood and their new residence:

> We came to New England (that I have always loved) and I have been doing my best to make a home. Am afraid I have lost my resiliency to this and that, but the home will be finished in another week or so. It is the smallest house I have ever seen! (Which we both wanted) and cost the most! (Commins 228).

The Marblehead cottage was Carlotta's least favorite home. It was especially bleak in the winter when most of the surroundings were shuttered and abandoned. With her customary flair Carlotta attempted to transfigure the colorless bungalow. She added an oceanfront glassed-in porch, renovated the kitchen (with added adjoining maids quarters), and completely insulated the entire six room, fifty-year-old house with double layered windows. She then proceeded to transform the interior. Signature Chinese red doors, reminiscent of Tao House, opened into a veritable rainbow of color: Pink walls, blue tiled floors vividly died draperies were reflected in mirrors. The two-story frame house included four small rooms on the second floor, their respective bedrooms and studies. It was a costly project, rivaling Casa Genotta and Tao House, and exacerbated by skyrocketing building costs, and the cost of overtime labor to speed the project so the prospective tenants could move in.

After having spurned friends, family, even business associates, the O'Neills finally got the complete solitude they professed to want. The result was disastrous; with no one to turn to, they turned on each other. O'Neill had claimed that he wanted to be an artist or nothing, and now nothing was exactly what he

had left. There was no genius remaining for Carlotta, the reputed dragon lady, to protect. O'Neill gazed out at the sea for hours, while Carlotta was reduced to playing nursemaid. He was embarrassed by his palsy, which he wanted no one but Carlotta to see. O'Neill had become like his own character, Larry Slade, in The Iceman Cometh, at the end a tired, disillusioned, worn out Irishman who had exhausted his options. Reviewers agreed that "when the curtain falls, nothing is left for Larry but to die," and one critic wryly offered Larry an alternative: "Larry could write plays" (Cargill 65). O'Neill could no longer even do that.

The couple's simmering hostilities and extreme self-dissatisfaction finally erupted into violence. Love and hate were the simultaneous passions of O'Neill's characters, and Carlotta finally realized that they characterized his feelings toward her: "Not that Gene, in spite of all his dedications and little notes swearing love and begging for forgiveness, didn't also hate me" (Quintero 64). On the evening of February 5, 1951, after a particularly nasty quarrel, O'Neill fled the depressing confines of their oceanfront home, taking refuge in the night air. He left in a hurry, leaving his cane and his coat behind. It was a blustery winter night and he stumbled and fell in a snow bank. He tried to get up but he had broken one of his legs. From inside the house, Carlotta heard his cries. As she opened the door, she saw O'Neill lying injured and helpless. Instead of coming to his aid as she had so many times in the past, she ignored his plight with the taunt, "How the mighty have fallen! Where's your greatness now little man?" (Dardis 235). The door closed behind her. O'Neill lay in the snow bank until he was discovered by passers-by. He was hospitalized in Salem until March 30,

then transferred to Doctors Hospital in New York, where he remained for a month.

While O'Neill recuperated in a hospital bed, Carlotta was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. O'Neill had his revenge for being left in pain in the snow; he had her committed to a mental hospital. On March 28, he signed a petition alleging that his wife was an "insane person . . . incapable of taking care of herself and requested that some suitable person be appointed her guardian" (Sheaffer 644). Carlotta was even more agitated, especially when she learned that O'Neill had struck her a double insult. Sheaffer relates that, "Carlotta's bitterness over the position was intensified when she learned that O'Neill had changed his will to eliminate her as the executrix" (647).

As O'Neill declared Carlotta mentally unfit and wrote her out of his will, she filed suit for a legal separation. Carlotta was vituperative in her feelings toward O'Neill:

> O'Neill has failed his children & wives. He <u>loathes</u> women, except when he needs them. When he no longer needs them--out they go! But with Nietzsche and Strindberg as his gods one can understand all this. (Sheaffer 644) .

During this period of separation, O'Neill's friends once again banded together in a protective web, shielding their comrade from the allegedly crazed Carlotta. A group of his cronies formed a conspiracy to ban Carlotta from O'Neill's life for good. The venture was ultimately unsuccessful, and it would personally aggrieve some of O'Neill's inner circle for the rest of their lives. Once

Carlotta regained control she severed all ties with everyone who had plotted against her. Lawrence Langner, an old friend from O'Neill's Provincetown days, was particularly determined to save his friend from Carlotta. To Sheaffer, Langner and the others were well intentioned but misguided:

> But what he and the others never realized, apparently was that Carlotta, in both a good and a dark sense, was virtually an ideal mate for Eugene O'Neill . . . He unconsciously welcomed the anguish he suffered at times through Carlotta. She gave him opportunities to do penance for his sin of having been born (Sheaffer 647).

Although in the wake of O'Neill's accident, it appeared that O'Neill had resolved never to see his wife again, "In time their strange love-hate relationship resumed: they were surely 'welded' as few couples have ever been" (Dardis 255).

Carlotta had returned to Marblehead Neck to pick up the pieces of their final domestic debacle. Most of her assets had been frozen during their separation. Meantime, O'Neill had abandoned thoughts of a separation, and resolved to reconcile with Carlotta. On May 17th, he left for Boston and for Carlotta. Referring to the situation later, Carlotta asked him, "How could you have done that to me?" Sheaffer reports that, "His face started to get dark, then suddenly he smiled, 'Well, it was a helluva fourth act.' 'Yes', I said, 'it <u>was</u> a helluva fourth act, and I was the one who suffered.' " (Sheaffer 659).

Following their well-publicized separation and reconciliation, the O'Neills decided to move to the Hotel Shelton. While not as dramatic as their reunion

scene on the high seas twenty years earlier, they were nonetheless back together, and Carlotta was once again at the helm. Sheaffer reports that, "He was returning under Carlotta's terms, one of her chief stipulations being that he would again change his will and rename her as his executrix and sole heir" (653). Before O'Neill had been at the Shelton two weeks, he did exactly that.

In the winters of 1952 and 1953, as if to make a final break with his life as an artist, O'Neill and Carlotta destroyed the unfinished manuscripts form his Cycle Plays. He explained to Carlotta that, "He didn't want to leave any unfinished plays and he said, 'it isn't that I don't trust you, Carlotta, but you might drop dead or get run over or something and I don't want anybody else finishing up a play of mine' " (Cargill 94). As Carlotta described it, "We tore them up, bit by bit, together. I helped him because his hands--he had this terrible tremor, he could tear just a few pages at a time. It was awful, it was like tearing up children" (Cargill 94-95).

The plays were destroyed and O'Neill died in November the same year. Carlotta offered her own grim post-mortem: "He could not work for the ten years before his death, at 65, in 1953. He died when he could no longer work. He died spiritually. And it was just a matter of dragging a poor, diseased body along for a few years until it too died" (Cargill 93).

Carlotta had controlled O'Neill during his life and she was determined to control his legacy. She engineered the revision and final editing of his will and is credited with the final testament: "I make these provisions, in recognition of the loyalty and care afforded me by my said wife" (Sheaffer 663). The will was read

on Christmas Eve 1953. It was the perfect Christmas present for Carlotta. She was the one who survived.

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Chapter Eight

The Legacy

1953 -1970

Carlotta relished her new role in managing O'Neill's estate. She proclaimed that, "I have but one reason to live and that is to carry out Gene's wishes. I have my Eugene O'Neill collection to put in order" (Sheaffer 635). However, she interpreted his will in her own way, and there was considerable speculation over whether she carried out Gene's wishes or her own. One of her most criticized decisions dealt with the production of A Long Day's Journey Into Night. When O'Neill wrote the play he stipulated that it not be published until twenty-five years after his death. Two years after he died, Carlotta was entertaining thoughts of having it published and even produced. She saw no reason for the long wait; in fact, O'Neill often referred to the play as their nest egg. As bookkeeper, Carlotta worried about money constantly. After the Marblehead Neck disaster, the couple was $17,000 in debt. Attempting to put her mind at ease, "he comforted her by saying that Long Day's Journey was their 'ace in the hole' " (Gallup 287).

In the spring of 1955 Carlotta notified publisher Bennett Cerf of her decision. He was aghast, thinking her a shrill opportunist. Random House immediately consulted their attorneys, and to their shock, they learned that the law was on Carlotta's side. She had been named the sole heir in O'Neill's will, and as sole heir, her power superceded the wishes of the deceased.

Bennett Cerf finally agreed to publish the manuscript if Carlotta would print a public statement, both on the dust jacket and in the book, explaining that she was overriding her husband's wishes. She was incensed. There were other publishing houses. Carlotta switched her affiliation to Yale University Press and had the play published. Her enemies were quick to criticize her actions. According to Dorothy Commins, one of Carlotta's most eloquent detractors:

> Random House was horrified and washed their hands of the entire project. Bennett Cerf particularly would not compromise his principles as a publisher by violating a dead man's wishes (Commins 240).

Her critics were livid but Carlotta was pleased. She began to think seriously about a full scale Broadway production. One of Carlotta's shrewdest moves was to engage the talents of director José Quintero. They first met in the winter of 1956 while she was living at The Lowell Hotel in New York. Through Carlotta's agent, Jane Rubin, Quintero had sought information on the status of O'Neill's work. Rubin called back two days later to tell him that Mrs. O'Neill wished to meet him.

Quintero was an ardent admirer of O'Neill's work. He was relatively unknown at the time, and Leigh Connell, a partner in Circle in the Square, where Quintero was working, approached him with the prospect, "José, you should do an O'Neill play" (Quintero 150). He thought the play he should do was The Iceman Cometh, adding that "not one of his plays has been performed in the last ten years" (150). Quintero promptly borrowed a copy of the play from Connell

and stayed up all night reading. He was dazzled by what he read.

The first time that Carlotta and Quintero met, she greeted him at the door, then ushered him into her bedroom and sat him upon her bed. She then proceeded to model a series of twenty hats, asking him which one he liked best. There were all stunning black hats. Quintero selected one that featured a long trail of chiffon, which she artfully draped around her, neck, forehead and finally, cascaded down her back. "That's the most beautiful one of the all", he told her. Carlotta answered, "This is the one I wore when I buried him" (Quintero 155). He had obviously passed Carlotta's test, and it won him the rights to produce The Iceman Cometh. She told him, "You came to get rights for the play. You can have them. I trust you. I like you. I hope it turns out well this time, not only for O'Neill but for you also." (Quintero 157).

Quintero took his time in casting the play and recruited a brilliant company. The success of the Circle in the Square revival of The Iceman Cometh finally led to the stage production of Journey.

The O'Neill revival marked the beginning of a close friendship and professional relationship between José Quintero and Carlotta Monterey. Quintero was admittedly taken by her, and indebted to the boost she gave his career. He recalls:

> She was 68, and one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen, with the radiant bearing that one attributes to reclusive royalty. From our first meeting, my relationship with Carlotta Monterey O'Neill was marked by a tantalizing sense of unreality, though it

profoundly influenced my entire professional life. (Quintero 63).

"Unreality" was an understatement in reference to Carlotta. Quintero quickly became accustomed to Carlotta's bizarre behavior. According to her, O'Neill would often visit her, and presence haunted and frightened her. José would hold her hand during these visitations. He admits he never actually saw the apparition, but he never doubted for that Carlotta did: "I could not see him, but that didn't matter. She did. It was her reality I was existing in, not mine" (Quintero 204). He did however address O'Neill at Carlotta's behest. She would beg the intervention of Quintero when O'Neill would revile, taunt and torment her. She maintained that he would follow her from room to room and heckle her relentlessly. Once again questions concerning the will arose, perhaps revealing her unresolved feelings of guilt. In describing this apparition Carlotta said that:

> He sits at the edge of my bed, or at the end of the coach, there, and asks me if I mind if he indulges in a bit of speculation, regarding something about which only I have the definite answer. 'Would you, Carlotta have taken me back if I had come to Boston without gift of a new will?' (Quintero 66).

Driven nearly mad by the specter, Carlotta retorted, "Who in their right mind, would take back a bundle of shaking misery without demanding some shred of reward?" (Quintero 66). Still, she revealed her sense of guilt when she implored Quintero, "Tell him how hard I have been working all these years. Tell him about Iceman and how I helped make it a success. The failure of that play almost killed the poor bastard. Tell him, please!" (Quintero 204).

Still mulling over the fate of Long Day's Journey, Carlotta made a decision, and telephoned Quintero exceedingly early one morning. She began the conversation by asking, "Have I awakened you?" He become used to Carlotta calling at odd hours and assured her that he had been up for hours. She continued, "Going out of my mind, still working for O'Neill, and that is why you must come up to my apartment as soon as you can. I think I have a surprise for you" (Quintero 203). The first thing she asked him when he arrived was what did he know about Long Day's Journey Into Night? Quintero told her he had read it, thought it a masterpiece and recalled that O'Neill did not want it performed until many years after his death. He also added "that every producer and director in New York would give their soul and their bank accounts to do it" (Quintero 206). Carlotta told him that she had decided to produce the play in the United States and she wanted him to direct it. Quintero was speechless. He excused himself promising that he would do it "exactly as O'Neill wrote it, without cutting a line." He fled the apartment and "vomited as soon as I reached the sidewalk" (Quintero 206).

Journey opened in New York on November 7, 1956 with a stellar cast. Florence Eldridge and Frederick March played the elder Tyrones, Jason Robards, Jr. was Jamie, and Bradford Dillman was Edmund. The play was the highlight of the 1956-1957 Broadway season (Sheaffer 634). The published version appeared on February 20, 1956, and proved the biggest seller of all time for Yale University Press. The book sold more than forty-five thousand hardcover copies and more than eight hundred thousand paperbacks (Gallup

290). It is doubtful, however, that Bennett Cerf thought his decision was wrong.

With the publication and production of Journey, O'Neill's drama was released from its theatrical limbo. Even Dorothy Commins, who had criticized Carlotta's decision, admitted that "The play was accepted, as it so richly merited, not as a rattling of skeletons in a family closet, but as a work of art dealing with a universal rather than a personal experience" (Commins 242).

She declared 1956 the year of the O'Neill renaissance, "restoring him to the position he had abdicated after the production of Days Without End in 1934--that of America's greatest playwright" (Commins xx-xxi).

Carlotta received substantial royalties from both production and publication. Upon her death in 1970, she bequeathed the royalties from her husband's plays to Yale for the purpose of establishing Eugene O'Neill scholarships and furthering the Eugene O'Neill Collection. Yale was named beneficiary of all O'Neill's papers in her 1964 will.

Carlotta survived her husband by seventeen years. She lived at the posh Ritz Carlton and made a career of navigating the maze of legal red tape that surrounded O'Neill's estate. This was no easy feat, as described by the Gelbs: "The estate is hedged by a tangle of copyright laws, awash with producers, publishers, university trustees, deans and curators and it is guarded by Scylla and Charybdis of two law firms" (Gelb and Gelb 1). O'Neill continued to monopolize her thoughts:

> I lay down exhausted every bone & muscle in my body aches--weak--Dr. phones--tells me I have been doing too much--one can

not do at 74 what one did at 40-50 -60! I worked with O'Neill for 26 years. He died--& I have been working for him for 10 years. I am still working for him--there is no one else!

Inseparable in life, Gene and Carlotta are eternally united. On November 28, 1970, Carlotta's ashes were placed beside Eugene Gladstone O'Neill's in Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston. Requiscat in pace.

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Epilogue

The life of Carlotta Monterey exemplifies Modris Eksteins' description of the modern age as an era where "Old authority and traditional values no longer had credibility. Yet no new values had emerged in their stead" (256). Born at the end of Victorian era and coming of age as fellow San Franciscan Isadora Duncan exalted freedom of body and spirit, Carlotta sought self-expression both in the unconventional world of the theatre and in the conventional role of wife and mentor to the playwright who revolutionized and defined American drama.

Alfred Allan Lewis' assertion that, "Superficially worldly, Carlotta was the most old-fashioned of women" (397), is in itself superficial, a gross oversimplification of the complex (and often contradictory) personality of the woman born Hazel Neilson Tharsing, who transformed herself into Carlotta Monterey. At the same time, Carlotta did give up her stage career to devote herself to the genius Eugene O'Neill. In her early life, she had ambitiously pursued a career, demonstrating the shrewd business sense of the elder Tharsings in negotiating the terms of her contract with Lee Shubert, and exploiting her photogenic qualities as a model in the promising new advertising industry. Her first husbands were chosen for their apparent (if illusory) financial security, as her mother had carefully chosen her lovers, and she decided to have a child for the rather unorthodox reason that her costar and former lover, Lou Tellegin, told her that she would never be a good actress until she experienced motherhood. Carlotta subsequently rejected the child (ironically, leaving the child

with her mother as her mother had left her with an aunt), and ultimately she abandoned her acting career for a man who was no more suited to parenthood than she was, despite the fact that he already had a family. Old-fashioned women typically want to have families and choose men who share their traditional view of a home. They are also usually careful to choose men who are not already married; O'Neill was married to Agnes when Carlotta decided she would make him a better mate.

Carlotta's life was one of many paradoxes, and one of the most significant is the fact that she chose to abandon the stage after her one theatrical triumph: the role of Mildred Douglas in O'Neill's play, The Hairy Ape. After a series of tepid reviews, generally highlighting her physical attractiveness over her acting, she received good reviews in a demanding dramatic role. The ultimate result was that she turned her back on the prospect of future stage triumphs to devote herself to the playwright who had not wanted her in the role at all. The question is, did she really believe it was her duty to submerge her ambition for O'Neill's benefit, as she claimed, or did she have other motives for her decision to place the playwright's career over her own?

Perhaps Ilka Chase inadvertently hit upon the answer: "Carlotta wanted to possess her men and be everything to them. She had a sense of mission and wanted to help him achieve himself" (Lewis 397). Carlotta's impeccable and meticulous taste as she went about redesigning and decorating her various homes indicates that she was a perfectionist. The quality of her brief acting career suggests that she fell far short of the talent of a Sarah Bernhardt or Ellen

Terry. With her talent for interior design she might have followed Elsie de Wolfe in turning from actress to interior decorator. However, de Wolfe was supported in her professional efforts by her long-term companion Bessy Marbury, who fostered de Wolfe's career as she served her impressive clientele of literary talent. Through Marbury, Carlotta was introduced to a man who held the traditional notion that his wife should subordinate her own interests to serve his. Yet underlying this seemingly old-fashioned arrangement is a pervasive sense that it was not traditional gender roles that governed the arrangement but Carlotta's quest for perfection and O'Neill's belief that it was genius rather than gender that should earn him a partner's single-minded support.

O'Neill alone possessed genius; Carlotta could only achieve perfection by possessing him. Alternately, O'Neill yearned for the love and support he could never receive from his drug-addicted mother. By providing it, Carlotta could possess O'Neill and "be everything" to him. Their relationship was one of mutual codependence. By all accounts they fought frequently; in personality, the tempestuous Carlotta probably overshadowed the withdrawn Gene. Unlike Elsie de Wolfe, who was encouraged to be independent by a lesbian partner, Carlotta was allowed by social conventions to shine in O'Neill's reflected glory, as Charlie Chaplin observed. Once secure in possessing O'Neill she believed she had the right to criticize Agnes for not serving him well enough. She would fulfill the "sense of mission" she chose for herself.

Throughout her life, Carlotta's behavior straddled the old authority and the emerging new modern values. In this respect, she was somewhat like her

mother, Nellie, who defied convention by her divorce, her rejection of motherhood, and her pursuit of the entrepreneurial spirit that swept through America in the Industrial Age. At the same time, Nellie was a boarding house matron catering to the domestic concerns of her boarders in keeping with the boundaries of class and gender. Nellie's business ventures, both conventional and enterprising were probably dictated by practical concerns: labor force employment would never have awarded her the income she enjoyed from her entrepreneurial endeavors. Similarly, Carlotta could not have independently earned the financial and social status awarded her by her relationship with O'Neill. Carlotta was blatantly ambitious and self-serving. Like O'Neill, she desired the love she never had as a child. While O'Neill's ambitions were fueled by his prodigious talent, Carlotta's ambitions were fueled by a desire for extrinsic rewards. In her elevation of material over intrinsic rewards she differed dramatically from contemporaries such as Isadora Duncan, Margaret Sanger, Emma Goldman, and even Gertrude Stein, whose success as a writer might have been more assured had she stuck to Jamesian novels rather than venture into radical experimentation with words. In short, Carlotta Monterey was a product of both the Industrial Age and the Modern Age. O'Neill was a commodity of her entrepreneurial spirit in much the same way she was a commodity to Nellie, who preferred to promote her as a beauty queen rather than nurture her as a child.

By all accounts, Carlotta had tremendous allure. Once describing herself as a girl of extremes, she carefully cultivated an intriguing and powerful image. If

she lacked the erudition of Mabel Dodge's circle of Greenwich Village Provincetown intellectuals, she could easily assume the bohemian style that assured her acceptance. Her career as an actress endowed her with artistic credentials, and it was the prestigious Bessy Marbury who introduced her to O'Neill. It was the height of the Jazz Age when Carlotta Monterey met Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill exemplified the alienation of the modern age and Carlotta embodied the hedonism and "denial of repression" that Freud had inadvertently made the keynotes of the popular culture he publicly despised. O'Neill's plays were routinely analyzed for their Freudian content, while like the Surrealists, he denied that his work was inspired by the theories of Freud. Freud himself might have approved of Carlotta giving up her career to further O'Neill's, although he would have looked with harsh disapproval on her multiple marriages and affairs, and the fact that O'Neill was probably more dependent on her emotionally than she was on him.

The events leading up to and following O'Neill's death illustrate the strength of Carlotta's personality, and suggest that despite her claims to the contrary, she did resent subordinating her ego to O'Neill's. She claimed that O'Neill died when he could no longer write; so too, it appears, did her devotion to him. One cannot shine in the reflected glory of a has-been. Her drive to control the terms of his will was as much the prosaic desire for financial gain as the far-reaching desire to shape his legacy. O'Neill had insisted that A Long Day's Journey into Night not be published until twenty-five years after his death to protect the family he brutally portrayed. Carlotta ensured that Journey was not

only published but produced on the Broadway Stage. O'Neill's plays were the perfect vehicle for the method actors who had begun to dominate stage and screen during the 1950s. Journey boasted a stellar cast and elevated the career of director José Quintero, who had become Carlotta's friend. Even more important, it fueled a revival of interest in the plays of Eugene O'Neill. Whether it was Carlotta's astute business sense, her need to control O'Neill's legend in order to ensure her own, or simply revenge on the husband who had tried to declare her incompetent to deny her executrix control over his will, the timing had been ideal. Twenty-five years into the future, Journey would have had to survive in a culture that thrived on disco music, and embraced hedonism while rejecting Freud. By ignoring O'Neill's last wishes, Carlotta secured his place in American drama, the exalted place he had occupied in the Jazz Age when American art and culture were forever redefined. By engineering the literary and theatrical coup (over the protests of Random House publisher Bennett Cerf), Carlotta secured her own place in American culture, less well-defined, but as uniquely American and twentieth century as O'Neill's.

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