

The Potent Magic in Early 20th Century American Drama: Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill within the Eugenics Movement

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1. Introduction

The interdisciplinarity of science and literature has long been a polemical issue for many practitioners whose main aim is the process of answering a question. in the spirit of forging connections across different disciplines, and, as a form of interaction between the two, interdisciplinarity arose for the sake of producing new forms of knowledge “*solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession*” (Klein, Julie Thompson, and William H. Newell, 1997: 401).

The phrase “*sub-field*” or “*interdiscipline*” of “*science and literature*” was first coined by Stefan Collini¹ to formally break the rigid boundaries between these two realms of knowledge. Then, the burgeoning area has found more definite framework in the founding of a new British Society of Literature and Science (BSLS) on the eve of 2006 at Glasgow university.

The relationship between Science and Literature has extended so much to penetrate the modern American theatre. In this respect, this study examines those contact zones in terms of the interaction between Eugenics, as a science of heredity, and modern American drama by discussing Susan Glaspell’s *The Verge* (1921) and Eugene O’Neill’s *Strange Interlude* (1928). Furthermore, we tend to explain

¹ Stefan Collini, born in 1947, is an English literary critic and a professor of English literature and intellectual history at Cambridge University.

how this interrelation is introduced in both plays to finally study each playwright's stance towards the combination of science and literature. Yet, prior to deal with the core idea of this paper we tend to, first; exploit this increasingly complex area where science meets literature giving a short description of its legitimacy.

2. Interdiscipline of Science and Literature

As the new sciences forced their way into literary language, a scientifically shaped character primarily has been created. When the question of the essence of humanity is raised, literature, therefore, functions as a means to the knowledge of science rather than merely describing the progress of sciences (as in Goethe's *Dr. Faustus* and Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*). Literature can more or less convey good understanding of anthropological, psychological, and fantastical preconditions and consequences of the scientific process of knowledge. In this sense, literature may enrich the representation of scientific processes at a self-reflexive level without claiming to contradict science on its field. In this relationship, literature assumes a hybrid position. Firstly, the cognitive form of literature maintains its relationship to pre-modern forms of science and research practices. And secondly, literature remains pure in its main aspects, no matter how much it represents the sciences; the subjects of literature are reflected in the mode of fiction, they are set in very symbolic contexts. The language is indeed figurative, and beyond some didactic functions, literature's foremost goal is to entertain and stimulate the fantasy of the reader, rather than to accumulate or to criticize facts.

The relationship between literature and science is perhaps a great love story in modern literature. But it is most often an asymmetrical relationship in which science is represented in literature in certain forms. These relationships were rather different at the beginning of the modern period. During the 14th and 15th centuries, while rediscovering the sources of antique knowledge, the arts were also considered to be forms of knowledge and science. Beyond their defining characteristics be they technical, mathematical and medical, the arts were collected in a system of "humaniora" that was organized

around the science of rhetoric.² The presence of scientific elements in literature dates back to the Greek times³, then visible in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer and Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. During the Renaissance, the close conjunction between literature and rhetoric had reached its apex to give birth to one of the works that summed up different kinds of knowledge and experience. Christopher Marlowe's⁴ *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* wove together myth, literature, philosophy, physics, astrology, mathematics, and history. In the 17th century, Milton's *Aeropagitica* (1644) is a further record about literature and science. In the closing decades of the 18th century Erasmus Darwin's poem *The love of the Plants* followed by his *The Botanic Garden* came to prominence to introduce the "Didactic Scientific Poem" that used science to preach a moral message about the position of man in the universe.

3. Modern American drama and the Eugenics movement

However, on the other side of the Atlantic, American writers contributed to the enriching of the interdisciplinary. As the present study focuses on science and literature in modern American drama, a large part of the analysis will fall on the encounters between modern American theatre and the American Eugenics movement. Both enjoyed unparalleled popularity from 1910 until 1930. In a period of rapid change and growing diversity, American eugenicists relied on drama to stage and promote the message that biological heredity is visible in the embodied present and that it is controllable. In the mutual informative sense, the American dramatists were borrowing from, and contending with, the rhetoric and ideas of the eugenic version of hereditary theory. What was the place of heredity and

² For the eminent role of anatomical studies in the sciences and arts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Rafael Mandressi: "Morale, mondanité, esthétique et métaphore" (Mandressi, Chap. 5, 217-268).

³ Many Greek literary works comprise accounts of diseases, for example the opening episode of Homer's *Iliad* (8th C. B.C) where Apollo set plague upon his army to punish Agamemnon. This illness is described by Homer as a contagious disease with an acute fever, sudden in onset and rapidly fatal. one may also refer to some anatomic references in this work

⁴ the work of Marlowe bears many outstanding astronomical aspects about the study of the universe. Marlowe was highly educated, so he must have been aware of the debates surrounding the contemporary challenges to Aristotelian cosmology, and he employed such ideas in his play.

hereditary theory in the emergence of modern American drama? And how did the hereditary theory of the eugenics movement highlight the form, uses, and directions of S. Glaspell's work and E. O'Neill's?

On a historical level, the early struggle to articulate hereditary theory took place primarily between 1900 and 1930. At the end of that span of 30 years, most of the terms of heredity still in circulation today were established; subsequently, the discovery of the DNA in 1953 led to deep changes in the scientific structure of the gene. The term Eugenics was coined by the English biologist Francis Galton in 1883 to mean "well-born". Building on his statistical studies of heredity, Galton emphasized the importance both of encouraging the "fit" members of society (so-called "positive" eugenics) and preventing the procreation of the "unfit" ("negative" eugenics). Playwrights like E. O'Neill, H. Ibsen and A. Strindberg first shared with the eugenics movement a vivid interest in the presence of the past in the embodied present. Indeed, this aspect of hereditary theory was widely applied to suggest that historical patterns can best be understood by examining the present situation. Such a proposal echoes the dramatic plot of retrospective revelation. At the same time, playwrights grappled with the idea that past events are alive in – and even permeate – the present time.

Indeed, the question of how to demonstrate the influence of the past in the permanent present of stage time is a constant concern of drama. Eugenicists' insistence on the past-present dichotomy as evidence offered an ideal frame of reference for modern dramatists like Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill. Both showed deep concern with the idea of generational transmission and so the presence of the past in the present, which they introduced in drama wondering how would such a hybrid theme inform about new directions in modern theatre. The Dramatists's interest in the eugenic ideas lies mainly in the aspects of visibility and spectatorship. *In eugenic theory, there is a vital tension between hidden truth (usually ominous, recessive genetic secrets) and visible truth, or dominant genetic history displayed on the body* (Tamseen Wolff, 2002: 8). Therefore, the tension creates between what is clearly visible on the body and what lurks unseen in the body stirred the playwrights' minds about the tension between

hidden truth and visible truth, which is the playwright's natural playground. It affects everything in performance; from dramatic form to stage design to the role of the audience to the theories and practice of acting.

Scholars of evolutionary theory like Gillian Beer have established relevance to literary narrative in terms of the mode of fictionality. She agreed that evolutionary theory is imaginative because of its sheer inability to be fully demonstrated in the present moment. Dramatists consequently find evolutionary theory useful because its interest in time and change means that it has inherent connections in the processes of narrative. By contrast, hereditary theory can only be demonstrated in the present and requires living, embodied evidence, thus suggesting its potential value for dramatists. Yet, the critics' views diverge on eugenics as a literary or aesthetic phenomenon serving cultural or political ends, but at its popular and demonstrative core, some view eugenics most clearly corresponding to performance. In fact, it served more the dramatists to move easily between past and present rather than the policy makers in their project of making a society free of "unfit" members.

Beyond the implications of eugenic hereditary ideas in the literary field, their consistent use of drama in methodology, training and promotional efforts was most plainly inviting to modern American dramatists. More than that, the expressive need for an audience to demonstrate, yet equalize, the equation of biological and social worth that eugenicists sought to reach, made the theatre the most challenging site where the non-biological family would experience specific concerns that were at a high-water mark during the period.

The connections between drama and eugenics cannot be claimed to be a purely American invention since earlier European playwrights like H. Ibsen, A. Strindberg and G. Bernard Shaw had emphasized heredity thematically and metaphorically. Americans welcomed the European dramatic interpretations of heredity largely because, in the first third of the 20th century, they were living in a society whose main interests lay in the possibilities and limitations

suggested by the new thinking on heredity. During that period society underwent one of its most rapid, mind-stirring changes. Eugenacists then offered ideas and policing for coping with the stirring social changes; all of their proposals for “race betterment” were explained in the light of Mendelian heredity. These rules stated, according to eugenacists that the germ plasm will be certainly inherited by future generations and cannot be altered although being predicted.

The appropriate response to this experimentally defensible biological certainty was to deal with reproduction among the superior only while preventing the inferior. The American arena was directly influenced by that eugenic assumption of biological experimentation. By virtue of its emphasis on reproduction and evolution, it became a national project to make only the “fit” members of society reproduce and prevent the “unfit” In this sense; the melting pot was submitted to the polarity of social and biological worth. Eugenacists agreed that increased foreign dysgenic germ plasm was swiftly changing the American biological landscape for worse (quoted in Kevles, 19: 47). If social problems were reducible to biology therefore dysgenic members of society are justifiable at the bottom of heap. The variety of classes and races in America seems to enforce the “permanent pollution of the national germ plasm” (Wiggam, 19 14). Wiggam, in fact, introduces and defines eugenics in terms of the immigration “problem”.

In addition to the arrival of an unprecedented number of immigrants, this period also witnessed the arrival of the so-called “New Negro” and “New Woman”, the representative figures of an increasingly vocal, educated, and urban African American community and an active feminist and suffrage movement. All in all, these developments with the looming specter of World War I put all the prevailing definitions and perceptions of nation, race, class and gender under constant revision.

In their request to guide people to “see” their heritage and their possible directions, eugenacists often turned to drama, asserting that what can be seen answers fears about the unknown or strange. Designating some individuals “fit” and others “unfit”, eugenacists

assumed that audiences would see the human differences as a “truth” of heredity. Within a stimulating climate in which questions about heredity and the past were best tackled, major and connected dramatists, Susan Glaspell and Eugene O’Neill showed their interest in the past as a dramatic subject.

4. Susan Glaspell’s *The Verge*

Glaspell’s *The Verge* investigates most imaginatively the question of what is biologically and socially transmissible. The play’s heroine Claire Archer, an upper middle-class woman approaching middle age in her second marriage, has recently become overwhelmed with botanical experimentation and the possibility of creating whole new species. Feeling trapped by her puritan, Anglo-Saxon heritage, Claire is equally captivated by the possibility of transforming her own identity. In addressing the issue of heredity and experimentation with plant and human life, Glaspell projects to possibly transfer her own identity. Besides that, she confronts the ideas and rhetoric of the Eugenics movement.

But Glaspell innovated in the theme of heredity as a dramatic subject as she exploited further possibilities of autonomous directions and mobility while Eugenists affirm that heredity is predetermined and fixed. In other words, eugenic theories negate free will and sustain the idea that an individual is “*moveable*”(G.K. Chesterton: 362.) One of the most stirring questions of mobility for Glaspell is how much anyone can determine who he or she is. The idea is best personified by Claire and her need to escape “*the forms molded for us*” (*The Verge*, I: 64).

Besides, all the other characters demonstrate a sheer desire and ability to act against biologically or socially prescribed roles. However, eugenicists, based on the assumptions about the omnipotent gene, maintained that biological determinism and the genetic past overrode any possibility of individual direction. But in their propaganda, eugenicists claimed that the betterment of the race’s future belonged to those whose past fixed them as eugenically fit. In negotiating the place of individual autonomy and direction within the hereditary theory, Glaspell insists on that couple of paradoxical ideas: heredity controls the individual through its determined traits of present

identity, and the individual controls heredity, through the potential possibilities of altering the future by discarding the idea of the omnipotent gene by multiplying the prospect of determining future heredity.

Much of the play's actions focus on the question of how space affects meaning. The title of the play best reflects Glaspell's deep interest in boundaries between sanity and insanity; belonging and otherness; plant and human; fixity and change; old and new; pattern and creation. The greenhouse is not only a place for growing plants; it is also that of the most creative experimentations where connections between plants and human life are very striking. In fact, the greenhouse is a place in which nature is disrupted, and it is itself disrupted by the comings and goings of unpredictable human elements. In this setting, Claire and the plant metaphorically undergo parallel developments. Through the specific experimentation done on the plant, Claire also expresses her desire to wriggle out from the biological constraints transmitted from her ancestors. Metaphorically speaking the transfer from the fixed identity is realized through the experimental breeding carried out in the botanical garden of the play. The greenhouse is a place of disrupting nature, and Claire as a character embodies Glaspell's sheer desire to escape her very conditions of reality. By way of forced mutation, Claire's artificial circumstances in the greenhouse for growing plants helps create different crossings. However, Claire's experimenter profile seems to be an oddity in her environment. Her husband, Harry, distinguishes himself from that surrounding and showing his reluctance to undergo experimentation or transformation stating "*I am not a flower*" (*The Verge*, I: 59).

Furthermore, the confrontation scene Claire has with her daughter, Elizabeth, further sustains the position of Claire as an oddity in nature as she furiously counters the eugenic reasoning. When commenting on her mother's radical experimentation, Elizabeth disagrees with Claire's view of "producing a new kind and better kind of plant" (I: 76) when she presses six times "*What's the use of making them different if they're not better?*" (*The Verge*, I: 76), whereas the mother does not actually want them to be better, but just different. In the scene as in many others, Claire's disagreement with her daughter's

expression of eugenic ideas is a clear refutation of biological heredity. Parents and their offspring may be unrelated.

Elizabeth, in various scenes as the one cited above, projects the image of a eugenic script for women, like Claire, who possesses her specific white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant ancestry. Eugenicists often claimed that the survival of the Anglo-Saxon civilization would assume the reproduction of the great race by women like Claire. But in delineating the worthy female “conservators” of a specific American heritage, eugenicists attempted to distinguish between “loose” women identified as “dysgenic” and those who were fit. The word “loose” is indeed used by Claire in the play several times in the sense of getting loose from her genealogical roots. The eugenic agenda, therefore, tends to realize the project of producing the great race particularly by women whose puritan heritage is a prerequisite. Claire’s resistance to the biological “model” of nature is a further proof of her oddity. Also her decision to leave Elizabeth in the custody of her sister Adelaid is metaphorically her refusal of reproduction as she disavows maternity. Instead she assumes self-production for plants or herself in order to reject the socially suggested female’s duties. Such a character in mutation embraces what one eugenicist described as the most destructive factor to the growth and preservation of the Anglo-American population: An Anglo-American woman’s “*self-assertive instinct*” (Raymond. B. Cattell, *The Fight of our National Intelligence: 154*, qtd in Tamsen Wolff, 2002: 175)

The role of language and speech in reconceiving or thwarting heredity is another aspect Glaspell explores in the play. The use or misuse of words functions as a criticism of the imprecision characteristic of the eugenic terminology. Glaspell’s concern about speech and language reflects to a large extent contemporary cultural anxiety about how language delineates a race, or a nation. Michael North compellingly argues that the modern urge toward linguistic standardization, present in the Standard Language Movement and dialect literature of the United States in the 1880s, finds a counterpart in the same period’s increasingly strict immigration regulations and sterilization statutes (North, : 21-48). Characters’ individual names

are also emblematic. Claire Archer aims at clarity, Tom's name; Edgeworthy, similarly suggests his readiness to perch on the edge of change. The naming of Tom, Dick, and Harry defines each man by his relationship to Claire: soul mate and confident, lover, husband. Glaspell even devises a hierarchy among the three by naming them in the descending order of their comprehension of Claire and Claire's objective.

The actions of the play lose their former intensification from the start of the second act. Here, Glaspell focuses less on the means to escape from the past and sheds light on the effect of the residual past experiences, feelings and definitions on the present. The idea is interpreted by Claire as "*the haunting beauty from the life we've left*" (*The Verge*, II: 86). Christianity is one emissary from the beautiful past, surfacing in the play in the form of a hymn "Nearer my God to thee", which serves as a leitmotif for Claire. However, Christianity is nonetheless troubling to her because it is an "*ancestor's hymn, and because the old religion is contending with a new religion of scientifically controlled breeding. The tension between the old and new religions is frequently demonstrated. The edge vine's leaves could be in the 'form of a cross'*" (Tamsen Wolff, 2002: 186)

Again, exchanges between Claire and Elizabeth about what the hereditary experimentation is meant to accomplish show further the disparity. Therefore, Monism, which is the belief of the continuity of nature and man, is the new faith that Glaspell herself embarked on. The eugenics movement helps provide scientific proof for this spiritual position. Such a hybridization of religiosity creates a newly combined religious belief for Claire based on the link between eugenics and Christianity. In charting where and how the past asserts itself in the present, or the present displaces the past, Glaspell is attentive to what is lost in the transition.

5. Eugene O'Neill and the family secrets

O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* (1928) directly recalls the plot elements of *The Verge*. In his attempt to dramatize the subject of "*man's struggle with himself, his own past,*" (Cargill, 1961: 111) O'Neill recalls the idea of the dynamic woman and three men who

revolve around her: a husband, a lover and an adviser/confident, who possesses as well a potential position as a lover. Both women try to test within each pairing of relationship what it provides. Eugenics has special resonance for O'Neill. He adopts and reconfigures ideas of heredity and Eugenics in the play to explore the influence of the past on the present and the powers and limits of visibility. The primary concern of *Strange Interlude* is the extensive, shaping past, and what will be transmitted to the future; hence the meaning of the title, which comes from a line delivered by Nina: "*the only living life is in the past and future – the present is an interlude – strange interlude in which we call on past and future to bear witness we are living!*" (*Strange Interlude*, 8: 222)

The hereditary scope of the story is run through nine long acts, which follows four characters from 1919 to 1945. The practical reason for the play's length is the use of an old stage convention – the aside. Throughout the play, the characters' inner thoughts are often spoken out loud, unheard by the other characters, a fact which allows the audience to go into the secret worlds of the characters.

The causal chain of decisions and events that make up the play are set in motion by the death of an off-stage character: Gordon Shaw, a pilot killed in WWI. When Nina appears in the first act, she is unhinged by the loss of Gordon, her fiancé, but even more by her lack of a child. The major preoccupation in the play is reproduction as well as transmission from one generation to another. Then, the linearity in the play providing record of past events is a eugenic articulation of past and present. In this sense, the title of the play reflects the very intention of E. O'Neill that he speaks out of Nina's tongue "*the only living life is in the past and future...the present is an interlude...strange interlude in which we call on past and future to bear witness we are living*" (*Strange Interlude*, VIII: 222)

Plotting in the play functions according to two interrelated aspects best articulated in the third act: The first part, or the diagnosis of problem, "*is an unquestioned belief in congenital insanity; and the second or the proposed cure, is the resulting necessity of breeding for eugenically healthy offspring*" (Tamsen Wolff, 2002: 198-199). In

addition to this, the problem of reproduction in the play is steadily fostered by a diffuse collection of ideas common to eugenic rhetoric that are most often laid out in dichotomies. Health and sickness, visible surfaces and hidden depths are the most common to create meaning out of the contrast.

Nell Darrell, the play's main diagnostician, provides solutions to and scientific evaluation for every problem in the play; he tries to persuade Nina to marry the healthy Sam Evans and have children by maintaining that Sam's family members are "*simple, healthy people, I'm sure of that although I've never met them.*" (II: 102) Hence Nina's opening lines to Darrel ring the eugenic alarm: "*It's a queer house, Ned. It's incredible to think Sam was born and spent his childhood here. I'm glad he doesn't show it*" (III: 112). Sam may not show abnormality in his person, but therein lays the danger. The obligation to suspect and rout out hidden dysgenic traits, especially feeble-mindedness or insanity, is described by eugenicist Ellsworth Huntington:

A seemingly normal or desirable person who has abnormal or undesirable relative may transmit to his children undesirable qualities which are now recessive, or concealed. We shall learn that it's very dangerous to marry a person who comes from a family having serious defects such as hereditary insanity. (Huntington, 1923: 88)

Sam is precisely such a seemingly normal person, as his mother reveals to pregnant Nina. Evans suffers from congenital insanity; the longstanding family secret "the curse on the Evans" continues to be alive in Sam's insane aunt Bessie Evans

As a curing response the eugenic rhetoric relies on two facts; institutionalization and sterilization: "*Eugenics is an excellent thing: I very much wish the wrong people could be prevented entirely from*

breeding. Criminals should be sterilized and feeble-minded persons forbidden to leave offspring behind them” (Roosevelt, 1914: 32) This idea is supported by Mrs. Evans who installed Bessie upstairs: “*Now she just sits, doesn’t say a word, but she’s happy, she laughs to herself a lot, she hasn’t care in the world*” (III: 122). Evans insists that Nina aborts Sam’s baby and, maintaining that Nina owes Sam a healthy child, she bluntly points the way for Nina to accomplish this: “*I used to wish that I’d gone out deliberate in our first year, without my husband knowing, and picked a man, a healthy male to breed by, to give the man I loved a healthy child*” (III: 125)

Following her abortion, Nina enlists Darrell in the secret project of breeding a healthy baby for herself and Sam to rise as their own. The scene of this “*eugenic arrangement*” (Crabb, 1928: 83) and the arrival of the “*eugenic baby*” (Atkinson, 1912: 75) provide the play with its big secret, the secret of paternity. When Nina and Darrell decide to commit “scientific adultery”, Nina switches to third person, telling Darrell that “Sam’s wife” has been thinking of “picking out a healthy male about whom she cares nothing and having a child by him” (IV: 146). In deciding to carry out the breeding experiment, Nina and Darrell seem to have circumvented the problem of Sam’s bad genes. Thus, O’Neill demonstrates that the control science appears to offer his characters is transient. Darrell let his promising career suffer permanent damage while he is obsessed by Nina. For her part, although Nina seems to hold sway over the three male figures, her obsession with reproduction means that she becomes unhappily subsumed in a script she’s trying to write. Nina’s son Gordon – who is biologically Darrell’s son but is raised as Sam’s – suggests the memory of Gordon Shaw. “*He doesn’t noticeably resemble his mother and he looks nothing at all like his father. He seems to have sprung from a line distinct from any of the people we have seen*” (VII: 195)

By the end, the second Gordon plainly resembles the first: a handsome, athletic, American pilot; and all three men recognize the second as their collectively produced son at different points with Marsden concluding that “her child is the child of our three loves for her” (VI: 193). Finally, neither the good nor the bad bloodline is

verifiable. Although Evans' portrayal of Bessie's insanity is supported by Darrell, the threat of that heredity never materializes: Sam remains sane until his death of a heart-attack. The resurrection of Gordon, meanwhile, stands as a testament to longing over heredity. Thus, heredity is seen as a myth-making process which produces versions of the past that are challenged and re-imagined in the present. The eugenic version of heredity extended a cultural anxiety about how to decide, what would be carried forward from the past to the present and future.

The plot elements of both plays are similar. Both women are the protagonists as a figure of reproduction; they are concerned with the question of how to direct their lives, and the place of self-production or reproduction in that struggle. However, Glaspell used grammatical breakdowns, formal verse, and a variety of theatrical linguistic devices, whereas the innovation of O'Neill was the use of asides that showed the disparity between what is spoken and what is actually felt or thought. Both O'Neill and Glaspell concluded that the influences from the past are inescapable and unchangeable, yet, the struggle against them is tragically doomed. They evoked the problem with language and its ability to convey meaning at all through the characters' problems with speech. In fact, the large use of verbosity that O'Neill uses in the play to make his characters speak out their inner thoughts does not help them see through their foggy lives.

6. Conclusion

Both Glaspell and O'Neill seem to have reoriented the modern American drama by introducing a couple of scientific elements driven from the heredity theory and eugenics. Yet, the set of similarities between both dramatists' plays, namely; *The Verge* and *Strange Interlude*, rather unveils the mind of each playwright about the uses of those scientific ideas. The female characters' efforts to alter their lives within a male sphere owe lot of means to the spirit of eugenics, but the ways in which Glaspell and O'Neill assume and respond to issues of heredity are markedly different. The O'Neillian eugenic process in

Strange Interlude seems to be more elaborated than the process in Glaspell's work. O'Neill defines the steps by, first, the diagnosis of the problem, then, the potential curing methods doomed to failure. By virtue of his emphasis on the disjunction between the reality and appearances, the eugenic way of quieting the future becomes a myth. Glaspell's response to the issue is rather ruled by a feminist hope to secure an equal or even a better place than the man's. The greenhouse for Claire is her inside mirror where her desire of being able to produce; a male attribute in the play, is about being real. The fact tends to provoke a gendered analysis of the eugenic mind. Nevertheless, the force of heredity as modern man's tragedy makes the common present for Claire and Nina. The causality of the past and its impact on the future is what really makes the present a tragic interlude.

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