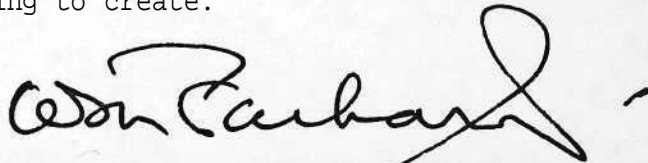


But this means that in order to locate a character's major action, the playwright has to go inside himself and uncover some impulse that is probably hidden away somewhere deep in his own unconscious, and then he has to allow this impulse to express itself to him as a conscious dramatic action. And certainly this process is the single most difficult and frustrating and block-creating aspect of playwriting, this search for the truth of an action which necessitates a descent inside oneself. It is probably the single most important reason why most playwrights abandon their plays or opt for a lot of facile and gimmicky plot lines or else do anything they can think of to outwit this arduous psychological pilgrimage to those forbidden regions of themselves. Yet we know that without this search, without this descent, without this arduous pilgrimage, there can be no true dramatic writing. Eugene O'Neill writes of this process:

One's outer life passes in a solitude haunted by the masks of others; one's inner life passes in a solitude hounded by the masks of oneself.

EUGENE O'NEILL: MEMORANDA ON MASKS
THE AMERICAN SPECTATOR, 1932

It should go without saying, however, that if one can persevere in this inner search, this exercise in unmasking oneself, there will come such authentic heartfelt joy when one finally does realize the truth of a major action out of the depths of oneself. It is, without question, the highest experience one can have in playwriting, far beyond any external goals of production or publication or material remuneration. The mere fact that one has given shape and form to some major action out of oneself, is enough to justify all the difficulty and frustration and blocks one has had to endure through the long patient struggle of trying to locate what it is that one is laboring to create.



William Packard: THE ART OF THE PLAYWRIGHT