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The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

Editor: Frederick Wilkins
Suffolk University, Boston

Vol. I, No. 3
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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

It has been a gratifying experience to guide the Eugene O'Neill Newsletter through its first full year of existence. The index to Volume I at the end of this issue suggests the breadth of material its pages have included, thanks to the diligence of its dedicated readers. The subscription list continues to grow rapidly and now includes, in addition to the United States, individual and institutional subscribers in Canada, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Sweden and West Germany. Doubtless, there are many more who might wish to receive it and submit material for its pages if they but knew of its existence; and so I urge all who have found the Newsletter's first four issues interesting and valuable to tell friends, theatres and libraries of its availability.

The current issue continues the short-and-long blend that has pleased a number of correspondents: notes on activities, publications and performances of interest to O'Neillians; three lucid (though perhaps not completely complementary) studies of The Hairy Ape; and a report on the first performances of that play in three European capitals.

It remains my hope that contributions to the Newsletter will be equally divided between scholars and theatre people. Accordingly, the next issue (for which material should be submitted by mid-March) will concentrate on O'Neill's plays in performance. I welcome reviews of recent productions, memories of past ones, and notes by actors, designers and directors who have confronted the works of O'Neill head-on in the playhouse. The issue will include detailed reviews of the Quintero-Robards production of A Touch of the Poet in New York City and the Long Wharf program of sea plays

in New Haven, and a previously-promised survey of critical reactions to the 1976 Broadway production of Anna Christie and to Liv Ullmann's performance as Anna.

The May issue will also feature essays by Kristin Morrison ("Conrad and O'Neill as Playwrights of the Sea") and James A. Robinson ("Christianity and All God's Chillun Got Wings"). While all submissions for May will be read with a sympathetic eye, the eye will look with greatest favor on responses to the plays of O'Neill in performance. Brush off your theatrical memories, articulate them in a form that blends fervor with succinctness, and send them along. We'll all be the richer for sharing them.

I am grateful to the many friends of O'Neill who have sent words of encouragement and have enriched the first volume of the Newsletter with their thoughtful notes and essays. The Newsletter seems to have answered a need, and it will continue to try to justify the respect of its many well-wishers. A happy 1978 to you all! --F. W.

IRONIC USE OF MYTH IN THE HAIRY APE

Nietzsche's general influence on the thought and plays of Eugene O'Neill is widely known. During his life O'Neill paid homage to Nietzsche as his mentor, and in recent years critical studies have linked both Thus Spoke Zarathustra and The Birth of Tragedy to specific O'Neill plays. But no one to my knowledge has pointed out the connection between Nietzsche's Dionysian myth as expounded in The Birth of Tragedy and O'Neill's ironic treatment of that material in The Hairy Ape. Indeed, O'Neill's ironic perspective has proved to be one of the play's most puzzling features. To the confusion of his early critics, O'Neill subtitled his play, "A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life in Eight Scenes." But The Hairy Ape is not "comedy" as that term casually is understood; its violent laughter issues from what Northrop Frye describes as the darkest mode of irony, "the non-heroic residue of tragedy, centering on a theme of puzzled defeat."¹

I would suggest that the specific mythological content subverted and parodied in The Hairy Ape is the perpetual triumph of Dionysus over his various antagonists in the ancient world; material which, according to Nietzsche, when symbolized in Greek tragedy, provided the rational man of culture with "an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature," a shattering of individuality and a "fusion with primal being."² In The Hairy Ape ironically the vital force is mocked: the god is impotent. For O'Neill Yank is Dionysus, but Dionysus who has lost his meaning in the modern world, the symbol of Nietzsche's ancient god emasculated by an urban industrialized America in which he literally does not "belong." The plot of The Hairy Ape very likely is derived from a legend concerning Dionysus which tells of the god's capture by a band of pirates who imprison him on board a ship for ransom. In the Greek myth Dionysus retains his powers and, transforming himself into a lion, scatters the presumptuous mortals who sought to fetter him, turning them into dolphins.

That, however, was the "ancient" god; his counterpart in "modern life" is a powerless grotesque imprisoned in the stokehole of an ocean liner, the captive of a new class of pirates who wear silk hats and monkey fur. Except to his mates in the engine room (who resemble Nietzsche's satyr chorus in their drunken comradery, their shouts of "Drink, don't think!"), the god is an object of ridicule and scorn. On land he is superfluous, a god in search of worshippers to whom he remains invisible. "Force, dat's me!" Yank cries out to the people. "I beg your pardon," one gentleman responds, "You have made me lose my bus." A mock epiphany on Fifth Avenue ends with Dionysus being hauled away to prison, a development which also occurs in Euripides'

The Bacchae. But there are no so-called "palace miracles" in The Hairy Ape. Yank pries apart the bars, but instead of toppling down his prison walls, the god is clapped into a straightjacket. Regarded by the new community as an evolutionary throwback, the diminished god eventually wanders to the zoo, and there, among civilization's other specimens of pent-up animal vitality, he is destroyed by his uncomprehending brother, the gorilla.

O'Neill's intent is that we see in this not simply the anguish of an extravagant grotesque, but a portrayal of modern experience as a whole. Yank, O'Neill is saying, represents contemporary man dispossessed of god-head and self-harmony through the workings of a perverted social consciousness that defines him not as the embodiment of vital force but as an object. This process is dramatized in Scene III of The Hairy Ape when Mildred faints at the first sight of Yank. ("Take me away! Oh, the filthy beast!") In forcing Yank to view himself through her perverted eyes, Mildred vitiates Yank's Dionysian harmony and supplants that emotion with a feeling of bleak isolation which remains with Yank throughout the play.

In The Birth of Tragedy Nietzsche writes that the god Dionysus is continually impelled to suffer in his own person the agonies of individuation; that is why he is perpetually in need of Apollonian redemption through the appearance of regained unity. This parable gives meaning to O'Neill's conception of Yank and Mildred as symbolic corollaries. In Scene V, Yank leaves his ship to search for Mildred so that she may reveal to him how he "belongs," but his quest is doomed to failure. In a "Socratic" culture, Nietzsche intimates, there can be no lasting fusion of Apollonian and Dionysian principles; on the contrary, cut off from one another each force tends to degenerate. Yank indeed is a pitiful Dionysus degraded to brute force. And Mildred, in whose eyes he finds his image (and who is necessary to his redemption), is a more sorrowful creature still. Yank's power drives civilization and Mildred is its representative, "a waste product in the Bessemer process." Thus she becomes the Apollonian manifestation of a degraded Dionysian force, the expression, according to O'Neill's stage direction in Scene II, "not of its life energy but merely of the artificialities that energy had won for itself in the spending." Mildred is too weak to provide the requisite Apollonian camouflage, and eventually she drives the god to destruction. Even her thick-headed aunt sees through her. Six times in the second scene she refers to Mildred as an ineffectual "poser."

Thus Yank is destined not to encounter her again. Instead he finds himself on Fifth Avenue surrounded by a congregation of "marionettes" who are filing out of church but who are incapable of recognizing the presence of a god. Driven to impotent fury, Yank in the penultimate scene is expelled from a meeting of the Industrial Workers of the World for preaching total destruction rather than reform; then, at the zoo he is absurdly mangled by an ape with whom he has offered to shake hands.

Nietzsche proclaims in The Birth of Tragedy that "without myth every culture loses the healthy and natural power of its creativity; only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement."³ By inverting the heroic pattern of Dionysian myth, O'Neill in The Hairy Ape expresses through irony, not dithyramb, his own wasteland vision of a materialistic culture ignorant of its roots in myth and drama. Incapable of the rhapsodic affirmation he was to arrive at later in The Great God Brown and Lazarus Laughed, O'Neill leaves us here wondering not whether Western civilization will regenerate itself, but only whether some shipmate will bring the news of Yank's demise to Paddy and the crew as Thamus did in ancient times. "So when he came opposite Palodes, and there was neither wind nor wave, Thamus, from the stern, looking toward the land, said the words as he had heard them: 'Great Pan is dead.' Even before he had finished,

there was a great cry of lamentation, not of one person, but of many, mingled with exclamations of amazement."⁴

¹Anatomy of Criticism (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 234.

²Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967), p. 59, p. 65.

³Nietzsche, p. 135.

⁴A passage from Plutarch's De Oraculorum defectu, trans. Frank C. Babbitt, cited in Robert Palmer's introduction to Walter Otto's Dionysus: Myth and Cult (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. x.

--Michael Hinden

THE SEARCH FOR SELF IN THE HAIRY APE: AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY?

The prevailing theme in the work of Eugene O'Neill--man's attempt to discover himself and his place in the order of things--makes his plays universal and enduring. Among the early plays, The Hairy Ape best reflects modern man's struggle for self-awareness and his effort to belong, to give life meaning. In the figure of Yank, O'Neill depicts the dilemma twentieth-century man faces when his faith in the machine and the world of materialism it symbolizes is shattered, and he can find nothing in himself or in his world that can replace this lost faith. O'Neill captures the mood of pessimism that prevailed in the 1920's, when man discovered that while the industrial world provided him with material benefits, it also crushed and threatened to obliterate his humanity. The typically somber O'Neill thesis prevails in the bleak world of The Hairy Ape: that man has lost his place and his belief in himself and in God or anything external to himself, that life without faith can only end in despair and death, and that man must strive to retain his humanity to give order and meaning to existence.

In his effort to dramatize the displacement of modern man in the distorted universe that followed World War I, O'Neill abandoned the realism of his first plays for expressionism. While it does contain realistic elements, The Hairy Ape continues the experiment in nonrealism begun in Emperor Jones. When O'Neill was charged with having been influenced by Kaiser's From Morn to Midnight, he stated that he had seen the play in 1922, after he had written the two plays, adding: "I had read From Morn to Midnight before Hairy Ape was written but not before the idea for it was planned. The point is that The Hairy Ape is a direct descendant of Jones, written before I had ever heard of expressionism." As Egil Törnqvist proves in his recent article, "Miss Julie and O'Neill," O'Neill had read the plays of Strindberg, and he and Central European expressionists were directly influenced by them. Like Strindberg in The Ghost Sonata and A Dream Play, O'Neill and European expressionists depicted modern man as exploited and forced to cope with social inequities.

What distinguishes the American playwright from the German expressionists and aligns him more closely to Strindberg is what John Gassner calls his "metaphysical mode of expressionism" in The Hairy Ape. The play examines not only the nature of man's role in society but the nature of being. Using

the technical devices of expressionism, O'Neill moves his hero, Yank, through a series of rapidly changing scenes in his quest to belong, to find his place in the universe; yet in his highly subjective treatment the dramatist never neglects to present the effects of dislocation and loss of faith on the human psyche.

While he needed a nonrealistic approach to dramatize Yank's outer struggle and inner suffering, O'Neill, like Strindberg before him, uses cause and effect and retains the character motivation of realism. O'Neill's catalyst for Yank's questioning of and awakening to his true condition--woman the destroyer and nemesis of man--is Strindbergian. Yank is Strindberg's dreamer in the sense that part of him has ever remained dormant. The distorted dream-like sequences in the last half of the play dramatize in slow motion Yank's search for self.

It is his encounter with Mildred, who emerges out of darkness like the unconscious, shadowed side of him, that rouses this slumbering automaton from his lethargy. Her rejection of his physical presence, the sum total of the self he had known until then, stuns him. He is thrown off balance when she classifies him as an animal, and his pursuit of her becomes a quest for his own identity. The artificial light above the stairs leading down to the stokehole illuminates not only Mildred but a part of Yank which has always remained a dark mystery to him. But it proves to be an ineffective illumination. Although light has always been a symbol of enlightenment, this artificial glow reflects an artificial woman who, like the modern technology that breeds her, cannot provide Yank with insight.

Until this time Yank has responded to his environment by a series of conditioned reflexes. As "part of the engines," he has adapted to his environment mechanically, bypassing conscious decisions. He has worshipped the machine, becoming one with it. It, in return, has crushed his humanity. Yet, at the beginning of the play, the union of machine and the brute strength of man has produced in Yank a godlike feeling. He is an extension of the machine; its power is personified in him. Yet even before Mildred's appearance, Yank has made feeble attempts to "tink," to understand the complexity of existence.

The dark region of the stokehole he inhabits reflects the underground of his mind. Proud of his animal strength and his ability to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the machine, he has never developed a social presence. Yank is not sophisticated enough to assume a mask to project a socially acceptable image. His arrogance and ignorance leave him vulnerable. In his first major contact with it, society, in the form of Mildred, crushes and rejects the raw natural state of man he represents.

Yank's unconscious, repressed desires never surface until Mildred's ethereal appearance. Through Mildred, daughter of the president of Nazareth Steel, the world's new plastic Virgin Queen, descending "a mile of ladders and steps to be havin' a look" at her slaves, O'Neill makes a strong anti-capitalist statement. Her forebears were once vital, productive, purposeful, like the country itself. In contrast, Mildred is described as pale, anemic, "looking as if the vitality of her stock had been sapped before she was conceived." Nervous, disdainful, discontented with her life in spite of great wealth and social position, she is vaguely conscious of being a "poser," as her aunt claims, and of lacking a purpose in life. Somewhere in her unconscious lies a yearning for the primitive, the animalistic, the primordial heart-of-darkness jungle, peopled by creatures like her grandmother "with her pipe beside her--puffing in Paradise." The horror that Yank sees but does not understand when he looks into her eyes is her realization that here in him are not only her roots, her past, but, if she would allow her sexual

and emotional drives free expression, her vital self.

This vision of Mildred has a twofold effect on Yank: it makes him aware of his social inferiority and conscious of his inadequacies as a human being. Before this encounter, he had been an integral part of the vast industrial complex that produced steel girders, rising godlike in the sky. Their majesty was something tangible, strong, aspiring, impressive like the brute power of his own body. It is inconceivable to him that Mildred, the daughter of steel, would reject him, the son of steel. Yank is the offspring of greedy, exploitative men and an accommodating earth mother with her wealth of natural resources. But he is the bastard child, a deformed Caliban, conceived furtively in the dark by amoral men and destined to inhabit the nether regions, hidden from society. Before Mildred came into his life, he had been the pure animal, a leopard, stalking through his domain, proud of the spots, the dirt and sweat, that gave him identity. When Mildred calls him a "filthy beast," Yank's safe, known world is destroyed; he is dispossessed. The feminine wonder of Mildred touches a chord of humanity within him that has never been struck before. He responds with a growing arousal of sensitivity and seeks to find his place on the ladder of evolution. When his pitiful attempts to belong fail, he wants to hurt the creature who gave life to the displaced monster in him but who has neglected to sever the umbilical cord that ties him to his animal world. He says, "She grinds the organ and I'm on de string. She'll get on her knees and take it back."

Mildred can do nothing to help him or anyone else. For her own attempts to become fully human have failed; and she is left, as she says, "a waste product of the Bessemer process," created and sustained by steel, a symbol of nature and human nature exploited. Nor can Yank help himself. He cannot discover by reflection who he is or where he belongs; he simply does not have the mental capacity to do so. Therefore, vainly, he turns outward to society for guidance, understanding and compassion. Society--assuming in the last scenes the shapes of the stylized chorus on Fifth Avenue, the prisoners at Blackwells Island, and the members of the IWW--persistently rejects him.

In his search to discover himself, Yank moves from one oubliette to another--from the cage-like stokehole of the steamer to the cell on Blackwells Island to the final deathcage. Although he does not reach the end without a degree of awareness of the meaning of existence, he must suffer the limits of his perception. In the past Yank had been content to worship the god of steel, had taken pride that he belonged to it. As a result of the rejection he has experienced, the idol is shattered. Now he knows that girders and beams and steam are not enough, that the newly aroused instincts within him crave nourishment:

Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't your belly. It's way down--at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops. Dat's me now--I don't tick, see?--I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woild. Now I ain't steel, and de woild owns me. Aw, hell! I can't see--it's all dark.

When he realizes his search to belong somewhere has been futile, and he has been rejected by all segments of society--the wealthy, the imprisoned, and finally the representatives of the masses, the IWW--Yank sits in a gutter, "bewildered by the confusion in his brain, pathetically impotent." In desperation, he "turns a bitter mocking face up like an ape gibbering at the moon" and says: "Man in de Moon, yuh look so wise, gimme de answer,

huh? Slip me de inside dope, de information right from de stable--where do I get off at, huh?" Abandoned by and now abandoning humanity, Yank makes his way to the zoo and the gorilla's cage. Remembering Mildred's words, he thinks man's house of classified beasts is where he might belong. It is twilight, that gray-light time between day and night, suspended precariously, even as Yank is, between heaven and earth, humanity and animality. Watching the gorilla who sits like "The Thinker," a pose he had often assumed earlier, Yank says, "Youse can sit and dope dream in de past, green woods, de jungle and de rest of it. But me--I ain't got no past to tink in.... You belong." He confronts the beast, looking for traces of himself, and calls it "brother." Yank settles not for brotherhood with man but with animals. Recklessly, he opens the door of the cage, and the gorilla embraces him "in a murderous hug" and throws Yank's crushed body into the cage.

Yank's world ends in despair and death. As O'Neill depicts it, his plight is that of modern man who has become dislocated, disillusioned, and destroyed by his highly technological world. As long as man does not question this world nor seek a better one, he is allowed to function by society, though only on an animalistic, mentally stultifying level. Only when he begins to question, however feebly, the validity of this world and tries to discover a more meaningful existence does he meet with rejection. The tragedy in modern society is not that man has become reduced to Yank's level but that he has even lost the will to attain to Yank's admirable though ill-fated quest. Having rejected his former place as "son" of God, he emerges as the bastard child of materialism, industrialism, and all the other "isms" that symbolize his godlessness and his inability to provide substitutes. Rootless, bereft of a meaningful role and place in the structure of the universe, he becomes an alien in a hostile world.

In an interview in the New York Herald Tribune (November 16, 1925), O'Neill stated that Yank is a symbol of man "who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way." O'Neill was dismayed that audiences saw merely the stoker and not the symbol, and said, "the symbol makes the play either important or just another play."

O'Neill would agree with Freud that complete self-awareness is an impossibility; man can never explore fully the deep recesses of the unconscious and fathom the secret storehouse of the source of rational decisions. The mind of man is a bottomless pit. What O'Neill seems to be demonstrating in The Hairy Ape is that man should at least engage in a search for the self and question the meaning of his existence. Turning back to live complacently on the animal level brings with it moral death and destruction; turning inward to discover the self can provide a degree of awareness of our humanity. Perhaps O'Neill wanted to show that life is an on-going exploration; that man, like Yank, is still in the process of evolution. As the playwright pointed out, man has "not yet acquired" harmony "in a spiritual way." Over fifty years have passed since O'Neill's interview on The Hairy Ape. Is it the stoker or the symbol of our selves that we see in the play today?

--Virginia Floyd

BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN THE HAIRY APE

Eugene O'Neill, a lapsed Catholic, said that the modern playwright must "dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it--the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new one for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning

for life in." The inarticulate Yank of The Hairy Ape feels a need that he cannot express, and that cannot be filled by anything available to him in the 20th century. Neither the rich people's Fifth Avenue church nor the poor people's Salvation Army has anything to offer Yank. The rich man's church denies his situation and needs. (The sermon was preached against such laborers' organizations as the IWW.) The Sallies mean well, offering "sinkers and coffee." But, as Yank says, "Aw, hell! What does dat get yuh?--Dis ting's in your inside, but it ain't your belly. Feedin' your face . . . dat don't touch it. It's way down at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves and everything moves. It stops and de whole woild stops." He compares himself to a watch with a broken mainspring. In his fumbling fashion, Yank is made to say what O'Neill realized, that man needs--if not a deity, at least a sense of the significance of his own life, to lend it dignity.

It is a truism that the Judeo-Christian religious tradition placed man at the center, with all creation subject to him, or--like the stars--made to serve his needs, and that Darwinism thrust man from the center of his universe. Post-Darwinian man no longer can see himself as the crown of creation. The hairy ape, or even Desmond Morris's naked ape, is unable to say with Renaissance man: "What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god."

In blatantly ironic contrast to Rodin's "The Thinker," whose posture Yank is made to assume, the hairy ape is not yet evolved into the fully human, his evolution thwarted by those who need his gorilla strength and cannot afford to let him escape his cage. Senator Queen, the representative of government, says of the IWW: "They would tear down society, put the lowest scum in the seats of the mighty, turn Almighty God's revealed plan for the world topsy-turvy, and make of our sweet and lovely civilization a shambles, a desolation where man, God's masterpiece, would soon degenerate back to the ape!" The irony may be sophomorically heavy-handed, but certainly the message is clear: in this play it is an industrialist and capitalist society that is responsible for man's degeneration to the hairy ape.

At the beginning of the play Yank believes in a myth that gives him the delusion of significance. He and the rest of the ape-like crew are "real men." Unlike the rich, they "belong." "It's me makes it hot," he says of the furnace he stokes. "It's me makes it roar! It's me makes it move! Sure, only for me everything stops. It all goes dead, get me?" But by the end of the play he has been awakened to the fallacy of this blue-collar myth, and there is nothing to replace it.

The deity Yank serves is the furnace. "She's gettin' hungry! Pile some grub in her. Trow it in her belly." This is more than personification; the furnace is Moloch, requiring to be fed by human lives. The cruel god of the pagan Canaanites was propitiated by sacrifices. Children were thrown into the furnace of his belly. In O'Neill's doctrinaire drama, industrialism demands human sacrifice. "Feeding our lives along wid the coal, I'm thinkin'," says Paddy, who also says, "Almighty God have pity on us." (One thinks of Dynamo, in which the god also destroys its worshippers.)

American society worships false gods, O'Neill suggests, by means of a familiar Biblical allusion, whose context is less familiar. Mildred speaks to her aunt: "Pardon my outburst. When a leopard complains of its spots, it must sound rather grotesque . . . only stay in the jungle, where your spots are camouflage. In a cage they make you conspicuous." But Mildred does not stay in her native habitat. She descends--and condescends--to "hell," to the stokers' "cage." By her distinctive "spots" (white dress,

white face, transparent-looking hands) Mildred is recognizable as a member of the effete, spiritually dead leisure class. ("She was all in white like dey wrap around stiffes.") And she herself acknowledges that she is "damned in more ways than one." Later, voices call out to Yank, who is black with coal dust, "It makes spots on you, like a leopard . . . like a piebald nigger." The prophet Jeremiah asked a rhetorical question: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" and concluded in sarcasm, "Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." The inability to change will bring retribution: "This is your lot . . . because you have forsaken me and trusted in false gods."

Several of the Biblical echoes in The Hairy Ape are of little significance. Mildred's father is president of Nazareth Steel, an obvious substitute for Bethlehem Steel Company, merely substituting the name of Jesus' boyhood home for that of his supposed birthplace. Mildred, leaving her aunt on deck, says, "Don't pray too hard that I may fall into the fiery furnace." The secretary for the IWW local wants Yank to distribute pamphlets on board ship. "Sow the seed." Long, the socialist stoker, protests, "All men is born free and ekal. That's in the bleedin' Bible, maties. [It isn't, of course.] But what do they care for the Bible--them lazy, bloated swine what travels first class." These passages do not illuminate the play.

However, the desultory chat of the rich church-goers does require examination. Many readers will realize that "dear Doctor Caiaphas" is an allusion to the High Priest who was, at least indirectly, responsible for the death of Christ. Caiaphas told the Jews that because of the explosive political situation it would be to their advantage to sacrifice Jesus rather than risk Roman intervention. In short, the Biblical Caiaphas stands for sacrificing justice to expediency, and so does O'Neill's. The rich people's pastor preached his sermon against "the radicals, my dear--and the false doctrines that are being preached." (In other words, he preached against such groups as the IWW, whose function was to aid men like Yank in their struggle with the Capitalists.)

The proceeds of the proposed "hundred percent American bazaar," it is suggested, can go to "rehabilitating the veil of the temple." In Jewish belief, God was invisibly present in the Temple's Holy of Holies, veiled from mankind by a curtain. He was directly accessible only to the High Priest, who, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, could lift the curtain aside and enter the invisible presence of God. In Christian belief, Christ's sacrificial death "rent the veil in the Temple" in that it opened the way into the direct presence of the deity. By "rehabilitating the veil of the temple," O'Neill's wealthy church-goers would replace the barrier between humanity and God.

In the penultimate scene, Yank has been turned away from the IWW local by members suspicious that he is an agent provocateur. Yank turns his face upward and questions the Man in the Moon. (There is no longer a God to whom man can address his questions.) "Aw hell! I can't see--it's all dark, get me?" Paul, in speaking of the limitations of human knowledge in this earthly life, said, "Now I see as in a glass, darkly. Then [after death, in the presence of God] I shall see face to face." But for Yank and the other apes in the crew there will be no "then." There is no heaven, but there is a hell. A grinning and indifferent cop consigns him to it.

--Ann D. Hughes

THREE EUROPEAN PRODUCTIONS OF THE HAIRY APE

Eugene O'Neill's early plays appealed to those English producers who, being fundamentally interested in experimentation, were seeking a new mode of expression in the theatre. Norman MacDermott first presented O'Neill's plays to Londoners in the Everyman Theatre. The American playwright could not have asked for a better introduction to the British capital; for, in the early twenties, this gloomy little playhouse at Hampden was considered by many playgoers and critics the most serious home of dramatic art in London. Here they could see, in 1921, such one-act plays as In the Zone and Ile and such full-length plays as Diff'rent and Beyond the Horizon (with Raymond Massey as Robert Mayo).

The other producer who early recognized the importance of O'Neill was Peter Godfrey, founder of the Gate Theatre. Interested in the production of unusual plays of literary and dramatic merit, Godfrey staged, in 1926, All God's Chillun Got Wings. In the following year, he presented The Great God Brown for the Stage Society at the Strand Theatre (with John Gielgud as Dion Anthony). Then followed, in 1928, Godfrey's effective and imaginative production of The Hairy Ape. The acting was praised highly by the critics, particularly that of George Merritt who had previously appeared in the small role of the bartender in The Long Voyage Home. "First-rate," "strong," "imaginative," and "explicit" were some of the adjectives used by one critic to describe Merritt's performance as the play's "eponymous" hero. G.W.B. in The Era congratulated producer and actor and wrote about the latter's part that it "had a definitely powerful appeal, in which there was tenderness and beauty. There was real pathos in the picture of this fine, decent, if lumbering, creature trying to 'tink' his way through life and being wounded in the process." Other critics were equally impressed by the whole production and particularly by the acting which, according to the critic of The London Observer of January 29, 1928, reached almost perfection.

Without the excellent interpretations by actors and producers of the Everyman and Gate Theatres, the American playwright may not have found his way to the regular West End theatres quite as easily. For as far as the plays themselves were concerned, there was a general hesitation to accept them wholeheartedly. The critics were often puzzled, but because of the quality of the work in the two theatres, they invariably recommended that their readers go and see the plays and judge for themselves.

It was unfortunate for O'Neill's reputation on the European continent that a number of ill-fated first productions made Europeans wonder about the achievements of the "foremost" American playwright. The presentation of Anna Christie in Berlin (October 9, 1923) had little to recommend it. The German production of The Emperor Jones (January 8, 1924) in the same city also suffered from technical inadequacies and received overwhelmingly bad reviews.

Nevertheless, directors showed continued interest in the American playwright, and through the presentation of The Hairy Ape at the Tribüne in Berlin O'Neill was said to have become "naturalized in Germany." Eugen Robert's production on October 31, 1924, was "a conscientious and sincerely intended attempt." The scenery was "competent, if uninspired;" the stage of the Tribüne, as Monty Jacobs pointed out in the Vossische Zeitung, was too limited for the free development of the scenes on Fifth Avenue or in the stokehole and for some of O'Neill's technical devices. The same critic praised the art of Eugen Klöpfer in the title role and singled out

the union scene for special attention: "With dangling arms and dragging steps, as clumsy and artless as an animal, he opens his heart to these men of the world. When they overpower him and throw him to the ground, his simplicity takes on a savior's traits, the characteristics of a despised cross-bearer." There were other theatre critics who commented on Klöpfer's acting ability, his naiveté and simple emotions, his mental sufferings; but, as in the case of O'Neill's earlier plays, they felt that the German theatre was not being enriched very much and some of them even objected to such American importations.

The Emperor Jones, the first play by O'Neill to be performed in Paris (October 31, 1923) was a complete failure. Firmin Gemier, the recently appointed director of the Odéon, the second National Theatre of France, had enough courage to try out his artistic ideas on a national stage. Anxious to present to the French public each year "an example of American contemporary art," he had, in 1922, made arrangements with the Drama League of America to receive their selection of plays "most suitable for performance in France" and "most representative of the dramatic art of . . . American democracy, sister of the French republic." From the plays submitted Gemier selected The Hairy Ape. In a letter announcing his decision he mentioned that he had asked Maurice Bourgeois to translate the play and concluded that he was "very desirous of working to maintain the bonds of friendship which unite our two continents."

As we know, The Hairy Ape was not the first American play presented at the Odéon, but it was evidently supposed to succeed The Emperor Jones in the following year. There was speculation in the press whether or not, after the failure of Emperor Jones, Gemier would go ahead with his plans for a production of a second play by O'Neill. As the record shows, a performance of The Hairy Ape--or any other play by O'Neill--did not take place until 1929, when Georges Pitoëff staged this play at the Théâtre des Arts.

In this Paris production of The Hairy Ape on September 21, Pitoëff, the Russian-born actor and director, proved to be an indefatigable protagonist in interpreting and emphasizing the symbolic character of O'Neill's work. He played the title role with considerable restraint and a certain monotony of diction. The scene in the stoker's forecabin and the dialogue between the two women on the deck of the ocean liner in particular showed the artistry of which the whole company was capable. Even the spicy low-class language and the play's lack of form could not detract from its "dazzling idealism." Still, the French public reacted to the story of Yank, misunderstood by everyone and outside the law of a mechanized society in which he is destined to live, with total indifference. One puzzled critic, who tried to explain the financial failure of the play, maintained that for the French "social declamations, anarchistic monologues and invectives against established order have not the same sense of novelty or of scandal as they do for the American public" (Illustration, October 19, 1929). The most favorable comment came from André Antoine who, according to Anouita Pitoëff (Ludmilla, ma mère [Juillard, 1955], p. 179), stressed the originality and the power of The Hairy Ape and concluded that Pitoëff's staging had resulted in the presentation of a true masterpiece.

The three early productions of The Hairy Ape in London, Berlin, and Paris have in common that they were presented in small, independent playhouses (Gate Theatre, Tribune, Théâtre des Arts), headed by men with progressive ideas concerning the theatre arts and with a genuine interest in experimentation (Godfrey, Robert, Pitoëff). Most of the actors were hardly known but, to judge from the reviews of the critics, they had the ability

to give convincing presentations of the play's characters. Most important, in each of the three cities, the production of The Hairy Ape created a favorable climate for its author and established him as a dramatist whose plays now became acceptable to some of the larger and more prestigious theatres in England, Germany, and France.

--Horst Frenz

O'NEILL'S STATELY MANSIONS, 1977-1978

Not only do O'Neill's plays span the North American continent; his homes do, too, and two of them are particularly noteworthy. One is Monte Cristo Cottage in New London, Connecticut, the summer home of James O'Neill, Sr., where the young playwright-to-be spent a memorable boyhood that he later recorded in several of his plays. The other is Tao House in Danville, California, not far from San Francisco, which O'Neill built in 1937 with money he received from his 1936 Nobel Prize for literature, and in which he and his wife Carlotta lived until 1944, when he sold it to an Oakland woman. (See Travis Bogard's description of the house in the May 1977 issue of the Newsletter, pp. 3-5.) Appropriately, considering O'Neill's stature in the nation's drama, both houses have received national recognition, and both are currently undergoing restoration that will make them, not only memento-clad memorials to the late playwright, but also centers for future scholarly study and for the nurturing of new dramatic and theatrical talent. The following reports describe recent activities at both houses.

I. Monte Cristo Cottage. O'Neill's boyhood home is a simple structure of modest proportion, undistinguished architecture and appalling construction. Despite these negative aspects, it is a Registered National Historic Landmark because of its profound significance in the life of the O'Neill family, whose ownership extended from 1884 to 1921, when the house and its contents went on auction.

The Eugene O'Neill Center [in nearby Waterbury] persuaded Lawrence White, owner of the Cottage, to sell it to the Center in 1974, giving Mr. White lifetime use of the residence. He passed away early in 1975.

When the White family removed the contents from the dwelling, we realized what we faced, and immediately hired a professional engineer and a prime contractor to survey, measure, make architectural drawings of the entire structure, and outline what measures had to be taken at once before the Cottage fell into irretrievable decline and deterioration. This meant an earnest and frantic effort at fundraising as well as praying for the best possible of New England weather because of the badly leaking roof and the ensuing water damage.

Restoration began in the summer of 1976. The Cottage at present has a new wood shingle roof and a new porch section; every rotted outside clapboard has been replaced, and all barge work, mill work and Victorian ball decorations have been restored or replaced. Problems such as a tree acting as the main support of the sitting room have been resolved and removed. The building inspector informed us that structurally we had "an elephant held up by toothpicks." Therefore, there are now steel underpinnings under the main structure, and triple wooden joists supporting the porch that "wraps halfway around the house." We are about to begin the rewiring and exterior painting and hope that within the twenty-fifth anniversary year of O'Neill's death--or, better, by the celebration of his ninetieth birthday in October 1978--

the Monte Cristo Cottage will reflect both the happy times of Ah, Wilderness! as well as the tragic drama of "the four haunted Tyrones" of Long Day's Journey Into Night.

We sincerely invite all readers to visit the Cottage at 325 Pequot Avenue, New London, Conn. 06320, now or at any time in the future. You may contact me or write to the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, 305 Great Neck Road, Waterford, Conn. 06385. We look forward to seeing as many friends of Eugene O'Neill as possible.

--Sally Thomas Pavetti, Curator

II. Tao House. "The legislative history of Tao House is long and torturous," writes Lois Sizoo, Secretary of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation in Danville. Between 1968 and 1970, three bills were introduced in the U.S. Congress to award the house national recognition and protection, but none was ever voted out of committee. "In May of 1971," the Secretary reports, "Tao House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and in August of 1971 it was included on the list of U.S. Landmarks." But these designations provided neither financial support nor legal protection for the property. It was the companion bills of Congressman George Miller (July 31, 1975) and Senator Allan Cranston (September 24, 1975) and the acquisition of the property by the State of California (September 22, 1976) that led to the designation of Tao House and fourteen surrounding acres as a National Historic Site, in a document signed by President Ford on October 19, 1976.

Though the house and grounds are now the property of the State of California, and the National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior will be involved in the planning, the administration of the site and the development of programs there will be the responsibility of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, whose president is Darlene Blair.

Travis Bogard, a member of the Foundation's board of directors, articulated the group's aspirations in the February 1977 issue of the Foundation's newsletter: "Here, some of us hope, a program can be formed where young actors and writers, designers and directors, have an opportunity to further perfect the disciplines and skills essential to fulfillment of their talents. However reclusive and somber O'Neill was, he was never deaf to the needs of young theatre people to be heard in worthy enterprises by an understanding public."

The first two events to realize that hope, and to provide funds for its further development, were performances at the Tao House site of The Hairy Ape (by the Hanover College Theatre of Indiana in July, 1976; see a report on that performance in this issue), and A Moon for the Misbegotten (by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Association in September, 1977).

On November 29, 1977, the first public meeting on the master plan for Tao House was held in Danville and included members of the Foundation, county and state administrators, and the National Park Service. The main points of discussion were (1) access to Tao House (especially the need for public transportation, since roads and parking facilities are scanty, and local residents, already concerned about "the flow of the curious," do not want Kuss Road to become a pilgrimage parkway); and (2) planning for future activities (who should participate; what size audiences to accommodate; how to fund activities without using tax money; and what additional construction, such as a staging area, should be contemplated). A second meeting will be held early in 1978.

Anyone interested in further information on the past, present and future of Tao House should write to Darlene Blair, Tao House, P.O. Box 402, Danville, CA 94526; or to Ron Mortimer, National Park Service, Box 36063, 450 Golden

Gate Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102. --Ed.

PHOENIX IN PROVINCETOWN

The Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf survived the ashes of a fire that gutted its theater on March 25, 1977, and rose again last summer with a four-play season that included Long Day's Journey Into Night. The choice of an O'Neill play was certainly appropriate, since it was the Provincetown Players' production of Bound East for Cardiff on July 28, 1916 (with the playwright himself in the one-line role of Second Mate) that secured Provincetown's place in American theatrical history.

After the tragic fire on March 25, Elliot Norton recalled some of the theater's history in the Boston Herald American (April 24, 1977, p. A31): "That original theater had no formal name. The Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf was erected years later, dedicated to summer entertainment for visitors, with a strong push by the producers to keep alive O'Neill's plays. There has been more than one management down through the years, some devotees who have hung on year after year against almost unconquerable odds, trying to produce good drama, well played, in a building that seats no more than 100.

"Catherine Huntington of Boston has been involved longest and has had much to do with keeping O'Neill's name alive by producing his plays. There was a time in the thirties and forties when his reputation was at a low ebb. But all during that period, Miss Huntington and her associates kept producing the O'Neill dramas, including the rare ones, in Provincetown. In 31 years, they presented 41 of his plays.

"Fifty years after Bound East for Cardiff and its author were introduced at the original playhouse half a mile away on Commercial Street, they reproduced it in a Eugene O'Neill Festival that also offered Ah, Wilderness!, Moon of the Carribees, A Touch of the Poet, Long Day's Journey Into Night, A Moon for the Misbegotten and Beyond the Horizon. That's an astonishing list for a tiny playhouse on Cape Cod, but Catherine Huntington, with her associates Virginia Thomas and Edward Thommen, managed it.

"Two years ago, Miss Huntington and her friends sold the theater, which was taken over by Lester and Adele Heller of Washington, D.C., who, like their predecessors, are devotees of good drama. They made plans to keep it going and despite some unfortunate hazards were doing pretty well until [March 25], when some local vandals broke into the empty buildings and set them ablaze.

"It looked for a while as if this was the end of the Playhouse on the Wharf and all it stands for. But the people of the old town rallied round to give the Hellers the use of the Town Hall as a theater, with some school-house space for building scenery. So there will be a Provincetown Playhouse as there has been down through the years. That is reason to rejoice."

And the rejoicing can continue, because the Playhouse's 1977 summer season was a success, and a new theatre has already been planned for construction on the same site as the original Provincetown Playhouse.

However, since not only the theater but all of its theatrical equipment was destroyed on March 25, the financial burden has been considerable and the Provincetown, like many another artistic ensemble, is struggling to survive. Persons wishing to make tax-deductible contributions to its support should make checks payable to Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf, Inc., and send them to Provincetown Playhouse, Gosnold Street, Provincetown, MA 02657. --Ed.

A FULL MOON IN MINNEAPOLIS

Four years ago, the third New York revival of A Moon for the Misbegotten became, in Barbara Gelb's words, "the smash dramatic hit of the 1974 season," an event which "does indeed argue for Mystery and Miracle." The phrase seems apt. Even to some devoted O'Neillians, the success of Moon seemed something only divine intervention could accomplish, especially to those of us well west of the Hudson. Later, we heard that this marvelous production would appear on television and that we would be able to witness the Miracle for ourselves.

Alas, for many of us, as for Jordan Y. Miller, writing in the Kansas Quarterly, 7, iv (1975), "the full-length uninterrupted living color performance" did nothing to dispel the Mystery. Like Professor Miller, I, too, "remained displeased, unsatisfied" because "It wasn't working." Unlike him, however, I was not awed by the performance of Jason Robards (although, like Clive Barnes, I did fall in love with Colleen Dewhurst). Yet, Professor Miller's dissatisfactions were mine. At bottom, whatever one felt about the performance, it seemed the play was deeply flawed.

Thus, when I learned a year ago that the excellent Guthrie Theater of Minneapolis was adding A Moon to its 1977 repertory season and, more than that, taking this main stage production on tour in early 1978, I was intrigued. Conscientiously, I included the play in a survey of modern American drama I was teaching, but after spending a week on the play with some bright theater students, I was still dissatisfied with it. Further, the grapevine from Minneapolis assured me that the role of Josie had created casting problems. I began to have some fears for the Guthrie production.

At the theater itself, on a Saturday evening, as I realized it would be a full house, my fears began to ease--something must be right about this production. But when I read that the director, Nick Havinga, was largely a television director, previously under contract for six years to Proctor & Gamble productions, my fears returned. Fortunately, they proved to be without foundation. The Guthrie Theater production of A Moon for the Misbegotten is truly brilliant. I have seldom been as moved by a play as I was that evening. And I was not alone. The entire audience was gripped by the incredible beauty of Eugene O'Neill's last play.

Perhaps if I had seen the Robards-Dewhurst Moon in the theater rather than on TV, I might have been equally moved, but I think not. I believe Jason Robards was miscast and, after seeing the Guthrie production, I believe I can explain why.

How many remember who played Phil Hogan opposite Dewhurst's Josie? Doesn't the director, Jose Quintero, come more readily to mind? (He certainly did to Professor Miller, who referred to the "Quintero-Robards revival" and failed even to mention Miss Dewhurst anywhere in his review.) The point seems clear, then, that the play was seen to focus on the Jamie-Josie relationship. Those are the starring roles. And if one must pick the role, many would choose Jim Tyrone. In Professor Miller's view, Tyrone is the "protagonist," and in Clive Barnes' words, "the real part, the whirlpool part, in the play is that of James Tyrone..." (New York Times, December 31, 1973, p. 32).

This view, I now believe, is a gross misconception, engendered by far too much emphasis on the "autobiographical O'Neill." Thanks to the success of the obviously biographical Long Day's Journey, the massive production of the Gelbs, and the meticulous efforts of Louis Sheaffer, I for one have been too quick to view the "sequel" to Journey through the distorting lens of biography. The simple truth of Nick Havinga's faithful direction is that

James Tyrone, Jr., is not the most important character in Moon. He is not even the second-most important character; Josie's father is. And that is why Robards was miscast. Placing him in the role of Jamie automatically gave the role an importance, a weight, it cannot carry.

The order of priority was clearly visible in the Guthrie curtain call. First out was Peter Michael Goetz, who did a masterful job in the role of Jim Tyrone. He accomplished what I felt Robards was unable to do: make the abrupt shifts in mood that O'Neill demands seem natural rather than forced. More important, Mr. Goetz delivered Jim's major confessional speech in Act III in the manner O'Neill calls for--"His voice becomes impersonal and objective, as though what he told concerned some man he had known, but had nothing to do with him." Unlike Robards, Goetz did not wring every possible ounce of emotion out of those speeches; rather, as O'Neill admonished Richard Bennett in the Horizon rehearsals, he delivered the speeches "as per the text." And it was exactly right.

To deliver Jamie's confession as Robards did, in a manner suitable to Hickey's confession in Iceman, is to force A Moon to appear as misshapen in performance as it does when read through an autobiographical screen. Jamie should not command the stage at that point. His speech is less important than Josie's reaction to it. A Moon is very much her play, hers and her father's.

Richard Russell Ramos, a marvelous character actor in this season's Guthrie company, did an amazing job as Phil Hogan, and was the second to appear in the curtain call. His applause clearly overshadowed Goetz's, not because he is a better actor, but because he was so perfect in the role which is second only to Josie's. It is the father-daughter relationship upon which A Moon so solidly rests, like the rock O'Neill calls for in the stage directions.

When Professor Miller writes that "We have little interest in James Tyrone, Jr., himself a petty figure, whose maudlin confession of his sins creates only disgust and revulsion," he is very close to the truth. We are neither supposed nor allowed to be that interested in Jim Tyrone because he is not the focal point; Josie is. A Moon has not a tragic hero, but a tragic heroine--a fact the Minneapolis audience well recognized when Sharon Ernster finally appeared for the curtain call. Uncannily, she embodies Louis Sheaffer's description of Christine Ell almost to perfection. What other roles future directors may find for Miss Ernster I cannot tell, but it is hard to imagine other roles for which she is so qualified. Outside of her unremarkable height, she is physically right for Josie in every respect and, what is more important, she brought Josie Hogan to incredible life as one of the great tragic heroines of this century.

For A Moon for the Misbegotten is a tragedy, a tragedy of love, of love denied and of love triumphant. Josie Hogan progresses classically through the pattern of purpose, passion, and perception. At first, out to revenge herself on James Tyrone, she learns he is blameless of the crime Phil has accused him of. Then, touched by Jim's ability to see her true nature, she tries to win his love. Confused by his respect, she proceeds to discover and grieve over the utter hopelessness of her love. She suffers over the painful knowledge of Jim Tyrone's sordid, pitiful memories, and then achieves tragic greatness as she is able to go on, despite this knowledge, and give him the love he deserves simply because he is a tortured human being capable of only a single, small act of self-denial. Her depth of love and self-abnegation ennoble her and in the process Jim Tyrone as well. Josie Hogan achieves tragic greatness because she is a genuinely self-sacrificial human being and, hence, deserving of the Madonna-blue

costumes O'Neill calls for (a color which the designer, Lewis Brown, seems to have deliberately avoided, without any loss to his overall effective conception).

Given the excellence of the acting and direction, the few departures from O'Neill's script were not significant. On the full-thrust, three quarter round stage of the Guthrie, there was never a hope that O'Neill's set would be created, but John Conklin's scene design captured the spirit of O'Neill's realistic description beautifully, even though Act II had to occur in the yard. The removable wall, a seeming import from Desire, is not essential. Nor is a cyclorama. The Act IV sunrise was accomplished by changes in the color, direction, and intensity of the lighting while the background remained black. Even so, it was a beautiful sunrise.

Of equal interest was the placement of the traditional Guthrie single intermission. It occurred, not at an act break, but immediately following Hogan's line in Act II, "God forgive me...it's the only way I can see that has a chance now," a procedure which pointed the line most emphatically and permitted the play to run without interruption from Tyrone's entrance until the end. As a consequence, the performance lasted only two-and-one-half hours and gained greatly in intensity.

The Miracle and the Mystery seem less enigmatic now, but not yet fully removed. How could the Quintero revival have been so successful if so wrong? Was it simply a case of Broadway "old-boyism" with the audiences applauding the idea rather than the act? Of one thing I am reasonably sure: A Moon for the Misbegotten owes more, biographically speaking, to Carlotta Monterey than it does to James O'Neill, Jr. Where else but in his last marriage, as O'Neill so often wrote, could he have found the true faith in love which allowed him to create the tragic greatness and beauty of Josie Hogan, a greatness and a beauty which the Guthrie Theater production fully realizes, both to their credit and to O'Neill's.

--Paul D. Voelker

[Richard Eder, in an article reviewing the current Guthrie Theatre repertory in the New York Times (July 21, 1977, p. 23), shared both Professor Voelker's enthusiasm for the performers and his misgivings about the play itself. He particularly liked the way the cast captured Josie's "mercurial strength and vulnerability," Tyrone's "deathly, strained cheerfulness," and the "fine tension" in the nature of Hogan: "He is bent and tricky, a small spring vibrating with calculation and with a tiny, sharp concern for Josie." --Ed.]

DESIRE AT THE ASOLO

The Asolo Theatre, on the grounds of the Ringling Art Museum in Sarasota, is supported by the state of Florida with an equity company directed by Richard Fallon, Dean of the Florida State University School of the Theatre. Built within the medieval castle of Queen Catherine Canaro in 1798 in the little town of Asolo near Venice, it was taken down in 1930 to be replaced by a movie theatre. Fortunately the proscenium arch, the curving decorated walls of the two upper tiers of boxes, the valences at the box openings and other ornamental details were preserved and stored and eventually purchased by the Sarasota Museum to be installed in 1957 in a building similar to the original theatre. Of typical 18th century design with three tiers of boxes, seating some 350, the theatre is said to have been adored by Eleanora Duse,

who spent much time in Asolo, as did Robert Browning, who wrote "Pippa Passes" among its "dew-pearled" hills. (Ironically the Italian province in which Asolo lies is now reconstructing an exact replica of this little architectural gem in Queen Catherine's castle, using the theatre in Florida as model!)

One of the nine plays in the Asolo's 1977 repertory season, Desire Under the Elms, was staged, as O'Neill designed it, on a two-level set with kitchen and parlor below and two bedrooms above. Since a porch at the front rises a foot or more above the stage (the yard) level, the house is raised that much more and makes for craned necks in the front rows of seats. According to the actors it was a difficult set to play on, with its small areas for action and the need to walk from the yard around to the back of the house to enter through the kitchen door or to tramp upstairs (the audience does not see the stairs but hears the footsteps) and down again, as the action moves from one room to another.

In the original production in 1924 at the Greenwich Village Theatre and later at the Earl Carroll Theatre, the setting was much like the Asolo's except that the porch was on stage right instead of between the audience and the house. Also flats were used to cover the unused rooms, necessitating curtain drawing and shifting of scenery not needed in the Asolo production, which revealed all rooms at all times, shifting focus by lighting the action on one or the other. The wooden gate, which in the original was stage center, supported by stone walls along the footlights, was moved to the side by Asolo, but was as effectively ripped off by the two brothers on their way to California.

To enter briefly the argument about the worth of Desire, if I were playing the old game of what three works of an author would you save if all the others were lost, I would choose Long Day's Journey, Iceman, and Desire. Melodramatic it is, but so are the myths of Phaedra and Oedipus. Living on his estate in Ridgefield, Connecticut (unlike the Cabot farm but with stone walls around it), O'Neill somehow caught the spirit of hard Ephraim Cabot, and already knew familial hatreds from his own life.

Perhaps Arthur Miller, a quarter of a century later, took a page from O'Neill's book when he designed Willy Loman's house on two levels with bedroom above and kitchen below. (Describing the past he says, "Brooklyn was gigantic elms ...") But he gave the actors freedom to move through the walls to dramatize at stage front Willy's memories of the past, whereas Eben's Maw remains a ghost. Even though Desire is thoroughly naturalistic in style, however, I would urge modern directors to use a half century's experience of stage techniques to bring the play to life in a new setting. True, the crowded, tiny rooms convey the restricted life of a New England farm, but much might be gained by moving the action into the open and conveying the "sickly grayish" walls by innovative lighting. The play, which was finely performed by the Asolo Company, is worthy of the best that modern techniques can bring to it.

--Winifred Frazer

THE EMPEROR JONES RETURNS TO NEW YORK CITY

New York's Perry Street Theater opened its 1977-78 season last fall with a highly-praised production of The Emperor Jones, directed by Donald J. Schulte, with an Afro-Cuban score by Eric Diamond and ritual-dance choreography by Randy Thomas. Holly Hill, in the New York Theatre Review (December

1977, p. 40), described designers Sara Denning and Willy Corpus's effective use of the theater's "small, red-brick-sided rectagle": "With just a few trappings--stringy muslin webs and paper mache masks on the walls, pin-point-accurate red, blue, gold and white lighting--and an asymmetrical audience seating arrangement, [they] have created the alien, stifling atmosphere of O'Neill's West Indian island. Stationing natives in shadowy positions behind the audience helps to carry it along on the pursuit of the Emperor as he flees his people's uprising."

Rob Baker, reviewing the production in After Dark (November 1977, p. 94), praised the acting of Rodney Hudson (Jones) and Philip Karnell (Smithers) as "exemplary, showing just the right mix of control and barbaric yawp necessary for O'Neill." Mel Gussow's review in the New York Times (September 23, 1977, p. C5) had particular praise for Hudson's portrayal of Jones: "Placing his knuckles on his hips and raising his bearded, imperious face, he conveys Brutus Jones's haughtiness and dignity without sacrificing the man's craze for self-preservation, his incipient cowardice....With some of the king-size humor and exuberance of James Earl Jones, Mr. Hudson makes us feel his character's radiant confidence, a healthy conceit that carries the actor over the shoals of O'Neill's rocky dialect. There is a feeling of comic imposture--putting on for the white man--in his use of 'dat' and 'dem.' As he flees through the forest, beleaguered by his guilt and by monstrous night forces--a choreographed chase--he communicates the character's insane imbalance. In the end, as his name indicates, the emperor is his own Brutus, his own destroyer."

THE HAIRY APE ENTERTAINS AT TAO HOUSE

As a special fund-raising event for the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, The Hairy Ape became the first drama to be staged at O'Neill's former home. Tao House offers several playing spaces of real potential. In a production by the Hanover College Theatre from Indiana, the play was staged in the courtyard of the house, under the long balcony that provided the necessary upper stage for Mildred and her mother.

The coming of the play to Danville was the result of a visit a member of the Tao House Board of Directors made to an interesting gathering, The Wabash (Indiana) College Eugene O'Neill Festival. There assembled, several of the smaller Indiana colleges had created a festival of some distinction, which offered to the participants and the general public an opportunity to witness several plays, each staged by a different college, to see videotapes of other plays and to hear lectures and informal talks on the plays and on O'Neill's place in American theatre and literature.

It was a simple occasion, but one which had an importance far beyond its modest pretensions. Especially compelling was The Hairy Ape, staged by Tom G. Evans, a member of the Hanover Theatre faculty. The play was simply mounted in a rebar iron cage which could quickly change its contours as needed to become the stokehole, the mannequin's window, the jail or the cage. With a kind of Brechtian detachment, at the end of each scene, the actors dropped their roles, changed the shape of the cage, and then, at a signal, recommenced the play.

Central to the effective presentation was the performance of Jim Baird as Yank. Baird had been a weight-lifter in his early college days, but, as he matured and found in theatre material of importance to him, he turned away from pumping iron. He had the physique and the sensitivity to make Yank work. With imagination and considerable daring, he brought the play

to a tragic level that was ably supported by the young actors who rounded out the cast. Since the cage was eminently portable, a tour was arranged for University of California theatres and for three performances at Tao House. There, under a fortunately full moon which bettered Belasco in the seventh scene, Yank's drama contrasted strangely with the elegant lines of the wisteria-clad house.

The play sold out for the length of its run and was reviewed with enthusiasm. All who saw it felt it to be an auspicious debut for drama at Tao House.

THE MILWAUKEE REP'S DYNAMIC DUO

The Milwaukee Repertory Theater Company's Eugene O'Neill project (see p. 14 of Newsletter's September issue) is now in full swing. Long Day's Journey Into Night opened on November 4 and Ah, Wilderness! on November 18. The two productions will be in repertory in Milwaukee until January 22, 1978. Two days later, a nine-state, six-week road tour will begin with initial performances at the University of Iowa and at Iowa State University. Director of both productions is Irene Lewis of the Hartford (Conn.) Stage Company. The set, modeled on the sun room of the Monte Cristo cottage, is by R. H. Graham; the costumes by Susan Tsu; lighting by Arden Fingerhut. Playing parallel parts are Robert Burr as James Tyrone, Sr. and Nat Miller; Regina David as Mary Tyrone and Essie Miller; Anthony Heald as Edmund and Richard; Ronald Frazier as Jamie and Uncle Sid; and Rose Pickering as Cathleen and Norah. In addition, Kristie Thatcher doubles as Richard's temptresses, Muriel and Belle, in Ah, Wilderness!

As a result of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, an unprecedented award to a resident theater company, the MRT has been able to arrange for a number of special projects to surround these productions. First of all, Paul Voelker, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin Center, Marshfield/Wood County, is on a year's leave of absence to serve as O'Neill consultant in residence at the MRT and to coordinate the other phases of the project. Advising him are members of a national advisory committee composed of Bernard Beckerman, Travis Bogard, Robert Corrigan, Horst Frenz, Esther M. Jackson and Frederick Wilkins.

The first visible result of the project has been the publication of a special issue of the MRT's subscriber magazine Prologue, containing specially commissioned, original articles on the two plays. (A list of the contents appears later in this issue, in note #2.) The second result is a photo-essay lobby display of the Monte Cristo cottage and New London, Conn., by the noted performing arts photographer Sandy Underwood. Next, a 30-minute television program has been made on O'Neill, New London, the two plays, and the productions, including scenes of the actors at the Monte Cristo cottage. This program is appearing on Milwaukee television and on stations along the tour route. It will later be available for classroom use.

In addition to editing Prologue and advising on the television project, Voelker has arranged a series of post-performance audience discussions involving MRT production personnel and members of the national advisory committee, as well as other invited scholars. Besides discussants from the fields of English and theater, scholars in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, American history, sociology, anthropology and film have agreed to participate. Voelker will also be going along on the road tour to participate in symposia, talk with local community groups, and arrange post-performance discussions.

Both productions were lauded by Dominique Paul Noth, drama critic of the Milwaukee Journal (November 5 and 19, 1977), who noted, both in the Journal and in a piece on both plays in the New York Theatre Review (January 1978, p. 34), the reverberating echoes that back-to-back performances of these two works create, somewhat lightening the tragedy and adding interesting shadows to the comedy. "Ms. Lewis is certainly right," says Noth, "in finding a lot of humor in Long Day's Journey and a lingering edge of darkness in the Fourth of July lilt of Ah, Wilderness!"

The project looks to be enormously successful and has already done a great deal to increase public appreciation of O'Neill's work in particular and of drama in general. Comments by participants can be expected in a future issue of the Newsletter.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, ABSTRACTS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. DAT OLE DAVIL SONG: A MINI-CONTEST. There's a song that Chris sings and whistles in the first act of Anna Christie and sings again in the third act: "My Yosephine, come board de ship.

Long time Ay wait for you.

De moon, she shi-i-ine.

She looka yust like you.

Tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee, tchee-tchee."

All he says about the song is that he learned it from an "Italian fallar" on another barge. Would he had said more, for the song is hard to locate. In response to a subscriber's query, the editor offers a free one-year Newsletter subscription to the first reader to send in a copy of the melody and complete lyrics to "Yosephine." Information on the song's origin would also be appreciated. Please: no new melodies! We do want the original.

2. AN OFFER TO NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS. The November 1977 issue of Prologue, a six-times-a-year publication of the Milwaukee Rep, is devoted to the two O'Neill plays the company is currently staging, Ah, Wilderness! and Long Day's Journey Into Night. Edited by Richard Bryant with literary supervision by Paul Voelker, it is a handsome and valuable publication. Its 32 pages are packed with photographs--of Monte Cristo Cottage (exteriors, the front parlor, the bannister which Eugene defaced with the letters M. C., the spare room that looms so ominously above the living room in Long Day's Journey, and father and sons sitting on the porch); of the family (James and Ella Quinlan O'Neill, Eugene and Carlotta); and of New London (seaside scenes, "Beach Day" crowds early in the century, and the Pequot Avenue lighthouse, whose foghorn so memorably punctuates the action of Long Day's Journey). Besides its pictorial brilliance, the volume features a number of new articles on O'Neill and the two plays: "At Home in New London," by Louis Sheaffer; "Monte Cristo Cottage: The Restoration," by Sally Pavetti; "Dreams of Joy, Dreams of Pain," by Travis Bogard; "Two Sides of an American Past," by John Henry Raleigh; "Long Day's Journey: The First Performance," by Horst Frenz; and "O'Neill in Repertory: A Chance and a Challenge," by Frederick Wilkins.

The MRTC has offered to provide one free copy (free except for postage) for every Newsletter subscriber who requests one. (Postage within the U.S.: 60¢ for first class, 30¢ for third class. Postage outside the U.S.: \$1.50.) To get your copy, send your name and address, and the

postage fee applicable to you, to "O'Neill Newsletter Offer," Suffolk University, Boston, MA 02114. You will be sent a copy as soon as they arrive from Milwaukee. Since supplies are limited, this offer is available to subscribers only--though of course anyone who includes a subscription check with his request will qualify as a recipient!

3. William J. Scheick, in "The Ending of O'Neill's Beyond the Horizon" (Modern Drama, September 1977, pp. 293-298), offers a well-reasoned response to the many critics who find the play's last scene structurally unconnected, unresolvedly ambiguous, or unconvincingly affirmative. As for structure, the final scene provides a coda for the "death motif" that spans the play (not only the physical deaths of Mayo, Mrs. Mayo, Mary and ultimately Robert; but the many smaller, intellectual and emotional "deaths" that the play shows life to be--"a recurrent experience of dying"--an experience underscored by an emphasis on a different major character's "deadness" at the end of each act). As for lack of resolution, the play traces the destruction of a self-deluded dreamer, Robert, whose eloquent description of his dream in Act I (which really comprises little more than "elusive abstractions") is, after the experiences of Acts II and III, "fragmented and brokenly articulated." Since O'Neill is stressing "the ultimate unknowableness... of life in general," complete resolution of the play's "problem" would be impossible. As for Robert's last-scene affirmation being unconvincing, it must be, says Scheick, since O'Neill's point is that "the meaning, mystery or secret of existence remains beyond the horizon of human life, language and dreams." Hence the "tendency toward silence" that Scheick traces throughout the play. [If Robert is a lover and poet in Act I, he seems to complete the Shakespearean triad by becoming a lunatic in his last hours. This is not Scheick's contention, but his stimulating essay can give rise to such an inference. --Ed.]
4. Halina Filipowicz-Findlay, of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Kansas, is the author of Eugene O'Neill (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1975; 296 pp.), the first and only book on O'Neill in Polish. The first chapter is biographical; the second treats the American theatrical situation at the time O'Neill's career began; nine chapters are devoted to detailed analyses of O'Neill's major plays; and a last chapter describes Polish radio, television and theatrical productions of O'Neill's works. The book contains 25 illustrations, and its bibliography includes a list of ten essays on O'Neill published in Poland between 1948 and 1974. Ms. Filipowicz-Findlay is currently preparing an essay on the reception of O'Neill's plays in Poland. It will appear in the September 1978 issue of the Newsletter, and is eagerly awaited by the editor, whose first exposure to A Moon for the Misbegotten was at the Teatr Nowy in Łódź in 1967.
5. DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS.
 - a. "Eugene O'Neill: The Philos-Aphilos of a Mother's Eternal Son" is the dissertation topic of Judith W. B. Williams, who is completing a Ph.D. in Acting and Directing at the University of Michigan. Ms. Williams offers the following report on her study:

"The purpose of this study is to posit the hypothesis that the Philos-Aphilos (love-hate) relationship between Eugene O'Neill and his mother, and its dramatic ramifications, will provide a new focus

for the critical-analytical exploration of the O'Neill canon. The study will answer the following questions: Why was the mother-son relationship chosen? Can this ambivalent relationship be shown to be the fountainhead of many of O'Neill's emotional problems? Is there adequate evidence in the canon of his plays to support this viewpoint? What insights would an in-depth exploration of this relationship and its various dramatic manifestations reveal?

"The published canon of O'Neill's plays will be chronologically analyzed. Those plays which can be shown to be strongly influenced by O'Neill's intense Philos-Aphilos feelings towards his mother will be closely examined. Are they influenced by symbolism, characterization, and/or plot construction? What are the dramatic and theatrical results of this influence?

"O'Neill's working out of this emotional love-hate duality through the medium of his plays will provide a clearly discernible thematic interpretation of the canon of his plays."

- b. Alice J. Kellman, Assistant Editor of The Drama Review, is completing a Ph.D. in Drama at New York University with a dissertation documenting the New York productions of the Provincetown Players. In the course of her research she completed a 70-page report on the very first productions of The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape, dealing with theme, structure, parallels with German Expressionist works, the theatre itself, and the set designs, and concluding with a description of the only available production photographs. Newsletter readers may expect a summary of that report, and of Ms. Kellman's dissertation, in future issue.
6. James A. Robinson, whose essay on "Christianity and All God's Chillun Got Wings" will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter, is presently engaged in a new O'Neill project and would welcome the assistance of knowledgeable O'Neillians: "I am currently conducting research on Oriental philosophy in O'Neill's plays from 1920 to 1930, and would greatly appreciate any information concerning specific sources, i.e., which texts and editions of Oriental sacred literature O'Neill read. (He admitted on several occasions that he had indeed read a substantial amount of it, but never got very specific.)" Anyone with pertinent information can contact Professor Robinson at the Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742.
7. Richard R. Centing, editor of Serials Review and the newsletter, Under the Sign of Pisces: Anais Nin and Her Circle, has sent in a copy of the program for the 1968 Circle in the Square production of A Moon for the Misbegotten, directed by Theodore Mann and starring Salone Jens, Mitchell Ryan and W. B. Brydon. He'd like to offer it to a collector of O'Neilliana, and the editor will happily send it to the first subscriber who requests it. Many thanks, Professor Centing.
8. Another chapter in the O'Neill family biography closed tragically just before midnight last June 22, when Shane O'Neill, son of the playwright and Agnes Boulton O'Neill, jumped to his death from the fourth floor of a Brooklyn apartment building. (Twenty-seven years before, in 1950, his older half-brother, Eugene O'Neill, Jr., had also committed suicide.) Summarizing the biography of Shane, in an article revealing the suicide in the New York Times (December 7, 1977, p. 42), Richard F. Shepard noted

that, though O'Neill had specifically disinherited both Shane and his sister Oona (whose husband, Charlie Chaplin, died on December 25), Shane's legacy from his father was considerable: "The issues that ran through so many of O'Neill's plays--alcohol, drugs, insecurity and a certain sense of entrapment by one's roots--seem to have dominated the life of the son. He had taken to drink, tried narcotics and suicide and had drifted through life in perplexity about what role he might play in the world."

9. RECENT, CURRENT AND FORTHCOMING O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS
(exclusive of those mentioned elsewhere in this issue).

The Great God Brown, dir. E. Baierlein. Germinal Theatre, Denver, Fall 1977. (Barbara Mackay praised the cut but "stunning" production in the December 1977 New York Theatre Review, p. 32:

"Clear plastic masks are used and are unusually effective. Without obscuring the actors' faces, the masks completely alter each individual's features enough to suggest total transformation."

Long Day's Journey Into Night, dir. F. Wittow. Academy Theatre, Atlanta, March 23 - April 21, 1978.

Marco Millions, dir. Tom Haas. Playmakers Repertory Company, Chapel Hill, N. C., March 16 - April 2, 1978.

A Moon for the Misbegotten (ubiquitous!):

- a. Intiman Theatre Company, Seattle; dir. M. Booker. Ended on October 15, 1977.
- b. Oregon Shakespeare Festival production, at Tao House, September 24 and 25, 1977. (Performed in front of the old barn, an SRO smash like The Hairy Ape before it.)
- c. Cohoes Music Hall, New York State; dir. Tom Greunewald. December 31, 1977 - January 22, 1978.
- d. Worcester (Mass.) Foothills Theatre Company, January 11-29, 1978.
- e. Berkeley (Cal.) Repertory Theatre; dir. M. Leibert. April 21 - May 28, 1978.

Sea Plays, dir. Arvin Brown. Long Wharf Theatre, New Haven, Conn., March 9 - April 9, 1978. Tel. (203) 787-4282.

A Touch of the Poet, dir. Jose Quintero. Helen Hayes Theatre, NYC. Current. Tel. (212) 246-6380.

PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

VIRGINIA FLOYD, Professor of English at Bryant College, directed one of the two seminars on O'Neill at the 1977 MLA Convention in Chicago last December--an event that she will summarize in the next issue of the Newsletter. She has been invited to speak on O'Neill's late plays at the American section of the International Literary Seminar in Debrecen, Hungary, in September 1978.

WINIFRED FRAZER, Professor of English at the University of Florida, directed an O'Neill seminar at the 1975 MLA Convention in San Francisco, and is the author of Love As Death in "The Iceman Cometh": A Modern Treatment of an Ancient Theme (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967) and important essays on Anna Christie, The Iceman Cometh and other plays of O'Neill.

HORST FRENZ, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Indiana University, is the author of Eugene O'Neill, trans. Helen Sebba (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1971), and of numerous articles on world theatre, especially European productions of O'Neill and other American playwrights. He is editor of American Playwrights on Drama (New York: Hill and Wang, 1965).

MICHAEL HINDEN, Associate Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, teaches modern drama and has published a variety of essays on twentieth-century playwrights and the nature of tragedy. His O'Neill contributions include "The Birth of Tragedy and The Great God Brown" (Modern Drama, September 1973, pp. 129-140), "Liking O'Neill" (Forum, Winter 1974, pp. 59-66), and "Desire Under the Elms: O'Neill and American Romance" (Forum, forthcoming).

ANN D. HUGHES, Assistant Professor of English at Suffolk University, Boston, is Co-ordinator of Suffolk's Freshman English program and teaches two courses in the Bible as literature. A 1977 lecture, "Women in the Bible," won her high acclaim. She has published essays in Discourse and the Saturday Review.

SALLY THOMAS PAVETTI, Curator of Monte Cristo Cottage in New London, is currently supervising the arduous efforts to restore the home to its 1912 state. Her guided tour of the cottage makes a visit to New London a most delightful and informative experience for any lover of O'Neill. Her article in this issue is reprinted from Prologue (November 4, 1977), a publication of the Milwaukee Repertory Theater Company.

PAUL D. VOELKER, Assistant Professor of Drama at the University of Wisconsin Center in Marshfield, is spending the current academic year as consultant to the Milwaukee Rep's O'Neill project, which is described in this issue of the Newsletter. His previous work on O'Neill was summarized in the September issue (pp. 4-6).

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* * *

PAPERS SOUGHT. Professor Vera Jiji is organizing a special session on "Love in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill" for the December 1978 MLA Convention in New York City. Persons with ideas or papers should contact Professor Jiji immediately at the Department of English, Brooklyn College of the City of New York, 11210.

A NOTE TO CURRENT SUBSCRIBERS.

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--F.W.

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