1978

The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter, vol. 2, no.1, 1978

Eugene O'Neill Society

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CHRISTIANITY AND ALL GOD'S CHILLUN GOT WINGS

Commentators on Eugene O'Neill's All God's Chillun Got Wings have always sharply contested the play's conclusion, in which the black protagonist exhibits an "ecstasy of religious humility" as he discerns God's benevolent hand in the psychosis of his bigoted white wife. In one camp are critics like Edwin Engel, who claims that the ending unconvincingly abstracts the religious experience out of a play whose subjects are racism and madness. In the other camp are those who agree with Eugene Waith that intentional irony drenches the conclusion, that Jim Harris' discovery of God is an instance "where utter defeat presents itself to him in the guise of victory," and that his self-deception disqualifies him as a tragic hero. But Engel, Waith and their supporters have overlooked a decisive factor in this controversy—the role which religion plays throughout the play. Close inspection reveals that racism, madness and Christianity are closely connected in Act One, making the conclusion perfectly consistent with the play's materials; and the attack on the Church also implicates the protagonist, who is trapped in a religious illusion that the play views as a subtle product of a racist society.

O'Neill's hostility toward Christianity, indeed toward all organized religion, is apparent in his life and other works. Lapsing from Roman Catholicism at fifteen, the playwright searched for substitute faiths for much of his adult life; but neopaganism, Orientalism, Nietzsche's gospel of the Superman, and Freud's doctrine of the unconscious were certainly not conventional religions, and never gained his whole-hearted acceptance anyway. His one return to Christianity, coincidental with the composition of Days Without End (in which the autobiographical hero rediscovers Christ at the conclusion), was only temporary, and perhaps attempted more for the sake of Carlotta Monterey than himself. Finally, the O'Neill plays written
around the same time as Chillun, in the early Twenties, reveal either deliberate ignoring or debunking of the Church. The Baptist religion of Emperor Brutus Jones is no protection against his subconscious demons; Yank in The Hairy Ape never considers turning to Jehovah to replace the faith previously placed in steel; the Puritanism of Ephraim Cabot is cold and cruel; the ascetic Christian side of Dion Anthony tortures him, and only the pagan Cybel brings him peace. Thus, Chillun's attack on Christianity as both social institution and shaper of values is consistent with O'Neill's general attitude toward the Church revealed elsewhere.

The most obvious assault on Christianity occurs in the expressionistic setting of the wedding scene which concludes Act One. Throughout the act a corner in lower Manhattan, with blacks populating one street and whites another, has stood as an emblem of segregation and racial barriers. But when the scene shifts to a street before the church where Jim weds Ella, the setting comes to life to express the Church's complicity in the racism of both races. Society's hostility to the marriage is symbolized by opposing lines of whites and blacks, "staring across at each other with bitter hostile eyes" (319), and by similarly opposing tenements, with drawn shades which give "an effect of staring, brutal eyes that pry callously at human beings without acknowledging them" (318). The Church, supposed to champion love, has surrendered to this hatred, for "even the two tall, narrow church windows on either side of the arched door are blanked with dull green shades" (318). After the newlyweds emerge from the church, "the doors slam behind them like wooden lips of an idol that has spat them out" (319-20). Institutional Christianity thus offers no encouragement or even protection to the young couple; instead, it joins in the larger society's hatred and distrust of those who cross racial lines.

But Christianity is not only externalized in the setting of Act One; it is internalized in the character of Jim. The connection of the Christian values of self-sacrifice and worship with a neurotic, self-defeating personality subtly broadens the attack on the Church. Even before the wedding, Jim's mental unbalance appears: when Ella accepts his marriage proposal, he vows to be "your black slave that adores you as sacred" and "in a frenzy of self-abnegation, as he says the last words he beats his head on the flagstones" (318). After the ceremony, as he successfully guides her through the opposing racial lines, a "hysteric quality of ecstasy breaks into his voice" (320). Marriage to a demented woman who vacillates between childishness and maniacal racism, and repeated failures to pass his bar exam due to his racial inferiority complex, strain Jim enormously; and he hysterically embraces religion again after his final failure. In the last scene his earlier self-abnegation and ecstasy return as, raising "his shining eyes, his transfigured face" to the sky, he shouts "Forgive me, God—and make me worthy! . . . Now I hear Your voice! . . . Let this fire of burning suffering purify me of selfishness and make me worthy of the child You send me for the woman You take away!" (342) The play ends with Jim's vow, in his "ecstasy of religious humility," to "play right up to the gates of Heaven" with the infantile Ella (342). Jim's religious intensity at this point should hardly surprise any close reader of the play; and the portraying of Christian prayer and self-sacrifice as the desperate act of a neurotic, insecure man is a bitter, pointed comment on Christianity itself.

There is thus substantial internal evidence to support Waith's assertion that Jim pathetically deludes himself at the conclusion. In addition, the ending reinforces the connection established earlier between racism and Christianity. For the white man has always found the Christian virtues of humility, passive obedience, and acceptance of suffering to be convenient instruments for persuading the black to accept his oppression. Jim, in
accepting his final role as a slave to a white woman, appropriately calls on God to justify his position to himself. Ultimately duped by his own racism and religion into a childish posture similar to that of Ella, Jim is a tragicomic character who remains under his foolish illusions as the play ends. And the institution and precepts of Christianity, the play makes clear, bear some responsibility for his pitiful plight.


4 Travis Bogard notes that both O'Neill and Carlotta acknowledged the play to be "more hers than his." (Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill [New York, 1972], p. 305); not coincidentally, Carlotta desired that O'Neill return to the Catholic faith.

--James A. Robinson

CONRAD AND O'NEILL AS PLAYWRIGHTS OF THE SEA

In 1914 Clayton Hamilton, drama editor for The Bookman and Vogue and teacher of playwriting at Columbia University, counselled O'Neill to use his first-hand knowledge of the sea to initiate a new kind of drama: "'There had been several novelists of the sea and poets of the sea—Mr. Conrad and Mr. Kipling and Mr. Masquefield, for example—but there never yet had been a dramatist of the sea.'" There is a pleasant, and minor, irony in the fact that earlier in the year The Smart Set had published a brief one-act play by Joseph Conrad about a sailor. But of course, even without hindsight, Hamilton was correct: Conrad's few plays (written at mid-career) were failures, both in production and as published works. The dramatist of the sea was yet to emerge.

Because O'Neill had been an enthusiastic reader of Conrad's work since high school and for the rest of his life enjoyed talking about favorite novels, it is possible that he might have read Conrad's play, "One Day More." Certainly by 1917 O'Neill was familiar with The Smart Set since he sent three plays there that year; and it is likely that in 1914 as an aspiring author engaged in an intense program of literary activity, both reading and writing, he would have seen copies of this important magazine. Himself a beginning dramatist, he would not have passed over a first play by one of his favorite authors.

O'Neill may or may not have read "One Day More." It is interesting to note, however, the coincidence of a striking similarity between Conrad's play and the three by O'Neill which appeared a few years later in The Smart Set: "One Day More" prefigures themes present in "The Long Voyage Home," "Ile," and "The Moon of the Caribees," and to some extent there are even similarities in technique. Now O'Neill's plays are judged the "most distinguished" of the one-hundred and ten plays to appear in The Smart Set.
during the editorship of H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan (1914-1923), but that perception may be colored somewhat by O'Neill's subsequent career. Conrad's play is, in fact, not much worse than "Ile" (and "Ile" is, conversely, a very Conradian piece); had "One Day More" been printed under O'Neill's name, it would be difficult to disprove authorship. Despite strong similarities, however, there are some important differences, which serve to suggest why O'Neill went on to become an accomplished playwright and Conrad returned to fiction.

First, the similarities. "One Day More" deals with a situation in which a woman is driven to the edge of madness by the self-absorption of the man to whom she is most closely joined: Bessie Carvil, kept in filial bondage to her blind father, finds solace talking with her neighbor, the "mad" Captain Hagberd, who for sixteen years has awaited the dutiful return of his runaway son, Harry. Hagberd's sole occupation has been furnishing an inland house for this sailor son and selecting an appropriate bride, the gentle, isolated Bessie. When Harry finally returns, he is not recognized by his father and, in any case, does not want either the possessions or the bride because they would hamper his nautical freedom. Harry returns to sea, leaving Bessie on land, broken-hearted and near madness, while Hagberd persists in his illusory hope and Carvil continues his tyranny. The similarity between themes in "One Day More" and "Ile" is striking: isolation, monomania, madness, the opposition of sea and land, the destruction of women by oppressive or careless men; and both plays end with theatrical effects intended to suggest this destruction (O'Neill's Mrs. Keeney, alone on stage, playing the organ "wildly and discordantly"; Conrad's Bessie, alone on stage, surrounded by lightning and thunder). "The Long Voyage Home" also resembles "One Day More" in its ironic treatment of the theme of a wandering son's frustrated return to his paternal home. "The Moon of the Caribees" duplicates Conrad's portrayal of life at sea and the character of seamen: rough and ready singers of chanties who feel that roots and land hinder but the sea's fluidity frees, and that women, belonging to the land, ought to be loved and left.

Aside from "The Moon of the Caribees," which is something of a mood piece, there is a formal similarity between Conrad's play and O'Neill's. "Ile," "The Long Voyage Home," and "One Day More" are like dramatized short stories: a single anecdote which focuses on the moment of climax of an action extending into the past and beginning to reach its critical point as the play opens; and in all cases that climax involves a reversal or denial of hope (Bessie will never escape her father; Hagberd will never be reunited with his son; Mrs. Keeney will never be free from the cold, the ice, the brutality; Olson will never return home). With no incongruity, "One Day More" might have joined the volume of O'Neill's sea plays collected in 1919.

But there are also differences. Probably the most important difference lies in the fact that a single play of Conrad's contains material O'Neill distributed through three separate plays. "One Day More" is packed with generalized human problems which O'Neill treats selectively and gives more individualized development. Aside from a few petulant remarks, neither Carvill nor Hagberd demonstrates the tyranny Bessie and Harry feel; but O'Neill shows us Captain Keeney in brutal conflict with his men, shows us the very moment of his heartless refusal to abandon the oil and return home even though isolation is driving his wife mad. The tyrant master, the tyrant husband is itself something of a cliche, but O'Neill supplies scenes to make the tyranny believable. A second important difference between the two writers is the fact that Conrad requires very little physical action: for the most part, his characters sit and talk or walk up and down and talk; O'Neill, with much more sense of drama, provides fights, dances, various groupings of characters on stage utilizing stage properties (bottles of rum,
pieces of paper, baskets of fruit): movement, color, action. O'Neill also establishes a strong and functional sense of place: a bar with its regulars described in detail; a moonlit island which is itself almost a character; a frozen sea, analogue of the frozen heart. By contrast, Conrad's "town" with its nearby "sea-wall" has very little specificity. In short, Conrad's play sketches, O'Neill's plays dramatize.

What makes Conrad a master of fiction (and he is unquestionably that) prevents him from being a good playwright: as Marlow says, of another character in Chance, "'The inwardness of what was passing before his eyes was hidden from him who had looked on, more impenetrably than from me who at a distance of years was listening to his words.'" Here are the elements of Conrad's genius: inwardness, distance, listening to the words. These constitute the private drama of fiction. But O'Neill, even in his early plays, is master of the public drama of theatre: the sight, the sound, the action, the detail that makes themes and relationships pass before our very eyes as we look on.


2Gelb, pp. 79f.

3The Gelbs print a conversation reconstructed from O'Neill's days at the Hell Hole in which he expresses surprise that Slim has not heard of Conrad and urges him to read The Nigger of the Narcissus (p. 351). Louis Sheaffer, in O'Neill: Son and Artist (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), indicates that O'Neill had read nearly all of Conrad and refers to a conversation in the mid-1940's when O'Neill apparently quoted from Lord Jim from memory (pp. 28, 604).

4Conrad's attempts at playwriting were collected in 1934 under the title Three Plays: Laughing Annie, One Day More, The Secret Agent. Only the last two were produced: "One Day More" by the Stage Society on June 25, 1905 (although Shaw liked it, Conrad himself considered the play a failure, as he indicated in a letter to Galsworthy); "The Secret Agent" on November 3, 1922 (also a failure). "One Day More" was published in The Smart Set in February, 1914, and as a separate volume by Doubleday in 1920.

5Louis Sheaffer, O'Neill: Son and Playwright (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1968), p. 392. "The Long Voyage Home" (which had been previously published as a book) was published in The Smart Set in October, 1917; "Ile" and "The Moon of the Caribees" appeared in the May 1918 issue. (Conrad's play, "One Day More," although appearing in The Smart Set at the beginning of the Mencken/Nathan editorship, had actually been secured for publication by the previous editor, W. H. Wright.)

6"One Day More" was, in fact, a dramatization of Conrad's story "Tomorrow." O'Neill, of course, had practiced turning short stories into plays in George Pierce Baker's playwriting course at Harvard.


--Kristin Morrison
There is no dearth of analyses of Eugene O'Neill's early and late periods of critical and theatrical success. Few explanations have been given, however, for the so-called "great O'Neill silence" from 1934 to 1956, when the playwright and his work were almost entirely rejected and neglected in this country. Americans will patronize a Resurrection, shun a Gethsemane. Those sensitive to the needs of the creative artist may commiserate with O'Neill for the dark days of those last two decades. How difficult and discouraging they must have been for him, living as he was in theatrical limbo. How monumental was his courage to continue writing for some more appreciative American posterity. The question that should be raised here is: did he indeed have this intention?

O'Neill never essayed the role of American crowd-pleaser. If his final bequest of the last great plays to the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm is any indication of his reaction to prevailing attitudes in this country, he had probably given up any hope for change here. The reports reaching him from time to time of successful European productions provided some encouragement. Obviously, he must have pondered his situation: vine leaves abroad, thorns at home. Some knowledgeable American scholars have given this paradox the serious thought it deserves for what it tells us about ourselves as a people. But a much larger group are not aware of how well O'Neill plays in Europe and has played there consistently from the early 1920's to the present, even during the twenty-two-year period when Americans were ignoring him.

In the past, American O'Neill scholars have had few, if any, opportunities to exchange ideas with their European counterparts. O'Neill specialists on both sides of the Atlantic have had to work, so to speak, in a vacuum, often unaware of scholarly efforts of those outside their national sphere. In an attempt to rectify this situation and promote direct dialogue on an international level, I organized a session, "A European Perspective of Eugene O'Neill," for the 1977 MLA Convention.

A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities made it possible to bring three distinguished European O'Neill scholars to this country to participate in this session: Tom Olsson, author of the recently published O'Neill and the Royal Dramatic and curator of the library at the Royal Dramatic; Timo Tiusanen, author of O'Neill's Scenic Images and Professor of Theatre Research at the University of Helsinki; and Peter Egri, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Budapest, author of The History of the European Drama at the Turn of the Century and a study in progress of the extraordinary outburst of dramatic creativity in the United States during and since World War I, with O'Neill as its central focus.

Harold Cannon, Director of the Division of Research Grants at NEH, states that these papers are eligible to be published as they are the products of a previous grant. Through the kind efforts and support of Dr. Donald Gallup, curator of the O'Neill Collection at Yale, I have begun negotiations with Mr. Edward Tripp, Executive Editor at Yale University Press, to publish a volume of essays, Eugene O'Neill: European and American Perspectives. This book will contain the papers summarized here and those presented by American scholars at the 1976 session: John Henry Raleigh, Esther M. Jackson, Frederick Wilkins, and Albert Bermel.

What I shall do here is offer some of the "highlights" of the papers presented by the three Europeans, hopefully whetting appetites for the complete versions. There was to have been a fourth participant, Clifford Leech, the eminent English Renaissance drama scholar but author also of the critical study, Eugene O'Neill. Unfortunately, Professor Leech died last July.
Those of us who knew and respected him so highly mourn him. Permission to publish his paper has been given by the executor of his estate. In what he terms a "reminiscent talk," Professor Leech relates his own personal experiences in directing and seeing some of the first London productions of O'Neill's plays in the 1920's and 1930's. His paper, "O'Neill in England from Anna Christie to Long Day's Journey into Night--1923-1958," is typical of Professor Leech: scholarly, humorous, spirited. As perhaps his last critical commentary, and certainly the final coda to his work on the playwright, it deserves a permanent place in O'Neill scholarship.

1. Tom Olsson: "O'Neill and the Royal Dramatic"

In his paper, as in his book, Dr. Olsson provides an in-depth analysis of O'Neill productions in Sweden from the 1920's to the present and explains the reasons why the dramatist has been received so well and produced so often there. In discussing the period that has come to be known as "the great O'Neill silence," Dr. Olsson points out that "in Sweden that silence was not total." Ah, Wilderness! opened in the autumn of 1934 and "was on the repertory until the Spring of 1937--much dependent on O'Neill's Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936." The Great God Brown was staged at the Vasa Theatre in Stockholm in 1936, and a year later "Gothenburg's Municipal Theatre's Studio stage had been opened with well-received performances of The Emperor Jones and Ile." When the Royal Dramatic opened its second stage in 1945, All God's Chillun Got Wings was chosen for the opening program and "O'Neill sent a telegram with his good wishes for this premiere." In 1947 The Iceman Cometh had its European premiere at the Royal Dramatic. "The critics were profusely enthusiastic about the playwright, the director, and cast." The European premiere of A Moon for the Misbegotten at Malmo's Municipal Theatre in March 1953 was followed a month later by an even more successful production at the Royal Dramatic. O'Neill could not have failed to contrast the ill-fated, aborted American version of 1947 and the Swedish production. Dr. Olsson says: "According to Carlotta O'Neill, her husband had heard of the reviews before he died in the autumn of the same year. Apparently he then requested her to see that the rest of his dramatic production which had never been staged was bequeathed to the Royal Dramatic, in gratitude for what that theatre had done for his drama during a period of thirty years.

...Between the years 1956 and 1962 no less than four world premieres of O'Neill's plays took place at the Royal Dramatic"--Long Day's Journey, A Touch of the Poet, Hughie, and More Stately Mansions.

One of the most significant contributions Dr. Olsson makes to O'Neill scholarship is the insight he gives into the relationship established between Carlotta O'Neill and Karl Ragnar Gierow. In a letter to Mr. Gierow dated August 19, 1955, she discussed Long Day's Journey and states her husband's request: "Under no circumstances was it to be produced in the theatre in this country. He said he would like the Royal Theatre, Stockholm, to do it--sans royalties--as a gesture from him in gratitude for the excellent performances they have given his plays over the years. The Scandinavian Peninsula is dear to me as it was to him. They kept us going in 1953 when this country wasn't interested in O'Neill." In his conclusion, Dr. Olsson compares O'Neill to Strindberg, who was rejected and then finally acclaimed in Sweden, and asks: "Will young actors and producers open up new roads into the work of O'Neill, perhaps the most noteworthy playwright of our time? That has been the case with Strindberg. Perhaps it will be with O'Neill too."

2. Timo Tiusanen: "O'Neill's Significance: A Scandinavian and European View"

Professor Tiusanen provides an outsider's view of how O'Neill is perceived and evaluated in America today. He is dismayed that the dramatist is not
adequately appreciated and produced in this country and asks: "Is there still a Puritan prejudice alive in America against the theatre—and another against O'Neill as an analyst of 'low' characters?" He notes that the United States is a "country without a dramaturgic tradition." One remedy that he offers is to "classicize" O'Neill. "He is worth it. Yet a word of warning is needed: 'Classicizing' a playwright does not mean mummifying him. It means a sound middle road between negligence and glorification; it means keeping him alive, not through the artificial respiration of reverential revival but by paying him respect in the only way acceptable to O'Neill's ghost: that is, by finding ever new relevance for his plays. For him, life meant writing; for his plays, meaningful production is essential for life. O'Neill's significance is based on two magnificent truths. He created his own personal theatre language, and he conveyed significant statements about the condition of modern man by means of that language. The Scandinavian countries and Germany have done what can be reasonably expected to keep a crucial body of modern classics of world drama alive; Sweden has done even more. It is up to you, my dear American friends, to decide whether you want to listen to that language, now and in the days to come."

3. Peter Egri: "An East-European View of O'Neill: The Uses of the Short Story in O'Neill's and Chekhov's Plays"

If American scholars have had little contact with their western European counterparts, they are even more removed from the mainstream of eastern European scholarship. There is no reason for this to continue, for eastern European scholars, particularly in Hungary, are making overtures to establish new international bonds. [An International Seminar of English and American Studies will be held at Kossuth University in Debrecen, Hungary, from September 8 to 11, 1978. At the Seminar's O'Neill session, Professor Maria Korenyeva of the Moscow Gorky Institute will present a paper on the early plays; Professor Egri and I will discuss the late plays. Dr. István Pálffy, head of the English Department, wishes to extend an invitation to American scholars to attend this session via the Newsletter. The papers will be published in Hungarian Studies in English and will give Americans a totally new, objective perspective on their native literature.]

Professor Egri's paper presents a comprehensive analysis of the use of the short story in O'Neill's plays. In comparing the relationship between the two genres in O'Neill's work to a similar integration in Chekhov's, he demonstrates "the organic manner in which the American dramatist was able to become part of a movement in world literature. ... O'Neill's shorter dramas tend to approach the genre of the short story, and his longer plays verge on novels, without ceasing to be excellent dramas. This, too, is an important international link. ... His performance of synthesizing the epic and the dramatic seems to be the formal (generic) equivalent of his successful fight for human integrity under rather difficult circumstances. ... The more we can see O'Neill as part of an international dramatic movement, the more we are able to understand his international, indeed, universal appeal—and also his American quality."

One would have to read Professor Egri's essay in its entirety to appreciate the tremendous contribution it makes to O'Neill scholarship. He discusses the generic proximity of the short story and the one-act play in Warnings and other O'Neill plays—both those that are demonstrably related to short stories and those that are not. One question is obviously raised: are the features typical of the short story that are incorporated in O'Neill's early plays manifested in his later work? Professor Egri finds the integration of the generic features of the short story and the short play, coupled with a Chekhovian atmosphere, in O'Neill's late masterpiece, Hughie. He provides a superb analysis of this play and in his conclusion comes full circle,
summarizing the similarities between Chekhov and O'Neill: their attempt to synthesize "the lyric and the epic into the dramatic, to integrate the short story and the short play into a revealing and moving dramatic unity."

It would be impossible to speculate on the full impact that exposure to the ideas of these Europeans can have on American scholars, professional theatre people, American theatre audiences, and international O'Neill scholarship. The failure of Americans to appreciate their cultural legacy and to nourish their national and personal wellspring is a dangerous signpost on the road leading to a morally bankrupt wasteland. As O'Neill demonstrates so often in his plays, Americans are totally caught up in material pursuits and find it difficult to resolve the conflict between materialism and idealism, to pursue a truly enriched life based on humanistic values. While the papers presented by the Europeans provide valuable information about O'Neill productions abroad, they also raise some disturbing questions about the attitudes of Americans to their greatest dramatist, to theatre, and, by implication, to the quality of life itself.

In 1976 America celebrated its bicentennial. This is a relatively young country, and our negative national attitude to our greatest native dramatist may merely be the result of cultural "growing pains." Coming to terms with O'Neill and paying him the homage he deserves would signal our mature entry into the international theatrical mainstream. Two hundred years ago we declared our independence from Europe. The papers presented by the three Europeans may convince us that it would serve us well as a people to establish new bonds with the old world. As a nation of immigrants, our roots are there. It may be that O'Neill, the son of an immigrant, who depicted so well our endless attempt to belong, will help us establish new international cultural ties and gain world theatrical maturity. And then perhaps at last he will "belong."

--Virginia Floyd

THE EMPEROR JONES AND THE HAIRY APE--A BEGINNING AND AN END

There is little dispute over the fact that The Emperor Jones is the play which first brought a small, amateur, off-off-Broadway company, the Province-town Players, into the limelight. Begun as a summer recreation for several bored artists and writers in Provincetown, Massachusetts, the Players moved their theatre to Greenwich Village's Macdougal Street. In The Art Theatre (pp. 67-68), Sheldon Cheney sums up the Provincetown Playhouse in one sentence by calling it "a cramped, little stage and a bare and unattractive room of an auditorium." Indeed, the playhouse, which had at one time been a stable, is written of as barely seating 100; and after the Players' opening in the fall of 1916, it is their tiny size that characterizes them. (See Norris Houghton, The Exploding Stage.) There they began what they intended as a "Playwright's Theatre," a theatre of new works, experimental in nature, for a small subscription audience. Its members, then fairly young and largely unknown, were, among others, Eugene O'Neill, Cleon Throckmorton, George Cram Cook, and Robert Edmond Jones.

The Emperor Jones, directed by Cook, opened on November 1 as the first bill of the 1920-21 season. The program credits Throckmorton with both designing and executing the sets. Not merely was the play a clear departure from the school of naturalism pervading drama in the early part of this century; it was the first major attempt by an American playwright to utilize expressionistic devices. (Although Beyond the Horizon made it to Broadway sometime earlier, The Emperor Jones was the first expressionist play to reach a mass,
Broadway audience, following its limited run downtown.) It was the first dramatic play with a white supporting cast to star a black actor. And it was the first production in the United States to utilize the plaster dome, so important in the European art theatre movement of the day. This plaster cyclorama was built especially for the Emperor production. After reading O'Neill's script, Cook felt that only a version of the European kuppel-horizont would be able to give the stage the sense of infinite depth and distance so necessary to O'Neill's work. Written accounts of the dome's precise dimensions are contradictory; in any case, the dome was an innovative and rare contribution to American theatre. The silhouette and color effects achieved with it were lauded by one New York critic after another.

While Emperor was not the first production of the Provincetown, not even its first New York production, its uniqueness marked a very important period for the group, a time of great plans. Although the Players had dedicated themselves to experiment, few of the new works they had presented prior to this were truly experimental. The Emperor Jones, then, was a beginning, both for the group and for its principal playwright, O'Neill.

Just as the Emperor marked a beginning, The Hairy Ape marked an end. Although the Players were to go on for another few seasons, much had changed. The experimentation begun with Emperor was to lead to one Broadway success after another and to the ultimate death of the Players as a "Playwright's Theatre." In 1924 the corporation of Jones, O'Neill, MacGowan and Light controlled not merely the Provincetown but had taken over the Greenwich Village Theatre as well, illustrating their move toward greater commercial recognition and an end, as well, to the avant-garde approach they had shown hitherto. In an unpublished manuscript on file in New York University's Fales Collection, Edna Kenton refers to "the season of O'Neill's The Hairy Ape" as the last season of the Players' transformation from a small, amateur group into a professional, big(ger) money concern. What was innovative and avant-garde in 1922 required more than mere novelty in 1924; The Great God Brown, for instance, was written by a playwright who had already come into his own, was a commercial (Broadway) success, and the innocence and naivete of the early Players' productions was no longer involved. (By the time All God's Chillun had been done, the Playhouse had incorporated.)

The Hairy Ape opened on March 9, 1922 with Arthur Hopkins and James Light directing while Jones and Throckmorton together designed the sets and lights. It is, for most critics, the logical development from Emperor both in theme and character. In both is a return to the savagery, the primeval man that Jung claims is a part of all of us. But in Ape O'Neill seems to use lighting and set in a far more naturalistic manner than he had in Jones. Although the stovehole set is an intentionally cramped one (and in this regard I disagree with Travis Bogard's major premises) and later scenes contain greatly distorted and angular sets, it is still not carried to the expressionist extreme that the Emperor sets had been. The contrasts of light and dark as representing character soul-states are more symbolist than expressionist.

In his use of masks and mask-like makeup, his more complex examination of man's inability to control his own life, and his borrowings from all the "isms"—expressionism, surrealism, naturalism and symbolism—O'Neill entered a new phase in writing The Hairy Ape. It is the more complete work and, as successful as The Emperor Jones is and was, The Hairy Ape is the final product of the two years of experimentation that both O'Neill and the Players began when The Emperor Jones was in its roughest draft.

--Alice J. Kellman
REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS


Jose Quintero's production of A Touch of the Poet fails to mask the structural problems of the play and creates several of its own. Although anticipating the late masterpieces in theme, characterization and structure, Poet betrays a clumsiness that O'Neill overcame when he abandoned the proposed cycle and wrote about the experiences and milieus of his past. The heavyhandedness of the current revival only draws attention to the script's weaknesses.

The play begins badly, with a conversation of bald exposition. It supplies information establishing the authenticity of Con Melody's heroism and his subsequent fall from grace, but does so in narrative rather than dramatic fashion. O'Neill's normally sure dramatic instincts also desert him in his treatment of the Harfords. Simon, the young man who captures Sara Melody's heart, remains a shadowy offstage figure. His mother Deborah speaks of her husband's family in a way that might have made sense in the overall scheme of the cycle, but which is virtually meaningless in a play whose central conflict is between Con and his daughter. Betty Miller's lack of Yankee aristocratic grandeur did not help, but the failure of dramatic intensity in her scene with Sara must be blamed on O'Neill.

Despite these difficulties, O'Neill created one of his greatest characters in Con Melody, a clear prototype for James Tyrone and a figure of romantic grandeur and tragic folly. The central disappointment of this production was Jason Robards' failure to capture Con's charm and power. Both visually and aurally he emphasized the character's foppishness and pretense, failing to remind us, even occasionally, of his heroic Byronic dimension. Most disastrous, however, was Robard's failure to make credible Con's apologies for the words that wounded his wife and daughter. Even these moments of true feeling rang false, uttered with the same obvious insincerity as his English country gentleman's posturings.

Robards' performance, and consequently the play, only came to life in the fourth act, when Con returns home bloody and beaten. Employing his own voice and freed from the stylization he found so uncomfortable, Robards made real Con's acceptance of his present circumstances, finally allowing the audience to care for the character he had only been superficially impersonating thus far. Sara's final realization that Con's illusions were preferable to his present abject submission had true power because Robards had now shown us a Con Melody worthy of our attention and sorrow.

In some ways Sara is the play's central character. She must choose between her father's Irish past and the hoped-for future happiness of Simon's love. She also bears the crucial insight that Con's grandiose posturings may have been destructive, but their absence renders him a defeated man. Kathryn Walker did not find the transition from child to woman occurring within Sara. Her delivery often became drawn-out vocal mannerism and there was little passion in much of her performance. As was the case with Robards, she also missed the Irishness of her character, something particularly evident because of the fine supporting performances of Geraldine Fitzgerald as Nora and Milo O'Shea as Cregan.

After his convincing productions of A Moon for the Misbegotten and Anna Christie, Jose Quintero's direction was especially disappointing. He miscast the two central roles and then compounded his error by failing
to help his actors discover the truth of their characters until late in the production. If Con Melody is not a complex mixture of blarney, cruelty and true Romantic charisma, and his daughter fails to convey the confusions of adolescent rebellion and first love, then the play becomes sodden and boring. I left the theater grateful for a moving fourth act but frustrated that O'Neill's flawed but still powerful play had not been better served by two of his foremost American interpreters.

--Roger W. Oliver


Remembering the brilliant, pointillist evocation of group life in the Long Wharf Theatre's 1973 production of David Storey's The Changing Room, I expected the same company's mounting of O'Neill's sea plays to be the highlight of the 1977-78 season. That it wasn't is not necessarily their fault; I had anticipated an analogy that couldn't exist. Storey's play is an organic unit whose power derives from the tightness of its structure; while the four Glencairn one-acts (The Moon of the Caribbees, In the Zone, Bound East for Cardiff and The Long Voyage Home--played in that order, with an intermission after the second) are, despite connections of set, cast and atmosphere, only tenuously linked. And so the performance, despite the addition of clever transitional scenes between the two plays in each act, lacked the cumulative punch of a full-length play. Nevertheless, the production did capture the atmosphere which is the plays' chief virtue; director Edward Payson Call managed the shifts from languorosity to violence and excitement and back again skillfully; and John Jensen's atmospheric and manipulable sets and Ronald Wallace's evocative lighting could not have been better. And aside from vocal inadequacies in a few of the smaller roles (the Captain, the First Mate and Fat Joe), the casting was ideal.

Actually the establishment of atmosphere began before the production started, for the audience entering the Long Wharf's three-quarter-round playing area were confronted with a dim, brooding study in black and grey, punctuated impressionistically by mast, bulwark and walkway, over which floated the mournful offstage song of the natives. The play began almost imperceptibly, as we slowly perceived the natures of individuals among the seamen--Driscoll's forceful superiority, Smitty's disdainful set-apartness, and the Donkeyman's detached cynicism. Tension slowly built until the arrival of the women, when excitement (and rum) spilled across the stage in an effective aura of raucous anarchy, briefly interrupted by quiet duets with Smitty by the Donkeyman and Pearl.

In the Zone, with its conventional suspense yarn and its message-ridden obviousness, was a letdown after the evocative sprawl of Caribbees; of the four plays it was the least enhanced by staging--because there is less to enhance. But performance by the same actors in the same roles underscored O'Neill's consistency in characterization: Smitty, again brooding, alienated and disdainful of his shipmates (though now with considerable justification); Cocky, again comic in his shifts from braggadocio to weasly cowardice; only Driscoll slightly changed--never again as dominant and forceful as in the first play. And Zone did have its theatrically effective moments: the men's panic when a coffee cup clatters to the floor and when a log thuds ominously against the side of the ship; the suspensful, snail's-pace lifting of Smitty's mattress and the delicate immersion of his metal box in the water pail; and, at the end, the image of Smitty, spotlighted in his isolation and brokenness, bent over his bunk in pain and humiliation.
The three-quarter-round staging was most beneficial in Bound East, for Yank's bunk could be near the front of the stage, and not at the back as O'Neill had placed it. The comradely affection of Driscoll and Yank was touching—one spotlighted oasis in a world of uncaring—and the pulsing throb of the ship's engine added to the grimness of Yank's plight. The Long Voyage Home, that provided the last movement of the quartet, was hampered by inadequate performances in the minor roles (especially vocally, though probably no one could swim smoothly through O'Neill's dialectal atrocities in those parts). But it also provided the acting triumph of the evening: William Newman's Olson—hair slicked down, gawky in landsman's garb, totally believable in accent, and touchingly hopeful, shy and gallant. No other of the Glencairn roles received quite so effective a transition from page to stage.

If Zone and Bound East had shared one act of the two-part evening, no shifting of sets would have been necessary in that half of the performance. But the director's choice of play-order was definitely right: the introduction of outsiders in the first and last plays served as an effective frame; the first and second should be done together since both focus on Smitty as the tormented isolato; the third and fourth provide comparable portraits of dreamers-of-land, hurtfully defrauded of their dreams; and each half followed the same progression—from a non-narrative mood-piece to a more traditional "story."

Aside from Newman, the most effective performers were Robert Lansing as Driscoll, solid, gruff yet tender, a clear leader; and Emery Battis as Cocky, strident in his false bravado, yet quick-wilting when challenged.

If the four plays have a unifying theme, it is provided by Driscoll in Bound East: "It's a hell av a life, the sea." And many nuances of that hell were vividly captured in the Long Wharf production which, flaws notwithstanding, conveyed a present life sufficiently cramped and demeaning for us to understand why men would take fragile refuge in hopes for the future (Yank and Olson) or memories of the past—whether sad, like Smitty's; happy, like Driscoll's and Yank's; or pathetically fabricated, like Cocky's. —Ed.

3. Probably no character in any O'Neill play has received as thorough and exhaustive a critical and scholarly study as has the protagonist of A Touch of the Poet in Lennart Josephson's recent monograph, A Role: O'Neill's Cornelius Melody (Stockholm Studies in History of Literature, #19), published in Stockholm by Almqvist & Wiksell International (1977), and in an English translation by Alan Blair (1978) by Humanities Press, Inc., Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 07716. The aim of Josephson's study is to give "examples of various viewpoints one can adopt in getting to know a remarkable role in a remarkable drama," and that aim is abundantly realized.

A few of the subjects covered are the following: (1) the sociological phenomenon of "class displacement" in the new world; (2) the naturalistic and expressionistic elements in the play; (3) parallels with classical drama (peripeteia, hubris and catharsis, with the tavern-regulars as chorus and Cregan as messenger); (4) the influence of other modern playwrights: Ibsen (The Wild Duck and Peer Gynt) and Synge (Playboy of the Western World); (5) the degree of influence of theorists and philosophers (Nietzsche, Jung, Adler); (6) the significance of the unprinted epilogue, and the relation of the play to More Stately Mansions and the projected cycle in its entirety; (7) "models from life" (John Dolan,
James O'Neill, Sr., the Irish character in general, and Eugene O'Neill himself—his obsession with mirrors and his own fondness for the passage from Byron that Melody quotes; (8) the relations between Melody and his wife, his daughter (both parallels and contrasts are revealed in a comparison of Con and Sara), his clients and the Yankee gentry; (9) the revelatory significance of setting, lighting, costume, furniture and properties; (10) the heterogeneous responses of critics and "artists of the theatre" to the first productions of the play in Stockholm, Helsinki and New York City; and (11) the treatment the play has received in scholarly publications from its first appearance to the present.

One of the finest sections is a study of the inner nature of Con Melody himself—or, rather, of the conflicting interpretations to which it has given rise. Just as the play embodies a "violent contrast between comedy and tragedy," Josephson sees Major Melody as a "contradictory person" who "belongs to two worlds" and whose "two selves ... have quite contrary ways of talking." (Josephson is particularly good in his study of the language in the play.) The problem that arises is how to assess Melody's voice and behavior after his fourth-act transformation. Do we see the re-emergence of a previously-submerged reality? Or is Melody donning a new mask? Or does he merely switch to the other half of a split personality, both of whose halves are "real"? Josephson examines the variety of answers to these questions and shows what they reveal: that Con Melody is "a live human being" and not a symbol—a view that is reinforced by the fact that the character's transformation is neither sudden nor complete.

If the book has a flaw (definitely not a tragic flaw!), it is the abundance of parenthetical asides: many a "see below" in the first half, and just as many "see aboves" in the second. But a study as wide-ranging as this probably requires such a plethora of cross-references. And the searching they demand of the reader proves eminently worthwhile since, in addition to the light it throws on Melody and his play, it teaches a valuable side-lesson: how a complete analysis of one character can illuminate a playwright's entire canon. —Ed.

4. This season's Broadway revival of A Touch of the Poet was the springboard for a free-flowing discussion of O'Neill in the New York Theatre Review's "Critics' Roundtable" (March 1978, pp. 10-22). While an unedited transcript makes for bumpy reading, stylistic infelicities can be offset by the spontaneity of discussants' contributions. And the discussants in the NYTR roundtable session were impressive indeed: actors Jason Robards, Colleen Dewhurst, Geraldine Fitzgerald, Milo O'Shea and Kathryn Walker; critics Henry Hewes, Julius Novick, Alvin Klein and Debbi Wasserman; biographer Barbara Gelb; producer Elliot Martin; and NYTR editor Ira J. Bilowit.

The discussion is too wide-ranging to "abstract" in the usual way: O'Neill's Irishness (O'Shea, p. 11), his view of women (Klein, Walker and Dewhurst, pp. 10-11), the complexity of his characters as a reflection of his own inner conflicts (Walker, p. 10), the alternation between possessiveness and idealism in so many of his characters (Hewes, p. 21), the theme of the cycle of which Touch of the Poet was to be a part (Gelb, p. 20), the Con Melody of Eric Portman and the James Tyrone of Frederic March and Laurence Olivier (Martin, pp. 19, 22), the conflicting views of what's authentic and what's artificial in the speech and behavior of Con Melody (Robards, p. 14; Hewes, Martin and Gelb, pp. 19-20), the echoes of Carlotta Monterey and Oona O'Neill in Deborah Harford and Sara
Melody (Gelb, p. 21), the need for a permanent O'Neill repertory company (Fitzgerald, pp. 15-16), etc. Certainly the discussion offers something for everyone and should be "must" reading for scholars and theatre artists alike. Two subjects—the unique challenge that O'Neill poses for actors and the reason for his current appeal to young people—loomed largest and may be of broader interest than the rest.

The challenge inherent in playing O'Neill was noted by a number of the performers. (Dewhurst, p. 13: "O'Neill is the actor's nightmare." Walker, p. 13: "it's intimidating because it's so immense." Robards, p. 10: "The greatest difficulty is trying to weed through ... to bring life into the play ... to make it real.") And the question most lengthily pondered was how actors can best meet that challenge. Not through the O'Neill biography, it was felt. (Gelb, p. 16: "I don't think it hurts ... but I think they're two separate things.") Nor through other scholarly research. (Robards read [p. 14] "a whole bunch of books about Wellington ... and ... a lot of Byron" prior to playing Con Melody; but when it came time to rehearse, "I just had to do lines and cues and business with my friendly fellow actors. That's about what it comes down to.") And not through intellectual analysis. O'Shea said (p. 13) that he always considers it "very bad for an actor to analyze too far." And Gelb (p. 22) warned against "a too intellectual approach to O'Neill [because he] was not an intellectual or cerebral writer. He was a very emotional writer who wrote from his gut and his unconscious."

Part of the difficulty for actors lies in combining life-size verisimilitude with the lofty, larger-than-life passions suggested, for instance, in the sort of stage directions paraphrased—or parodied—by Dewhurst (p. 13): "'screams with terror,' 'tears falling down,' 'now laughs,' 'now attacks.'" But the combination is essential since, as Walker said (p. 13), "unless you get a sense of the normal situation ... it becomes far too melodramatic." The actors, concurring with Gelb that O'Neill should be approached emotionally rather than intellectually, felt that one must begin by finding the deepest root of a character's nature in oneself. (E.g., Dewhurst, p. 13: "The biggest thing in O'Neill is to bring it down to the simplest response that you have in yourself, as a man or woman, to that character, and then build up.") The initial "bringing down" parallels O'Neill's own creative process, which Wasserman describes (p. 11) as "stripping away the masks, and revealing raw emotional flesh underneath." The "building up" that must follow seems like the reverse—an act of re-donning the mask. This latter process is explained in an apt analogy of Jose Quintero's that Walker cited (p. 13): "Jose describes it as putting on a lot of ... petticoats—all of very bright colors, the different emotional colors. And you put each one on. And once you understand all of that, you put a gray dress on top of it"—the gray dress being the mask, or the lifelike outer self that contains all the emotional colors—"so that, every once in a while, your skirt sort of kicks up and you see a ... ruffle of amazing colors." She notes that "the gray dress is the hardest part."

O'Neill's current appeal to young people, in both theatre and classroom, was commented on by a number of discussants. Dewhurst and Fitzgerald (p. 16) spoke of the enthusiasm and involvement of younger members of the audiences at Moon for the Misbegotten, Touch of the Poet and the 1971 production of Long Day's Journey. And Hovick stated his discovery (p. 16) "that students are interested in O'Neill in a way that they're not interested in any other playwright"—that they feel "a peculiarly personal connection" with him. There was general agreement among actors and directors (p. 16) that the basis of this appeal is
O'Neill's focus on "strong passion [and] basic human emotion" (Wasserman), and his insistence "that the essential truth of anybody's existence is the emotional truth of their lives" (Walker). It is heartening to young audiences to find "people who can feel as deeply as [O'Neill's] characters" (Hewes, p. 22) in an era in which "we're very packaged" (Dewhurst, p. 17). Ms. Dewhurst gives the liveliest explanation of this phenomenon (p. 16): "they are living in a TV tube, in a well-constructed, academic society in which we are all behaving either like mad people who'll die tomorrow or like bores who have nothing original to say or to think. And suddenly, they come to the theatre, and up there come living, breathing human beings." If so, and if, as is believed, theatre can have a transitive effect on spectators' lives, then O'Neill's influence may now be stronger and more efficacious than ever. Let's hope so. And three cheers to the New York Theatre Review for sharing so stimulating a discussion with its readers. --Ed.

5. Roger W. Oliver's "From the Exotic to the Real: The Evolution of Black Characterization in Three Plays by Eugene O'Neill" (Forum [University of Houston], Winter 1976, pp. 56-61) traces two simultaneous developments in the playwright's craft: from self-conscious, "exotic theatricality" ("innovations of Naturalism and Expressionism") to realism in dramatic technique; and from "racial stereotypes" to a deeper, truer perception of "social implications" in his treatment of blacks. Although the three plays (The Emperor Jones, All God's Chillun Got Wings and The Iceman Cometh) have a steadily decreasing number of black characters (all but one in Jones, exactly half in Chillun, and only one in Iceman), the actual treatment of blacks ascends, from the racial stereotyping of the first play (though Oliver shows that O'Neill's emphasis in Jones is really more universal than racial, and that the protagonist's blackness is exploited primarily for its exoticism); through the "honest attempt" in Chillun, though somewhat hampered by continued stereotyping, "to seriously dramatize blacks who try to advance themselves in a white-dominated society" and to examine "the effects of prejudice on the black psyche"; to a play (Iceman) in which "racial antagonism"--dominant in the second play--remains but is subordinated to O'Neill's "perception of the schizophrenic role played by a black man needing to become part of a white world. What Oliver skillfully traces, in an essay that offers fine analyses of Brutus Jones, Jim Harris and Joe Mott, is an evolution from experimental self-consciousness to subtlety and sensitivity; from exotic spectacle-for-its-own-sake to "a realistic presentation emphasizing what O'Neill wants to say rather than how he expresses it." In the course of that evolution, theatrical devices become more integrated, themes gain in clarity, and the characterization evidences O'Neill's "growth of sophistication and sympathetic understanding" of blacks and of their plight in American society. --Ed.

6. In "A Touch of the Tragic" (The New York Times Magazine, December 11, 1977, pp. 43-139), Barbara Gelb provides a lengthy and intimate portrait of O'Neill's greatest director, Jose Quintero, and a revealing picture of his directorial methods during the early rehearsals of A Touch of the Poet. ("Each time [he] approaches the first day's rehearsal of a play by O'Neill, he feels as though he is going on trial for murder.") She cites the numerous, almost mystical parallels between the lives of the playwright and the director; both gaining a "tragic view of life" because of troubled childhoods and similar parents; both lapsed (but not happily lapsed) Roman Catholics; both retrieved alcoholics; both sufferers from
"a sense of ambivalence about practically everything"—and both addressed by Carlotta Monterey O'Neill as "Gene." "It is," writes Gelb, "the sorrows and frustrations of Quintero's own life that have made him the quintessential O'Neill director." While her article restates much that can be found elsewhere—in Sheaffer, in the Gelbs' own biography, and in Quintero's book of memoirs, If You Don't Dance They Beat You—it does bring the sources together, carries them up to the present, and offers new insights of interest to those who have attended the ten O'Neill productions Quintero has directed:

The Iceman Cometh (1956),
Long Day's Journey Into Night (American premiere, 1956),
Desire Under the Elms (1963),
Strange Interlude (1963),
Marco Millions (1964),
Hughie (American premiere, 1964),
More Stately Mansions (American premiere, 1967),
A Moon for the Misbegotten (1973),
Anna Christie (1977), and
A Touch of the Poet (1977).

Quintero's rehearsal techniques are described (read-throughs before analyses, a more visceral than "cerebral" approach, and a quest for the perfect gesture), as are his feelings of guilt when he must make cuts in O'Neill's texts. Quintero draws an interesting parallel between his latest production's protagonist, Con Melody, and an earlier one: "I think he is on the verge of madness when the play begins, like Hickey in The Iceman Cometh." An interesting contrast is drawn between the acting methods of George C. Scott ("completely cerebral") and Jason Robards, who "develops a role slowly and emotionally, from within"—the suggestion being that the Robards approach is the more fruitful for work on O'Neill. Quintero, Ms. Gelb finds, has a number of the remembered qualities of the playwright: "an extraordinarily seductive sense of nonjudgmental compassion, combined with delicacy and intuition." --Ed.

[A sad postscript to the Gelb article, one that suggests that the above list of productions may not grow longer, was Mr. Quintero's announcement, released on May 7 by William Raidy of the Newhouse News Service, that his affiliation with O'Neill is over. "This is it ... for always," he said. "It is the termination of an association that I treasure, but it has to come to an end. I have directed ten plays of O'Neill all over the world, and now I want to emerge into my own reality." One hopes that he will be back; that all we're hearing are the doors of Harry Hope's saloon, which are so notorious for swinging both ways. But there is a note of finality in Quintero's words, and certainly all O'Neillians wish him well. --Ed.]

NEWS AND QUERIES

1. The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded a Chairman's grant of $9,750.00 to the Provincetown Playhouse on the Wharf, Inc., in support of a series of theatre-related and media projects (a number of which will be of interest to O'Neillians) under the heading "Provincetown Playhouse—Eugene O'Neill Theatre Museum Project." Adele Heller, Producing Director of the Playhouse, is Project Director. Funding was approved for seminars entitled, Changing Trends in American Theatre: From Eugene O'Neill to the Present, to be led by distinguished scholars and theatre professionals. The seminars will be presented without charge and open to the public.
Another project supported by the grant is the research, writing and printing of a book on the Provincetown Players' early years (to 1927). Entitled Provincetown: The Promise, it is being co-authored by Daniel Heller, Associate Producer at the Hartke Theatre, Catholic University of America, and Dr. Gary Williams, Assistant Professor at Catholic University, and publication is imminent. Other grant-supported projects include a pamphlet on the O'Neill Theatre Museum at the Playhouse, and restoration or replacement of photographs in the museum collection that were damaged or lost in the 1977 fire. Information about any of these activities—or about the Playhouse's summer schedule, which always includes a work by O'Neill—can be obtained by writing or calling the Provincetown Playhouse, Gosnold Street, Provincetown, MA 02657. Tel. 617/487-0955.

2. The eminence of O'Neill was very evident at a conference on modern American drama held at the Palais Palffy in Vienna from April 13 to May 18. Sponsored by the Austrian Association for American Studies and the American Embassy, it was co-chaired by Professors Herbert Foltinek and Waldemar Zacharasiewicz of the Department of English, University of Vienna. Dr. David Mayer, Senior Lecturer in Drama at the University of Manchester (England), spoke on "The Theater of Eugene O'Neill" on April 13; Jordan Miller, Professor of English, University of Rhode Island, discussed "The Post-O'Neill Theater of the 1940's and 50's" on April 20; and two films were shown—Face of Genius (about O'Neill) on April 13, and The Iceman Cometh on April 17. Another session relevant to O'Neill studies was held on May 11: "The American and European Theatre—Mutual Influences." (The editor hopes to obtain summaries of the Mayer and Miller talks for a future issue of the Newsletter.)

3. At the MLA Convention in Chicago last December, American, European and Asian scholars met informally to discuss subjects of mutual interest and concern. The following are a few highlights of the discussion.
   a. Elaine Reed, MLA Convention Coordinator, announced that the MLA will sponsor a special O'Neill event at its 1978 Convention in New York next December, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the playwright's death. (The plan has proceeded excitingly since December, and the event promises to be outstanding. Dr. Virginia Floyd will announce its details in the September issue of the Newsletter.)
   b. The need to get all of O'Neill's plays on the boards was agreed to by all, though there were differing opinions as to whether such a project could best be achieved by having the plays staged by various university theatres throughout the country, or by establishing a professional company to do all the plays in one place—perhaps in Joseph Papp's former theatre in Lincoln Center. But the need was unanimously agreed to, and 1988, the 100th anniversary of O'Neill's birth, was urged as a desirable completion date for such a project.
   c. The founding of a Eugene O'Neill Society was proposed, and Professors Horst Frenz, Virginia Floyd and Frederick Wilkins were asked to draft the bylaws for such a society and present them for discussion at an informal session during the MLA Convention next December.
   d. A new and complete edition of O'Neill's plays and one or more collections of his letters may soon become a reality. The former depends on the cooperation—or collaboration—of Random House and Yale University Press. Concerning the latter, Dr. Floyd read a letter from Donald Gallup announcing that "some progress is being made with the publication of the O'Neill letters. Contracts were signed more than a year ago for the letters to Kenneth Macgowan ... to be edited by Travis Bogard and Jackson Bryer and to be issued by the Yale University Press. The letters to the Theatre Guild are being edited by
George Jensen as a dissertation project at the University of South Carolina. ... We have authorized also the publication of the letters to George Jean Nathan, but I have had no recent report on the progress of this scheme.

e. Interest was expressed in a central source of information on what O'Neill plays are being (and have been) performed, and where. Accordingly, the Newsletter welcomes production lists from scholars and archivists throughout the world: what O'Neill is being performed in your state, province or country? and what are the titles and dates of previous productions (as well as the names of the theatres where they were presented)? The first installment in this project, a list of Hungarian productions of O'Neill from 1928 to the present, will appear in the September issue. It has been compiled from several sources and submitted by Professor Peter Egri of the University of Budapest, and it testifies, as Professor Egri says, "to the long-standing and not diminishing interest in O'Neill on the Hungarian stage." The editor regrets that space did not permit inclusion of the list in this issue, but promises its publication in September and hopes that many other scholars will emulate Professor Egri's dedicated service to O'Neill studies.

(The editor, who was not present at the Chicago discussion, thanks Dr. Virginia Floyd for submitting the information recorded here. If any distortions have been introduced by the editor's summarizing, he apologizes and invites discussants to clarify or expand on any of the above issues in the September Newsletter.)

4. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS AND WORK IN PROGRESS.


c. Professor Voelker has also written an essay on "Bound East for Cardiff" that is soon to appear in Studies in Bibliography.

d. Micheline Puech, Assistant Professor at the Paris Sorbonne, is writing a thesis on "Eugene O'Neill: A Modern Tragic Writer."

e. The University of Chicago Press has just published What Is an Editor? Saxe Commins at Work, a memoir of O'Neill's editor and closest friend by the editor's widow, Dorothy Commins. About a third of the 232-page book deals with O'Neill and contains much material not previously published. The book will be reviewed in the September issue of the Newsletter by Louis Sheaffer.

f. See also abstracts, earlier in this issue, of works by Gelb, Josephson and Oliver (pp. 13 & 16) and the note on a forthcoming book on the Provincetown Players at the start of this "News and Queries" section.

5. RECENT O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS

Ah, Wilderness! dir. Tom Haas. Playmakers Repertory Company, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. (Closed on April 2.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night, dir. Sonia Moore. American Stanislavski Theatre, at Greenwich Mews Theatre, 141 W. 13th Street, New York City. (Closed on May 21.)

Welded. Academy Arts Repertory, 330 E. 56th Street, New York City. (Closed on April 23.)
6. The Chicago Radio Theatre's recent production of The Hairy Ape (in an abbreviated 45-minute version) has been distributed by Public Broadcasting Associates of Berkeley, California, to 140 public radio stations nationally (the airing date in Boston was April 22). Many of the accents were awkwardly done, and Mildred and her aunt sounded amateurish, but the crowds (stokers, Fifth Avenue strollers, birds and monkeys) were aurally effective and the actor playing Yank captured the protagonist's blend of bruiser and poet.

7. Television's mini-series fad will soon dip into O'Neilldom. Work has begun on a production of Mourning Becomes Electra, which is scheduled to be shown as a series of several programs next season on PBS's Great Performances.

8. A number of subscribers have expressed interest in learning the current status of O'Neill studies in higher education—who's teaching what, and where. If all readers who are involved in courses that include O'Neill or know of such courses (general drama surveys, American drama courses, as well as courses and seminars devoted fully to O'Neill) would send in the following information, the editor will be happy to tabulate it and present the results in the January 1979 issue.
   1. Title of course, school or university, and instructor.
   2. How often offered? (Every quarter, every semester, once a year, biennially, etc.)
   3. O'Neill titles included in the course.
   4. A brief description of the course's content: solely literary (textual)? investigation of theatricality as well? leads to a production or staged reading? etc.

Naturally such a survey will be of little value if the response is small; so please do respond. (Any requests for confidentiality will be honored!) The results should be of interest well beyond the walls of academe.

9. Several subscribers have made another suggestion, closely related to the last: how about devoting an issue of the Newsletter to current student writing about O'Neill? Wouldn't it provide fledgling scholars the chance for a brief trial flight, and at the same time offer insights into the paths that future O'Neill studies will take? The editor welcomes the idea if subscribers approve, and if there are sufficient contributions that merit inclusion and that meet the journal's necessarily stringent restrictions on length: a 500-word maximum, which can in extremely meritorious circumstances be increased to 1,000. All instructors who have such materials (short essays; abstracts or sections of longer works) are urged to submit them by November 10. If enough are received, the January issue can, in addition to the above-mentioned survey, be devoted to the work of the O'Neill establishment of the next generation.

10. A few copies of the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre's special publication on O'Neill, Ah, Wilderness! and Long Day's Journey, abundantly illustrated and featuring essays by John Dillon, Louis Sheaffer, Sally Thomas Pavetti, Travis Bogard, John Henry Raleigh, Horst Frenz and Frederick Wilkins, are still available to subscribers at no charge except the cost of postage. (See full information on page 21 of the January 1978 issue.)

11. The editor continues to invite theatregoers' dusted-off memories of standout performers and performances of O'Neill. What has been submitted is being saved until there is enough for a special section. In addition, looking toward another special issue in the future, notes and essays are
requested on the film versions of O'Neill and on adaptations of his work for other media. As ever, all submissions will be welcome--notes and queries, responses and rebuttals, brief essays, abstracts of essays published elsewhere, and reviews of O'Neill performances. But the response to the special section on The Hairy Ape was gratifyingly enthusiastic, making the editor eager to try more such sections.

PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

VIRGINIA FLOYD, Professor of English at Bryant College, is well-known to readers of the Newsletter. At present she is editing a volume of the essays on O'Neill that were delivered by American and European scholars at her seminars on O'Neill in 1976 and 1977 at MLA. Its anticipated title is Eugene O'Neill: European and American Perspectives. She is also a major force behind the special O'Neill events impending at the 1978 MLA Convention; and in her spare time (!), she is preparing to lecture on O'Neill's late plays in Hungary in September.

ALICE J. KELLMAN, Assistant Editor of The Drama Review, is completing a Ph.D. in Drama at New York University. The contents of her dissertation, on the New York productions of the Provincetown Players, were described on page 23 of the January 1978 issue.


ROGER W. OLIVER is an Assistant Professor of English and Dramatic Literature at New York University, where he specializes in modern drama. This summer he will help inaugurate NYU's London program by teaching a "drama in performance" course. An abstract of his essay on black characterization in three O'Neill plays is included in this issue of the Newsletter.

JAMES A. ROBINSON, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Maryland, is currently conducting research on Oriental philosophy in O'Neill's plays of the 1920's--a project that is described on page 23 of the January issue of the Newsletter, and for which he still welcomes the assistance of fellow scholars. In addition to his O'Neill work, he has published articles on Edith Wharton (in The Markham Review) and Nelson Algren (in a graduate-student journal, The Gypsy Scholar).