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The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

Editor: Frederick Wilkins
Suffolk University, Boston

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HUGHIE: BY WAY OF OBIT

Hughie, except for the unfinished More Stately Mansions, was the last of O'Neill's plays to be published and produced. It was written soon after The Iceman and before the completion of Long Day's Journey. It was planned as one of a group of one-act plays to be entitled By Way of Obit, but was the only one of these to be completed. Apparently unrelated to the sequence of great autobiographical plays of the final period, it seems to exist outside of time.

From the beginning Hughie has been recognized as a perfect creation of a minor genre, and it has steadily grown in stature. Like the early one-act plays of the sea, it was based on the author's experience. But its brevity (it occupies less than 32 pages, and runs to less than an hour on the stage) and its lack of companion pieces set it apart. Produced in Stockholm in 1968, it was directed in America by José Quintero six years later as a full evening's entertainment. But O'Neill himself emphasized that "it was designed more to be read than staged." Only gradually has its full complexity and significance become apparent.

As simple realism, Hughie is acted in the setting of a "flea-bag hotel" off the "Great White Way," "between 3 and 4 A.M. of a day in the summer of 1928." The play consists of a long monologue (occasionally a dialogue) delivered by "Erie" Smith, a "small-fry gambler" and man-about-town, to the somnolent hotel clerk, who only occasionally listens, and then manages only perfunctory answers. This long monologue consists mostly of Erie's memories of Hughie, the earlier hotel clerk who has recently died. (Erie

is startled to hear that the new clerk is named Charlie "Hughes.") Now Erie has come from a drunken celebration of Hughie's funeral, and is desperately lonely. The plot, such as it is, describes his efforts to capture the new clerk's attention and to enlist his friendship. But the clerk wishes only to be let alone, to doze and to dream. Only near the end does Erie succeed, by means of recognizing and sharing the new clerk's dreams. The climax of the play comes with this recognition and shared communication. As the curtain falls, the two are happily rolling dice to pass the time till dawn.

The plot is relatively unimportant and the action minimal. If this were all, Hughie would remain a minor, realistic, one-act play. But beyond the level of "honest realism" the play achieves greatness on the level which O'Neill once described as "super-naturalism"--not the super-naturalism which is above and separated from the natural, but rather existing within the natural world, and illuminating and enhancing it. Egil Törnqvist has described "O'Neill's Super-naturalistic Technique" as including: the use of poetic stage directions, audible thoughts, extended silences, off-stage sounds, repetitious phrases, metaphoric words and proper names, and symbolism of all kinds. Hughie achieves a triumph of this "super-naturalism."

Beginning with The Moon of the Caribbees and other one-act plays of the sea, O'Neill had composed stage directions more poetic than practical. On the "S. S. Glencairn," we may remember: "There is silence, broken only by the haunted, saddened voice ... of that music, like the mood of the moonlight made audible." In Hughie there are many silences, now punctuating the spoken words; the off-stage music is now replaced by "the clanging bounce of garbage cans in the outer night"; and now the moonlight has given way to the dim light of the inner lobby of the ancient hotel off Broadway.

But the separate elements of this "super-naturalism" are less important than their combination in different and suggestive patterns. In Strange Interlude, for instance, the speaking of normally unspoken thoughts remained a separate technique, strikingly original but sometimes obtrusive. In Hughie the audible thoughts combine with the stage directions and off-stage noises to motivate the action and to enhance its significance. Sometimes these half-conscious thoughts arise from physical facts, sometimes they translate facts into conscious meanings, and sometimes they break through the level of consciousness to motivate later action and to create meaning.

Near the beginning, the clerk's "feet are beginning to ache"; later ... "fallen arches"; then he hears "the sound of that surface car ... Flat wheeled and tired. Distant the carbarn and far away the sleep." Fact has created fantasy, and fantasy has found expression in the pathetic fallacy of that "tired" street car. The incident is minor, but both fact and feeling start echoes to be heard later.

Near the middle, after "the garbage men have gone their predestined way," ... "the clerk's mind remains in the street to greet the noise of a far-off El train." But this off-stage noise grows in significance: "Only so many El trains pass in one night, and each one passing leaves one less to pass, so the night recedes, too, until at last it must die and join all the other long nights in Nirvana, the Big Night of Nights. And that's life." The repetition of street noises suggests a philosophy both age-old and modern, in which the outer night creates the night within the mind.

Near the end, "the Clerk's mind has rushed out to follow the siren wail of a fire engine.... 'Where's the fire?... Will it be big enough to burn down the whole damn city?' 'Sorry, there's too much stone and steel, there'd always be something left.'" But later these subconscious thoughts

repeat themselves: "Outside the spell of abnormal quiet presses suffocatingly.... The Night Clerk's mind cowers away from it.... His feet are giving him hell." And so he takes refuge in his dream. But a chance phrase of Erie's interrupts: "the whole goddamned racket. I mean life." And, "kicked out of his dream," the Clerk blurts out: "Yes, it is a goddamned racket when you stop to think, isn't it?... But we might as well make the best of it, because-- Well, you can't burn it all down, can you? There's too much steel and stone." And this discontinuity, in turn, kicks "Erie" out of his own dream of "Hughie," so that the two dreamers can finally communicate.

This repeated interweaving of acts and thoughts, street noises and fantasies, spoken words and unspoken, and dreams finally breaking through into actual speech, creates the sensation of an eerie unreality enveloping the real world. But if this sensation is mostly unconscious, O'Neill's "super-naturalistic technique" is mostly conscious. The Night Clerk "Blurts out with an uncanny, almost lifelike eagerness." "I beg your pardon, Mr.-- Erie-- but..." And curiously, the uncanny "Mr. --Erie" becomes, in the mind's eye, "Eerie Smith." Actually, in the Gelbs' biography of O'Neill, Erie's name is consistently misspelled "Eerie Smith." And this, despite the fact that Erie has earlier described himself as born in that "punk burg, Erie, P-a."

After the play is over, the protean character of "Erie" Smith, "Mr.-- Erie", and "Eerie Smith" continues to expand like some genie into universal proportions. We remember that O'Neill had introduced him in his cast of characters as "'Erie' Smith, a teller of tales." Erie had first told the tale of his old friend Hughie, "by way of obit." And in the telling he had told much of his own life story, but had changed it a little to make his life more livable. Finally, to satisfy the dream of the new clerk, Hughes, he had imagined himself the big-time gambler, lighting a cigar with a "C" note, in the racket of life. By the power of his imagination he had compelled the new Hughie to listen, and to share. And now, by this merging of realism, fantasy and metaphor, Erie Smith has become the master of illusion, sailing the eerie waters of the mind. And Hughie, and/or Charlie Hughes, has become his eternal audience.

As a parable of the creative imagination, Hughie continues to exist outside of time. But as a dramatic fable, Hughie re-enacts the story of his author's creative life and belongs to the year in which it was written. For almost a decade O'Neill had seemed to lose touch with his audience, groping through a night of frustration for some language to enthrall the audience of a new generation. In The Iceman Cometh he had succeeded. Now Hughie tells this tale, and Erie re-enacts his author's frustration. And now O'Neill, by identification with "Eerie Smith," becomes the ancient mariner of the imagination whose "Rime" he had adapted for the theatre almost a generation before. And "Hughie"--are you he?--becomes his newly captured audience. And in this tale of Erie and Hughie, O'Neill has once again been writing his own autobiography, "By Way of Obit."

--Frederic I. Carpenter

QUESTION AND ANSWER IN HUGHIE

In a startlingly dramatic effect, O'Neill announces the logos of Hughie in the opening monosyllable--"Key." The word focuses upon the playwright's lifetime theme, "fitting in." For Hughie offers a variation on the problem

of modern man's existential fate, the impossibility of belonging and the attendant problem of loneliness. Isolated spiritually and psychologically, he can never entirely bridge the gap. Yet try he must. For in the attempt he makes occasional momentary contact in shared misery, a contact sufficient to keep alive his illusion of belonging. In this brilliant tour de force, O'Neill distills the essential theme of modern literature from "Dover Beach" to The Waste Land and all varieties of absurdism.

If The Iceman Cometh stands as one of the longest masterpieces of modern drama, Hughie is among its most compact. Like Albee's The Zoo Story, it presents only two characters and takes no more than forty-five minutes to play. In tone and texture it closely resembles The Iceman. Instead of Harry Hope's deadend bar, the setting is now the lobby of a third-rate hotel just off Broadway. Its location in a sleazy back alley suggests a place whose business once was life. What action there is seems to take place outside time; indeed, time and space have almost no relevance to the meaning of the play. The characters move as in a vacuum, a twilight chamber in which particles float willy-nilly, occasionally bumping and shoving off one another. The individual wishes vaguely for something that he cannot quite remember. Is it joy, connection, love?

This condition of loneliness marks O'Neill's plays from the beginning: the lonely and God-forsaken sailor of the S. S. Glencairn of the early sea plays; the volatile Yank of The Hairy Ape who wants to "fit in"; the stoic Ephraim Cabot of Desire Under the Elms who knows that God himself is lonely; the tortured Dion Anthony who can make contact only with the whore; the human derelict Jamie Tyrone who finds a one-night surcease with Josie Hogan in A Moon for the Misbegotten. Perhaps Erie Smith of Hughie is a distant relative of Yank--Robert Smith--who could not remember his name (or didn't think it was worth troubling to remember).

The two characters seem unlikely to carry the play's heavy theme. Erie Smith, a flop as gambler, avoids at all costs the terror of being alone. Charlie Hughes, the Night Clerk, is so low voltage that he is given barely a dozen lines and the play thus becomes a virtual monologue by Smith. Yet the play's devastating point surfaces explosively in a brief exchange between these two misfits. At that point the ancient question that rings down the corridors of philosophy is asked and answered. The moment comes with dramatic swiftness, a moment whose irony is arresting in its focus on two losers. We will look at it presently.

For Erie and Hughes, existence has long since been ripped away from life tissues. Their world is disconnected, forlorn, its very nature a paralyzing ennui. Yet each wears a mask of the winner. Erie affects the sport, the kidder, the guy in the know. No "sucker" like his late friend Hughie, the former Night Clerk, Erie wishes to be seen as slick and sophisticated. For Charlie Hughes the mask is the grimace, a projection of non-committal friendliness and apparent animation. Sunk in a sea of silence, he tries desperately to fasten on to some reality which is forever eluding his imagination. The Night Clerk simply waits for the passing of the long night: "He is not thinking.... He stares acquiescently at nothing." He marks time by the sounds of the night, for "it would be discouraging to glance at the clock.... One would say [he] had even forgotten how it feels to be bored."

*Eugene O'Neill, Hughie (New Haven: 1959), pp. 7-8. Further passages are followed by page numbers in parentheses.

Smith enters the lobby, a fast-talking sport who moves obscurely on the margin of the gambling world. Dead within like the Clerk, he has "the same pasty, perspiry, night-life complexion" (8). The race-track lingo provides a facade and hides his loneliness. Immediately we are told that "there is something phoney about his characterization of himself, some sentimental softness behind it which doesn't belong in the hard-boiled picture" (9). After demanding the key Erie confesses, "I been off on a drunk" (10). In the manner of a bartender the Clerk must listen to the maudlin reconstruction of events. For to Erie he becomes a life-preserver, since anything is better than having to return to the terrifying silence of his room. Thus he launches into the story of his life and tawdry minor triumphs. Any perceptive listener could tell that his childhood (in Erie, Pennsylvania) had been a disaster and that he has never established many connections except what he could buy. As he continues, however, it becomes even more apparent that Erie had had a supportive relationship with the late Hughie, whose funeral provided the occasion for his binge. In fact, Erie had come to depend on Hughie's caring about him: "And I'm still carrying the torch for Hughie. His checking out was a real K. O. for me. Damn if I know why.... I miss Hughie, I guess. I guess I'd got to like him a lot." He recovers craftily to keep his image intact: "Not that I was ever real pals with him, you understand. He didn't run in my class. He didn't know none of the answers. He was just a sucker" (18). But Hughie was worth knowing because "that guy would believe anything."

Like the Iceman Hickey, Erie Smith is a compulsive talker whose audience again is not interested in what he has to say. The Clerk just wishes he'd go to bed. But Erie wishes to tell of an act of kindness, precisely the opposite of Hickey's confession of the murder of his wife. Moreover, he rambles on out of fear of returning to Room 492, just as Willie Oban in The Iceman fears to remain alone in his room. In the room one confronts himself in company with nothing, Nada. The light that surrounds Erie and Hughes at the desk offers the one small spot of warmth in an otherwise cold and dark universe.

At this point in his monologue Erie is willing to admit his loss in Hughie's death: "Christ, it's lonely. I wish Hughie was here" (28). He patronizes Hughie's romantic idealization of gangsters but admits its effect on him: "And, d'you know, it done me good, too, in a way. Sure. I'd get to seein' myself like he seen me" (29). Hughie had supplied connection and acceptance. Obviously his death plunged Erie into gloom. He has sent a \$100 horseshoe of roses for the funeral, the greatest act of affection in his life. Indeed, he has put himself in physical danger to buy it because he cannot pay the money back. Still he humors himself pathetically: "Hughie liked to kid himself he was my pal." But his mask drops for just an instant as he acknowledges, "And so he was...even if he was a sucker" (31).

Throughout most of this the Night Clerk has hardly pretended interest. Lost in a fantasy born of low-level hostility, he imagines the city burned to the ground, but in this fuzz of wishing a fireman tells him there's not a chance that the city can be destroyed and the Clerk replies in his dream: "Yes, I guess you're right. There's too much stone and steel.... It really doesn't matter to me" (27-28). He cannot even summon up anger to vent on the modern heartless metropolis.

In a brief but powerfully significant exchange of dialogue, the play's theme is established. Just as Larry Slade argues the irrelevance of the truth in The Iceman, an even more devastating point is made in Hughie.

Erie has been relating his philosophy of kidding. At the end of his speech, the Clerk is finally shaken into response and we hear the following lines almost as if repeated endlessly in an echo chamber:

ERIE But what the hell, Hughie loved it, and it didn't cost nobody nothin', and if every guy along Broadway who kids himself was to drop dead there wouldn't be nobody left. Ain't it the truth, Charlie?

NIGHT CLERK (His glassy eyes stare through Erie's face. He stammers deferentially.) Truth? I'm afraid I didn't get-- What's the truth?

ERIE (Hopelessly.) Nothing, Pal. Not a thing.

If we may be permitted a moment of license, we can hear in the mind's ear, ricocheting off the chamber walls and gaining a terrible resonance--the question posed by Greek philosophers, the query put to Christ by Pilate:

"WHAT'S THE TRUTH, THE TRUTH, the Truth, Truth, truth?"

"NOTHING, Pal. NOT A THING. NOTHING, Nothing, nothing--

PAL, Pal, pal...."

Modern man can hardly muster the courage to ask the question. And if he does, the answer reduces his momentary courage to hopeless resignation. One is reminded of Prufrock, in intelligence light years advanced beyond Erie and Hughes but dealing with the same question and playing the same games near "one-night cheap hotels":

There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet.

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.

In spite of all, however, O'Neill does not leave his loners totally broken. For in his late plays the philosophical implications, while always characteristically grim, are muted. The focus becomes the person, not the idea, and the toppled illusions are mended and set up again. The question answered, it is dismissed.

Erie's long confession, with its mixture of bravado and touching honesty, has somehow connected with the imagination of the Night Clerk. Like the earlier Hughie, Charles Hughes can be conned by the romantic gambler image. The name of Arnold Rothstein comes into his mind, and Erie takes on stature as a link to the dangerous and glamorous world of violence: "Do you by any chance know--Arnold Rothstein?... So you're an old friend of Arnold Rothstein!" (34-35) A kind of "beatific vision" comes into his eyes, and Erie's "face lights up with a saving revelation." He can still be accepted by the (new) Night Clerk in his role, his mask; he can reclaim the old relationship. To symbolize their rapport, they shake hands--contact, a touch, a level of kinship. Each will play his part, which is of course a pipedream but which gives some meaning to an otherwise meaningless life. So they roll the dice on the desk, an act which seems to signify acceptance of the rules of the game. Each will respect the other's illusion. The Clerk now sees Erie as "the Gambler in 492, the Friend of Arnold Rothstein--and nothing is incredible."

Erie Smith readjusts his mask and plays the game with renewed enthusiasm: "I just want to show you how I'll take you to the cleaners. It'll

give me confidence.... You remind me a lot of Hughie, Pal. He always trusted me" (37-38).

--Edward L. Shaughnessy

SAXE COMMINS AND THE O'NEILLS

Russel Crouse, in a remark that has been quoted often, said: "O'Neill is one of the most charming men I know, and I've known him for twenty-five years, but I can't say I understand him. His face is a mask, I don't know what goes on behind it, and I don't think anyone else does."

If, however, anyone did, it surely was Saxe Commins. The two men met in 1916, when O'Neill began his fruitful association with the Provincetown Players and Commins was in college. A shy, bookish soul with a great love of literature, Commins, whose eldest sister was married to a Provincetown actor, used to hang around the theater. As one of the earliest to believe O'Neill would prove outstanding, as one who gave his whole-hearted devotion to those he admired, he won O'Neill's friendship and confidence. Indeed, the playwright came to trust him implicitly, while to Commins their relationship was, after his family, the most important in his life.

Clearly, anything Saxe Commins has to say about his friend is of value to all interested in America's foremost playwright. Though Commins, who died in 1958, never wrote his memoirs--at least, not in full--we now have from the University of Chicago Press the next best thing: What Is An Editor?, subtitled Saxe Commins at Work, by his widow Dorothy. In fact, he is practically co-author of the book, for it contains generous helpings from his private writings--autobiographical sketches, editorial reports, inside views of the literary world, none of it ever published before--as well as letters to him from various noted writers.

Since Commins was an editor also for William Faulkner, Sinclair Lewis, Theodore Dreiser, W. H. Auden and, among others, Gertrude Stein, the book is not concerned exclusively with O'Neill, but it devotes to him about one-third of its 230-odd pages, far more than to any other person.

After visiting O'Neill and his wife Agnes in Bermuda in 1926, Saxe noted in his journal that the playwright had begun "the groundwork" for Strange Interlude and added: "At that time An American Tragedy by Theodore Dreiser had attained immense success and was being discussed everywhere.... He [O'Neill] said that Dreiser had written a novel of an unexceptional man, whereas he was at work on a novel in dramatic form of an exceptional woman. His play, according to the very meticulous outline contained in his notebooks, indicated the manner in which he would extend the device of masks used in his previous play, The Great God Brown, to the use of asides which would indicate the duality of thought and spoken word of his characters."

By coincidence, about two years after the Bermuda visit, the lives of both men changed radically. With the encouragement of his wife, the former Dorothy Berliner, a gifted pianist, Commins gave up a profitable dental practice for the precarious calling of literature. Already in his mid-30s, he had it difficult for a while--he entered the literary field during the Great Depression--but in time he proved an uncommon editor, one who, in Irwin Shaw's opinion, was "very likely the best" in 20th century America.

Meanwhile, in 1928, O'Neill deserted Agnes and their two small children to settle in France for a while with Carlotta Monterey, who had appeared a

few years earlier in his play The Hairy Ape and who became his third and final wife. Though What Is an Editor? contains a good many interesting sidelights on O'Neill's plays, it is perhaps most fascinating in its close-up views of the dramatist's private life, especially of his marriage to Miss Monterey. Commins had been very fond of Agnes, but his primary attachment, needless to say, was to O'Neill and, consequently, he wanted to be on good terms with his friend's new love.

On her side, Carlotta, a woman of extreme emotions (she never liked or disliked anything--she either "loved" it or "loathed" it), was anxious for Commins's approval. Not only because O'Neill valued him but from her own feelings. Despite an air of majestic self-assurance, which served her as a kind of "mask," she was deeply insecure and sought more than friends--she sought allies--in a world she always distrusted. From the outset Carlotta overwhelmed Saxe with kindness and affectionate concern; she acted toward him like a protective mother.

Eventually, however, when the O'Neills' marriage deteriorated into pure Strindberg, with Commins siding of course with his old friend, Carlotta turned against him so vehemently that he was devastated. Lacking O'Neill's account in his own words of certain crises in his marital life, Commins's account, either as an eyewitness or from what O'Neill had told him, is the most reliable we shall ever have. As the playwright's health gradually failed and Carlotta took over complete domination of his life, Saxe was shut out from his dearest friend, something that would grieve him till his own end.

Mrs. Commins, who writes well, has smoothly woven into her narrative the excerpts from her husband's writings. One of his most vivid vignettes concerns playwright Edward Sheldon, the author of Lulu Belle, The Dishonored Lady and one of the biggest hits of the World War I era, Romance. Sheldon, who died at 60, spent the second half of his life "completely immobilized" from total arthritis in a penthouse apartment in New York. During his confinement, many came to visit him, not so much to sympathize as to draw inspiration from his spiritual strength, his inner vitality, for he possessed a zest for living that rose above years of pain.

After his death, the apartment was occupied by Eugene and Carlotta. In a way, O'Neill was more unfortunate than Sheldon. Writing was his life, it meant everything to him, more than any of his wives or his children; and then, while at the very peak of his creative powers, a tremor of his hands forced him to stop writing. Had his mentality been affected also, his fate, though dark, would have been only pathetic. As it was, his mind, not the least impaired, teemed with ideas and characters for plays he could never write. As Mrs. Commins makes clear, his life, especially in the final years, was as tragic as anything he ever wrote.

-- Louis Sheaffer

A HUMANITARIAN PLAYWRIGHT

[Editor's Foreword. In February of 1923, during his senior year at Bowdoin College, George H. Quinby won the Class of 1868 Prize Speaking award, which was then presented annually to the author of the best written and spoken oration in the senior class. His subject was Eugene O'Neill, and the early and affectionate understanding of the playwright

that his speech reveals was later to enhance Quinby-directed productions of O'Neill both at Bowdoin (to which he later returned for a most distinguished career as Director of Dramatics) and in Iran, where (as readers of the September 1977 issue of the Newsletter are aware) he directed Ah, Wilderness!, Long Day's Journey, and The Straw.

"The 'impetus' for writing my speech about O'Neill's early plays," he explained recently, in response to a query by the editor, "was certainly tied in with a predilection for the theatre, nurtured by many trips to the Castle Square Stock Co., the troupes headed by Henry Jewett and his rival E. E. Clive, and Saturday morning vaudeville attendance at the Orpheum while I was a student at Wellesley High School. As I recall, I saw O'Neill's early plays at the old Park Square Theatre--The Emperor Jones from its second balcony, where I was surrounded by blacks [whose] reaction to the tom-tom drums certainly affected my own, and of course we all were much moved by the performance of the original lead, Charles Gilpin. I also saw Anna Christie, with Pauline Lord's unforgettable voice, there."

These are his retrospective thoughts on the speech itself: "It was, of course, an oratorical, rather than a literary appraisal of the plays, by an undergraduate rather than a scholar; but it came hard upon the production of the three plays after they'd been seen in their original performances. Perhaps some freshness of perception resulted." The editor wholeheartedly agrees and, finding the freshness undiminished, is proud to share the text of Professor Quinby's undergraduate speech with a wider audience on the fifty-fifth anniversary of its delivery. It is followed by an extra treat--a response to the "oration" by O'Neill himself. Sincere thanks to "Pat" Quinby for permission to reprint both.]

A Negro, driven crazy by superstitious terror; a wanton, drinking in a waterfront dive; a stoker in the furnace-room of an ocean liner:--these the main characters in serious plays! What man, professing to be a playwright, could choose the dregs of humanity as his heroes and heroines? And can it be that intelligent people can be lured away from the Prince of Denmark by the dramatic story of a coal heaver? Impossible! And yet it has occurred. Coming from such a play, a dramatic critic--supposed to be hardened to any emotional scene--has said, "We were limp at the end--a silent crowd of tear-stained faces!"

We are awed by the tragedies of Macbeth and Hamlet, realizing that here are noble figures, princes of mighty lands, whose ruin must involve many others and whose fall must be regarded as a national as well as a personal catastrophe. Since the time of Aristotle it has been a rule of the theater that a tragedy, to be truly noble--to evoke the purest emotions of sympathy, must have as its principal characters people of distinction in the world. The greatest of tragedies, those which have inspired the souls of playgoers from the time of Aeschylus to that of Drinkwater, have observed this rule. And now, beside the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, The Cid of Corneille, the Lear of Shakespeare, and the Lincoln of Drinkwater, must we place a superstitious, braggart Negro, a woman of the streets, and a human ape?

To one who has seen The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape of Eugene O'Neill, the answer is obvious. These plays raise us to such heights of tragic emotion that we are made to sympathize with the lowest strata of society--creatures usually considered the scum of the earth. Here is originality indeed; but to what end? Is it well that noble characters should be replaced by repulsive ones? Or is such a movement debasing the stage?

The time of kings is past. The individual is no longer of greatest importance. This is the age of the socialist; the man dealing with the masses is given the attentive ear. For over forty years there has been an ever-increasing tendency in the drama to make the object of moral censure society rather than the individual. Modern drama, be it fighting optimism as in the case of Ibsen or immobile pessimism as in the case of Andreyev, regards the social order as the real source of evil, and smites it in the name of the individual.

Eugene O'Neill has always desired to fight society in its conventional aspect. Having read Karl Marx and Nietzsche, he rebelled against a life ruled by the customs and traditions of society, and at the age of twenty started on a life of adventure on tramp steamers in order to meet people who were brutally themselves. His dancing was paid for five years later by six months of absolute rest in a tuberculosis infirmary. This half year was probably the most valuable in his life, for he had time to think. And having thought, he started to write plays, plays untrammelled by conventionality, and--such plays! Beyond the Horizon, The Emperor Jones, The Straw, Anna Christie, and The Hairy Ape followed each other in quick succession. They took New York by storm, and now the producers are clamoring for more.

Although O'Neill has in his turn fought society, he stands out from his predecessors in two ways,--in his emotionalism and in his choice of characters. The plays of Ibsen or of Galsworthy are often unpopular because of their intellectuality. They are written for people who wish to think rather than those who wish to feel. The intellect rather than the emotion is naturally appealed to in a socialistic play. An agility in mental acrobatics is necessary for full appreciation.

But the stage is not fundamentally cerebral--it is fundamentally emotional. And O'Neill is an extreme emotionalist. He seems to realize intuitively that to be dramatically effective he must appeal to the emotions. He uses every effect of technique or setting to assist him. The irregular, ever-quickenning beat of the tom-tom in The Emperor Jones is the pulse of the play and sets the emotional tempo for the audience as well. And the tense third act of Anna Christie has made a critic--not an enthusiastic youth, but a critic--want to climb up onto the stage and join in the argument. It is a masterpiece of emotional writing. And so O'Neill makes us sympathize with his characters, repulsive though they may be, by appealing to our emotions.

Summarizing the elements of O'Neill's success, one of our most noteworthy critics says of his plays, "They are invariably interesting from the standpoint of originality, picturesque vigor, and technique. In him there wrestle violently the fundamentals of a distinctly American playwright, one who has the stern ethics of a New Englander." But how is it that O'Neill shows his originality, his vigor, and most of his technique? In his characters. And there is no doubt but that his Americanism, so refreshing after the past years of French bedroom farces and English problem plays, is due in large part to his choice of characters; they are democratic to an extreme.

They are also rather sordid at first sight. Some people of overfine sensibility are disgusted with them throughout the plays. But such a person is rare, as O'Neill's emotional appeal is strong and far-reaching. The important point to note is the message the playwright attempts to convey in his unusual manner through these unusual characters. He seems to say, "Here are characters who fail to understand society, and what a tragedy it is when they collide with it!" His characters speak for him.

Anna Christie says, "We're all poor nuts and things happen, and we just get mixed in wrong." These people are drawn from actual life--people O'Neill met in his five years of wandering. And they are a very large class, a class that we do not understand; they are repulsive to us because we have not lived with them and learned their point of view as O'Neill has. The fault for their repulsiveness lies not in themselves, but in society. If they cannot be taught to understand society, society must be taught to understand them. This is what O'Neill is trying to do.

The scene in which Yank, better known as the Hairy Ape, meets society on Fifth Avenue is one of the most significant in modern drama. He tries to understand the group of silk-hatted, frock-coated church-goers and cannot. "They don't belong" is his eternal cry. Then he attempts to meet them with force and is repulsed again and again. Driven to the Zoo to find a fellow creature, he finally tells the gorilla--"I ain't on oith and I ain't in heaven, get me? I'm in de middle, tryin' to separate 'em, takin' all de worst punches from bot' of 'em. Where do I fit in?"

And where does he fit in? Society, in the symbolic form of the imperturbable church-goers, pays absolutely no attention to the unintelligent creature. The people of organized society do not recognize him as a human being. They have no desire to understand him. But they must and shall by means of O'Neill's wonderful art, playing on the very heart-strings of his audiences.

It is impossible to avoid his influence. Neither his power nor his originality is failing him. He is advancing steadily, and his plays cannot be neglected for a moment. He tells his purpose openly, saying: "In writing The Hairy Ape, I wished to show that the missing thread, literally 'the tie that binds' is the understanding of one another." His message is an old one, but it is expressed in a new and very effective manner, and it has a wider range than has ever been presented before, bringing the ape-like stoker into direct contact with Fifth Avenue society. In his delineation of unfortunate humanity, groping for comprehension of social relations, he is unique. He speaks for the souls of the largest class of people in the world today. His cry is the deepest humanitarian note ever struck in the dramatic world. "A distinctly American playwright, one who has the stern ethics of a New Englander." And a friend of those in need; I give you--Eugene O'Neill.

--George H. Quinby

EUGENE O'NEILL: A LETTER

Editor's note. When Pat Quinby's prize-winning speech, printed above, was published in the college newspaper, The Bowdoin Orient (February 28, 1923), its author sent a copy to the playwright with "How near did I come?" written across the front page. O'Neill's letter of reply, postmarked March 28, 1923, and offering (as its recipient rightly notes) "a fine example of his modesty and Irish wit," is published here for the first time.

Brook Farm,
Ridgefield, Conn.

My dear Mr. Quinby:

Thanks very much for sending me the paper. I've read your oration with the greatest interest, and I think it's damn good stuff. As for "coming near", well, I hope you did. More than that I cannot modestly assert. However, I can say that your deductions are to the point, and your treatment of the whole article is something you may well take confident pride in.

I'm glad you won the prize--and I'm glad the prize was money and not a medal. One can always use the former, but the latter should be confined exclusively to Blue Label Katsup and other winners in the Sauce Show. I feel rather strongly on this subject at present having just been awarded one--my first--for something or other--a gold one, weight and carat not yet divulged. What to do with, I ask?

All best regards to you,

Sincerely,

Eugene O'Neill.

P.S. Yours was delayed in forwarding--hence delay.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES FOR WHERE THE CROSS IS MADE

[The production of Where The Cross Is Made at Harvard University's Loeb Drama Center, which is reviewed in this issue, was directed by George Hamlin, the Center's Producing Director. Mr. Hamlin has kindly permitted the Newsletter to print the notes he made during pre-production discussions and rehearsals. The editor hopes that this exemplary and revealing study of the play will inspire other directors, and performers, to follow Mr. Hamlin's lead and share the insights that only theatrical experience can provide.]

Notes on the Text: One of O'Neill's journeyman plays. On the surface, filled with superficial melodrama, elementary psychology, stereotypical characters, and out-moded language. A strong play exists beyond and in spite of any of these apparent difficulties. It is concerned with the all-too-human tendency to see only what one believes. Under the unusual circumstances of this play, Nat and his father want to believe in the treasure where the cross is made, and they make themselves believe it. Is this madness, or just an extension of what we all do, in some degree?

As actors and director, we must stay above the play's problems and deal with the play as a "tale" - very much like a Poe horror-story. The reader of a Poe tale wants to be taken in by the story; that's why he reads it. Our audience wants to become involved in a reality; they come to the theater willingly to ask us to suspend their disbelief.

Notes on the set and lights: The simpler the better. The characters describe the set; in arena staging we will assume that the place looks like a ship's cabin because the character says it does. Things that we actually use (lamp, chair, table, map, treasure, etc.) should be the real thing. Choose them wisely for just the right effect. There will be no miming of absent doors, port-holes, etc. Unnecessary.

Everything in the text implies that the play happens in semi-darkness. We

see only what we must see, and nothing else. Great opportunities for lighting to enhance belief in the reality of the unreal - just as the "other" characters in the play do. Direction the light comes from is an important factor in the play.

Notes on early rehearsals: We have to sort out what O'Neill intends in many cases. His stage directions are sometimes misleading, sometimes absurd. Example:

Sue: Nat! Nat! For our mother's sake!

Nat: (Clutching at his throat as though to strangle something within him -- hoarsely,) Sue, have mercy!

No further clues for actors and director. Mother fixations of Nat and his sister? What would make a man strangle himself? We must find a way to play this for a modern audience whose knowledge of psychology is far more sophisticated than those of O'Neill's day.

If the ghosts come back only in the minds of Nat and his father, how can they bring back a real map with them? Is the map part of the "dream"? We add to Sue's final line to make our decision clear:

Sue: Oh, God! Come away, Nat! Come away! There's nothing there!

The Doctor and Sue are the skeptics in the play. Every such story has disbelievers within it. Their skepticism creates the dramatic conflict of their scenes with Nat. Play that! You are trying to get the other person to see what you see, and he can't or he refuses because of his character position.

We find an important viewpoint shift in the play at the moment of climax when Nat "sees" the ship in the harbour. Up to now the audience is on the side of the disbelievers (the skeptics). Now the audience begins to see what Nat and the Captain see (ghosts, ship, map, etc).

Notes after the last rehearsal: (One of our observers found the play sometimes funny). Don't be thrown if people laugh. With late-night horror movies, outer-space melodramas, shock films, etc., laughter is a common reaction. When you go to a fun-house or ride a roller-coaster, you get scared and laugh at your own fright. The Omen, Jaws; the titles themselves evoke a humorous reaction. Audiences are individuals acting in collective reaction; they are aware of people around them. They wouldn't laugh if there were no one else there. People love to show their sophistication, their superiority to anything outside the circle of provable experience. They wouldn't react at all unless they were being taken into the reality. They react because they catch themselves believing, not because they don't believe. [To the leading actor:] You have to believe, or you can't act the play. Don't be a critic, be an actor. From your character position, you cannot possibly view the world of the play with objectivity. You as the character snicker at Sue's unbelief, and it makes you hold on more firmly to what you think is real (the red and green lights of the ship in the harbour).

To the cast before the first performance: Tell the story. You are compelled to tell it, are driven to tell it, and desperately want to tell it. Aim for the climactic moment. The trajectory of the play is toward the moment when Nat believes he sees the ship in the harbour and when the audience begins to see what he sees. The audience will go along with this delusion as reality if they know that the characters actually believe in it. Making this happen is the fun in doing this kind of play.

O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS IN HUNGARY: A CHRONOLOGICAL RECORD

[These data, compiled and contributed by Peter Egri of the University of Budapest, are derived partly from O'Neill, a monograph in Hungarian by Mr. András Benedek, dramaturgist of the Hungarian National Theater (Budapest, 1964), and partly from the kind information of Mr. Balint Magyar, theatre historian.]

- 1928: The Hairy Ape (A szőrös majom), Új Színpad, Budapest.
 1929: Strange Interlude (Különös közjáték), Vígszínház, Budapest.
 1934: Ah, Wilderness! (Ifjúság), Vígszínház, Budapest.
 1937: Mourning Becomes Electra (Amerikai Elektra), Nemzeti Színház, Budapest.
 Days Without End (Mindörökke), Vígszínház, Budapest.
 1946: Desire Under the Elms (Vágy a szilfák alatt), Nemzeti Színház, Budapest.
 1947: Anna Christie (Anna Christie), Pesti Színház, Budapest.
 1963: Long Day's Journey Into Night (Hosszú út az éjszakába), Nemzeti Színház, Budapest.
 Mourning Becomes Electra (Amerikai Elektra), Vígszínház, Budapest.
 1964: Mourning Becomes Electra (Amerikai Elektra), Nemzeti Színház, Pécs.
 Desire Under the Elms (Vágy a szilfák alatt), Katona József Színház, Kecskemét.
 1965: Hughie (Éjszakai portás), Irodalmi Színpad, Budapest.
 1966: A Moon for the Misbegotten (Boldogtalan hold), Szigligeti Színház, Szolnok.
 1967: More Stately Mansions (Költő és üzlete), Nemzeti Színház, Pécs.
 Mourning Becomes Electra (Amerikai Elektra), Csokonai Színház, Debrecen.
 1968: Mourning Becomes Electra (Amerikai Elektra), Kisfaludy Színház, Győr.
 A Touch of the Poet (Egy igazi úr), József Attila Színház, Budapest.
 1969: Long Day's Journey Into Night (Hosszú út az éjszakába), Csokonai Színház, Debrecen.
 1970: Mourning Becomes Electra (Amerikai Elektra), Nemzeti Színház, Miskolc.
 Long Day's Journey Into Night (Hosszú út az éjszakába), Szigligeti Színház, Szolnok.
 1971: The Iceman Cometh (Eljő a jeges), Vígszínház, Budapest.
 1973: Marco Millions (Marco Polo milliói), Nemzeti Színház, Pécs.
 1974: A Touch of the Poet (Egy igazi úr), Katona József Színház, Kecskemét.
 Desire Under the Elms (Vágy a szilfák alatt), József Attila Színház, Budapest.
 1975: A Moon for the Misbegotten (Boldogtalan hold), Katona József Színház, Kecskemét.
 1977: Long Day's Journey Into Night (Utazás az éjszakába), Pesti Színház, Budapest.

--Peter Egri

REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

1. Paul Voelker, "Eugene O'Neill's Aesthetic of the Drama," Modern Drama (March 1978), pp. 87-99.

Eugene O'Neill was not the type of writer who expended time and energy in recurrent formal expositions of his dramatic theories. Nevertheless, he frequently expressed his ideas on the drama through the more informal methods of the interview and the personal letter. Examination of several hundred of these, primarily personal letters written over several decades, makes it possible to infer and to describe what seems to be a coherent aesthetic of the drama.

O'Neill's poetics of the drama contains six major principles. First, and for the critic the most important, is the principle of the script's integrity. The written text is a "thing in itself," a complete work of art, the values of which are self-contained and independent of theatrical production. Production may enhance these values or obscure them, but the values remain in all their clarity in the script itself.

The script is primarily an effort at communication between the playwright and the audience; as such, its chief value resides in the truth or the "interpretation" of life which the play communicates. The truth of the play is more important than any other aspect; it is the truth which is communicated which makes the play either important or just another play.

The truth of the play is communicated through three chief elements--the plot, the characters, and the settings. The plot is of primary importance; both the characters and the settings are subordinate to the events of the play, which in turn are subordinate to the truth of the play. This hierarchy of values suggests that the first task of the critic is to grasp the importance of the plot and the truth it conveys. In this attempt, however, the critic cannot really ignore the characters and the settings, for with the plot, all three combine into an organic whole which is ultimately indivisible.

The truth of the play is communicated to the audience on two mutually reinforcing levels, the intellectual and the emotional. As a result, the audience may feel the truth of the play without being able to comprehend it or to explain it. The emotional component of the truth is conveyed primarily through the play's rhythms, both the rhythms of the dialogue and the rhythms of the play's structure, including its visual scenic structure.

Clearly, in his effort to communicate, the playwright as an artist creates in a mode of mixed media. He uses both dialogue and the various theatrical media--lighting, sound, costume, blocking, gesture, and so forth--as indicated in the stage directions. It is because he is aware in the act of writing of all the salient elements of theatrical production that the completed script is self-contained.

These are the six basic principles: (1) the integrity of the script; (2) the primacy of truth; (3) the hierarchy of values; (4) the concept of organic unity; (5) the two-level, wholistic method of understanding; and (6) the artistic creation in the mode of mixed media.

There are also three secondary principles related to more traditional values: (1) the plot must be well constructed and recognized as inevitable; (2) the characters must be perceived as recognizable human beings, not just abstractions; and (3) the dialogue must be dynamic, colorful, and rhythmically beautiful. (P.V.)

2. Another essay by Professor Voelker, on Bound East for Cardiff, is scheduled to appear in the December 1978 issue of Studies in Bibli-

ography. To whet readers' appetites, Mr. Voelker offers the following "pre-abstract":

The article presents the first extended comparison of the 1914 Children of the Sea and the 1916 Bound East for Cardiff, a comparison which suggests that these two versions may be significantly more different than O'Neill's biographers have led us to believe. Since at this time no manuscript of Cardiff can be found in any of the major O'Neill collections to substantiate O'Neill's report that Cardiff was completed before he went to Harvard, it appears that George Pierce Baker may have in fact influenced the final shape of Cardiff, despite O'Neill's disclaimers. If so, the story of O'Neill's development in his first years as a playwright may have to be revised, especially with regard to his relationship to George Pierce Baker.

3. Desire Under the Elms, directed by Craig Hartley. Gainesville (Florida) Little Theatre, April 1978.

On a very small proscenium stage, Hartley made use of six acting areas on five levels. Upstage right on the highest level is the brothers' room. Slightly lower, stage left, is Ephraim's room. Down three steps and left center is the dining area (with no part of the kitchen being visible). Down right center and slightly lower is the parlor. At floor level downstage left is the porch area and right the yard area. By skillful lighting and movement of a few pieces of furniture, he conveyed the sense of a small two-story farmhouse, suggesting the wooden walls behind the bedrooms by uneven flats higher in the center and merging into a dark backdrop. Very low, similarly uneven partitions masked the levels between bedroom and first-floor levels, whereas a stone foundation appeared to support the house above the yard level.

Although the production was praised for its "craftsmanship" in all regards, the local critic found the play "filled with bleats and complaints rather than sound and fury." But she was "not bored ... at any time," and concluded that the evening "was a surprisingly relaxing one"--hardly the usual response to a well-produced Desire. The play also was the least popular of the Little Theatre's productions for the year--which may say more about Gainesville reviewers and audiences than about O'Neill.

--Winifred Frazer

4. Thirst, directed by Edward Amor. Experimental Theatre, University of Wisconsin-Madison, April 1978.

O'Neill's first sea play (1913-14), Thirst had an auspicious premiere at the Wharf Theatre in Provincetown in August, 1916. George Cram Cook, its director, played the Gentleman; Louise Bryant was the Dancer; and O'Neill himself played the Mulatto Sailor. But despite such an impressive original cast, the play was not performed again for more than sixty-one years, until it was revived last spring (April 12-15) in an experimental production at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, with Mohammed Paigah as scenic designer, Bruce Johnson as composer of the musical score, and Esther M. Jackson as literary advisor. Professor Jackson and the director, Edward Amor, considered the play "cinematic in form and contemporary in theme," and the endeavor was a great success, praised by local critic Jim Gribble (in the Press Connection) as "one of the theater events of the year."

While it is unlikely that fog drifted through the playhouse walls this time (the Experimental Theatre is in the basement of UWM's Vilas Hall), that omission was more than compensated for by the technical sophistication of a great university's drama department, far surpassing the limited means of the Provincetowners six decades back. This is Gribble's description of the recent production, which is interesting to compare with Travis Bogard's description of the 1916 scenic design (Contour in Time, p. 30): "There was no stage curtain; there was an expansive stretch of green and blue canvas across which the shadows of sharks 'swam'; there was the raft, articulated with both realism and expressionism of rough boards and canvas. In the background, an eerie electronic soundtrack chirped...."

"Thirst has no message to speak of. Its historical importance lies in its form and subject matter. In his early experimental days, O'Neill had not developed as a coherent social critic or philosopher. He merely wanted to shatter the false, stylized conventions of the theater and throw what he saw as the ugly, bitter truths of life in the audience's face. The play, however, is a touchstone for the themes that O'Neill would later grapple with directly in masterpieces like Mourning Becomes Electra.... [Cf. Louis Sheaffer, O'Neill, Son and Playwright, p. 272.]

"The star of this second Thirst is the setting, designed with uncanny insight by Mohammed Paigah. O'Neill put up with sparsity out of necessity in his early days, but his later career leaves no doubt that the settings for his plays should reflect both the theme and the mood of the action. In that, Paigah's work epitomizes O'Neill's ideas."

It is at such times that the editor, who has a photograph of the stage setting, most laments his present inability to include illustrations in the Newsletter. It is expected, however, that he will be able to do so within the coming year, at which time he hopes to share that photograph with Newsletter readers. Certainly the University of Wisconsin's admirable effort at resuscitation demonstrates how those works of O'Neill that are too often dismissed as unworkable or unworthy can be made to work, and succeed, if approached with creative imagination. --Ed.

5. Where the Cross Is Made, directed by George Hamlin. Loeb Experimental Theatre, Harvard University, July 6-8, 1978.

Where the Cross Is Made is an interesting study of the tenuous line between facts and dreams; the transference of a mad obsession from a father to a son; the difference between knowing and believing, and the insanity that results when the latter overcomes the former; and also the idea that believing can be life-sustaining even though it undermines the reason. Surely more than enough thematic material to sustain a one-act play, and the Loeb Drama Center production, under the direction of George Hamlin, brought it to effective life on a spare, three-quarter-round stage with just enough of the details of O'Neill's set description--chairs and table; ship's lantern; companionway stairs at the rear, rising to stage left; dim light and sounds of wind and sea--just enough to abet the audience's imagination, in a play that makes great demands on an audience's imagination.

O'Neill said that his purpose in writing the play was "to see whether it's possible to make an audience go mad, too," along with Nat Bartlett, as he is (in Travis Bogard's words) "consumed by his father's madness." While the audience was doubtless able to return to the work-

aday world after the performance with its reason unimpaired; and while the ghosts, though seaweed-matted, neither swayed nor dripped (their mime was superior to their slime); still, there was nary a titter at the performance I attended, and the throbbing green light that punctuated the ghost scenes made the suspension of disbelief surprisingly easy, even though the front-row spectators were, as in the original Provincetown Playhouse production, no more than four feet from the performers.

Captain Bartlett (Michael Miller) was appropriately crafty; his daughter Sue (Susan Berry) looked like a young Mary Tyrone, which is rather how O'Neill describes her; and Dr. Higgins (Andy Sellon), though more cool than I had expected him to be--neither the tale of cannibalism nor the corpse of Captain Bartlett cracked his supercilious veneer--certainly conveyed the "perfunctory" nature of the man O'Neill described.

The finest performance was by James Bundy as Nat, the son, whose incipient madness was carefully planted early--long before there's any explicit textual hint about his condition. In reading the play, I'd always sped too quickly over phrases like "with a forced laugh," "with a hollow chuckle," and "laughs sardonically." Bundy played them for all they were worth, as he did the tension in the boy between believing his father and accepting what he knows. When the treasure map flares up in a bright flame amid the surrounding gloom as Nat tries to "free [himself] and become sane," we recall his earlier emphasis to the doctor that, for facts, light is necessary: "Without that--they become dreams up here--dreams, Doctor." And when the light of the burning map fails to purge him of his mad dreams, the audience is as touched as Nat is, though in a different sense.

Mr. Hamlin, whose director's notes appear elsewhere in this issue, paced the performance with a mastery of suspenseful build-up. That, and Mr. Bundy's moving performance as Nat, made this a memorable production. --Ed.

NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. A number of Newsletter readers were gratified to learn, in the May 1978 issue (item 3a on pp. 18-19), that progress is being made toward the publication of O'Neill's letters--a resource that will be a boon to scholars and theatre artists alike. One of the compilers, George H. Jensen of the University of South Carolina, describes (in a letter of May 25) his recent and continuing efforts in the tangled vineyards of editorship:

"Donald Gallup and Armina Marshall, head of the Theatre Guild, gave me permission to edit the O'Neill-Guild correspondence as a dissertation project with the proviso that they could approve the manuscript before it was published as a book. The dissertation version was finished in fall 1977. Donald Gallup read the dissertation version. He generally approved of the manuscript, but wanted a few changes made before it was shown to Armina Marshall. Within the next week, I will finish revising the dissertation and send it to Miss Marshall. If and when she approves the manuscript, it will be submitted to Yale University Press. If Yale rejects the manuscript, it will be taken to other publishers. The major question now is how quickly Miss Marshall, who is obviously a busy woman, can read the manuscript and whether or not she will approve it. If

all goes well, the manuscript could be submitted for publication by the end of the summer."

2. In a recent "Arts and Leisure" section of the Sunday New York Times ("If Actors Had Their Choice of Roles," June 18, 1978, pp. 1, 11), Geraldine Fitzgerald was one of the performers who responded to the editor's inquiry as to what great theatrical characters they would most like to play. Ms. Fitzgerald's first choice was Cordelia in King Lear, since she has long been "interested in a human being who would sublimate her own needs to help another human being. I was interested because in this century altruism is suspect--is it neurotic, masochistic, parasitic--what? Well, I never got to play the role, and now never will, but I got to play Nora Melody in A Touch of the Poet and this woman is to me organically the same kind of person as Cordelia--as the play is to me Eugene O'Neill's retelling of the 'Lear' legend: the potentially great man who retreats from reality into dreams."

Her second choice was Mother Courage, in Marc Blitzstein's version of the Brecht play; and her third ("my all-time favorite") was a role she has played before: Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey. "She is, to me, the most complex character in dramatic literature: a mother who is herself a child, a mystic and a materialist, an artist with no means of expression, a sensualist who wants to be a celibate, a saint and a demon. I love her. In fact, I played the role in New York in Arvin Brown's production with Robert Ryan, where it was a sell-out success, but circumstances beyond anyone's control forced its closing after six weeks--hardly time to scratch the surface of this masterpiece."

3. STRANGE BEDFELLOWS IN PRODUCTION SWEEPSTAKES. Theatre Profiles/3, the latest of the Theatre Communication Group's biennial resource books on nonprofit professional theatres in the United States, reveals which playwrights were most performed by those theatres during the 1975-76 and 1976-77 seasons. O'Neill tied for fourth with two incongruous companions. The winner was of course Shakespeare (54 productions). Second and third were Tennessee Williams (34) and Shaw (32). Fourth place (25 productions each) was shared by Moliere, Noel Coward, and Eugene O'Neill! Below this tenuous triumverate came Chekhov (21), Pinter (18), Brecht (16), and Arthur Miller (14).
4. LOST O'NEILL FILM DISCOVERED. O'Neill, though usually dissatisfied with screen versions of his plays, called the 1923 film of Anna Christie, with Blanche Sweet and George Marion, "a delightful surprise ... remarkably well acted and directed, and in spirit an absolutely faithful transcript." Now the film, lost for years, has been located and was broadcast in New York City on July 22, as part of WNET's "Lost and Found" film series, with an introduction by Miss Sweet. Eileen Bowser, curator of the Museum of Modern Art's Department of Film, described the circumstances of its reemergence in the New York Times on June 25 (Section II, p. 22): "It had been rumored to exist in eastern Europe, but it was not until the FIAF [Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film] Congress was held in New York in 1969 that Blanche Sweet was able to beseech the film archivists she met there about her lost film. The delegate from Yugoslavia believed that his archive held a copy." And it did, evidencing one again eastern Europe's great contribution to O'Neill studies.
5. THE BLAZING TRAIL TO TAO HOUSE. Tempers flared at a February 28

meeting in Danville, California, when local residents of the Tao House area and representatives of the National Park Service discussed matters of access and programming in the continuing effort to convert Tao House into an available and fully active National Historic Site that retains the affection of its neighbors. The problem of access involves Kuss Road, the only existing vehicular access, which, according to a recent report by the National Park Service, is "bad, too narrow, too steep, and has too many accidents." (See the discussion of this problem on page 13 of the January 1978 issue of the Newsletter.) A variety of proposals were voiced--charging for use of the road, constructing a cog railway, etc.--and the solution, when reached, will be announced in the Newsletter. On the subject of programming, the residents of the area felt that "a cultural center for the elite would be improper; the public must also be allowed access. It should not be for the cultural elite only, nor should it be a retreat for theatre types only." While it is certainly true that a publicly-funded project should not be the sole possession of any elite, recent performances of O'Neill plays at Tao House (as reported in previous issues) suggest that "theatre types" can make--already have made--a valuable contribution, one that augurs well for the future of the Tao House site as a living memorial to O'Neill.

6. A recent reading, in close proximity, of Long Day's Journey and Frank Gilroy's The Subject Was Roses reminded New York playwright Milan Stitt "that Long Day is the only American play ever to receive two Pulitzer Prizes...in this way: If you take out the mother's drug addiction, the drunk brother, the son's consumption and the father as actor, one is left with The Subject Was Roses. The same revelations in the same order, the same child dead at birth, the same love revenges, etc. Curious." (Mr. Stitt, incidentally, has recently completed the screenplay for Stanley Kramer's film of his play, The Runner Stumbles, which is currently in production.)

7. "HICKEY" GREETES A HOOSIER, a reminiscence by Edward L. Shaughnessy.

After a matinee performance of A Moon for the Misbegotten in the spring of 1974, I had the good fortune to spend a few minutes in conversation with Jason Robards. I had simply waited until the Morosco emptied; his dresser escorted me backstage.

I have no reason to think that Mr. Robards would recall the interview, of course, but I'll not quickly forget it. How charming and gracious he was as he invited me to sit down in his dressing room. The time was about 5:15 in the afternoon; he (and Colleen Dewhurst and Ed Flanders) had yet to give the 8:00 p.m. performance. No hurry, though. We chatted for fifteen or twenty minutes: about O'Neill, about Shaughnessy in Long Day's Journey (who is Phil Hogan in the play they had just acted), about the comparative importance of the Gelbs' book and Sheaffer's two volumes. ("I'll take Louis' books," said Robards. It surprised me that he even had a preference.)

"What do you do, where are you from?" I told him about my teaching and about a fall seminar in O'Neill that I would be giving. "I'm from Indiana," I said. "I teach American literature at Butler University in Indianapolis." Robards smiled: I could imagine what he was thinking: "Hmm, the corn-belt, huh!" He just smiled for a few seconds and then said: "So they finally got the gospel out to the frontier, eh?" The point hit me immediately and we both laughed. Of course, Jason Robards had created the definitive Hickey under Quintero's direction

in 1956--Hickey, the son of a traveling Hoosier preacher from whom the salesman had learned how to size up hayseeds and other easy touches.

As I prepared to leave, I asked the actor to inscribe my program. He had nothing to write with. "All I have is a pen filled with teacher's red ink," I said. He took it and wrote above his photograph: "For Ed Shaughnessy--In teacher's red ink, not Scotch. Best health and wishes, Jason Robards." Now there's a true son of O'Neill, I thought. And that's one part of the story I can prove.

8. An interesting O'Neill project was recently staged by a senior honors student in the Dramatic Art Department at the University of California, Berkeley. Dianne Colantonio, a student specializing in lighting design, became impressed with the way in which O'Neill manipulated his lighting effects. Her thesis was that by calling for certain kinds of effects he contributed greatly to the subtlety and care with which lighting designers and technicians work in the American theatre. As a demonstration of her concept, she planned a program that showed O'Neill's lighting requirements over his career. The student-directed-and-acted presentation began with A Wife for a Life, which was staged with footlights and typical turn-of-the-century lighting effects to achieve the dying desert light and the campfire. She then offered the second scene of Emperor Jones and the last act of Welded, using two follow spots as the only illumination for the latter work. Welded emerged as a fascinating "art deco" period piece, and despite the excesses of emotion, there was every indication that, given courageous acting, the play might prove of interest in the theatre. The bill concluded with the Edmond/James Tyrone scene from the fourth act of Long Day's Journey into Night, the lighting being very reminiscent of the lighting required for A Wife for a Life.
9. In Berkeley, California, The Playhouse Company, a group of professional actors and advanced students of acting teacher Jean Shelton, undertook an O'Neill season, producing in succession throughout the year A Moon for the Misbegotten, directed by Alma Becker; The Hairy Ape, directed by Edward Weingold and Hughie, directed by David Datz; The Emperor Jones and Before Breakfast, directed by Robert Elross; and Long Day's Journey into Night, directed by Jean Shelton. The ambitious program featured Robert A. Behling as Jamie in both the Tyrone plays, Robert Elross as James Tyrone and as Erie Smith, and Michael McGuinness as Edmund. Danny Glover appeared as the Emperor Jones and Elliot Wagner appeared as Yank. Josie Hogan was played by Diana Ayers, F. Jo Mohrbach played Mrs. Rowland and Anne Macey played Mary Tyrone.
10. RECENT AND CURRENT O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS.

Ah, Wilderness! American Conservatory Theatre, San Francisco. The production toured in Hawaii (June 12-25) and Tokyo, Japan (June 30 - July 9).

Before Breakfast, starring Sylvia Miles. Chichester Festival, England, July. (Part of a double bill also including Clifford Browder's The Employment Agency.)

Desire Under the Elms, dir. Craig Hartley. Gainesville (Florida) Little Theatre, April 5-15. (See report in "Reviews and Abstracts" section of this issue.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night. Academy Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia. On tour from September 7 through October 1, under sponsorship of the Southern Arts Federation. One-day and two-and-a-half-day residencies

(\$1200 and \$1750 respectively) may still be available.

Marco Millions. Sharon (Connecticut) Playhouse, August 1-5, 8-12.

(A review will appear in the next issue.)

A Moon for the Misbegotten, dir. Stanley Wojewodski, Jr. American Stage Festival, Milford, New Hampshire, July 25-30.

Thirst, dir. Edward Amor. Experimental Theatre, University of Wisconsin-Madison, April 12-15. (See report in "Reviews and Abstracts" section of this issue.)

Where the Cross Is Made, dir. George Hamlin. Harvard Summer Repertory Theatre, Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 6-8. (Part of a double bill also including Thornton Wilder's The Happy Journey. See report in "Reviews and Abstracts" section of this issue.)

11. R.S.V.P. Items 8,9, and 11 in the "News and Queries" section of the last issue of the Newsletter (May 1978, pp. 20-21) were requests for information and materials for special sections in future issues. The editor hopes that, after subscribers have trode back from their arcadian summer rambles, those who have not as yet responded will find time to do so. While the requests are more fully stated on the aforementioned pages, these are in essence the materials being sought:
1. titles of college and university courses devoted to or including O'Neill, with a list of the titles included and a brief description of overall format;
 2. meritorious examples of student writing on O'Neill (both graduate and undergraduate, whether brief essays or extracts from longer works, but preferably no longer than 750 words), to be used in a special issue devoted to student work on O'Neill;
 3. theatregoers' memories of indelible past performers and performances of O'Neill; and
 4. notes and essays on the film versions of O'Neill's plays and on adaptations of his work for other media.
- The editor expects, before the end of 1979, to be able to include photographs and illustrations in the Newsletter, so responders to requests 3 and 4 might consider including illustrative materials with their submissions.

PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

FREDERIC I. CARPENTER, of the Department of English, University of California at Berkeley, is the author of Eugene O'Neill (Twayne), the second edition of which will appear in the spring of 1979 and will include the critique of Hughie that is printed in this issue. Professor Carpenter's "The Enduring O'Neill: The Early Plays" was in the May 1977 issue of the Newsletter. He is the author of many other works on American and English literature, including studies of Robinson Jeffers and Emerson.

PETER EGRI, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Budapest, is working on a monograph on O'Neill and will speak on The Iceman Cometh at the International Seminar in Debrecen, Hungary, in early September. A letter by Professor Egri on O'Neill in Hungary appeared in the May 1977 issue of the Newsletter.

WINIFRED FRAZER, Professor of English at the University of Florida, directed an O'Neill seminar at the 1975 MLA Convention in San Francisco. She is the author of Love As Death in "The Iceman

Cometh": A Modern Treatment of an Ancient Theme (1967) and essays on Anna Christie, The Iceman Cometh and other plays of O'Neill. She reviewed an earlier production of Desire Under the Elms in the January 1978 issue of the Newsletter.

GEORGE HAMLIN, Producing Director of the Loeb Drama Center at Harvard University, has been active in the theatre for more than 30 years as an actor, director, teacher and producer. He was managing director of the Dock Street Theatre, Charleston, S.C., and of the New Dramatists in New York. As production associate for Roger L. Stevens at the Playwrights Company in New York, his assignments included the Broadway productions of Miss Lonelyhearts, Time Remembered and The Firstborn. He came to Harvard when the Loeb was one year old (1961), and since that time has staged over thirty mainstage productions there.

GEORGE H. "PAT" QUINBY studied under George Pierce Baker at Yale, and was stage manager for Grand Hotel and Double Door in New York City before returning to his alma mater, Bowdoin College, in 1934, where he was director of dramatics until 1966 and taught playwriting until 1969. His O'Neill productions at Bowdoin included Bound East for Cardiff, Long Day's Journey, The Straw, The Emperor Jones and Ah, Wilderness!--the second, third and fifth of which he also directed in Iran, an experience which he described in the September 1977 issue of the Newsletter. He followed O'Neill to sea as a merchant seaman in '25-'26.

EDWARD L. SHAUGHNESSY, Associate Professor of English at Butler University, has published articles on Santayana in the Markham Review (May 1974), Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism (Spring 1975) and Journal of American Studies (August 1976). He will be on sabbatical leave during the spring of 1979 and will divide his time between Harvard (work on Santayana in the Widener) and Yale (work on O'Neill in the Beinecke).

LOUIS SHEAFFER, Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer of Eugene O'Neill (O'Neill, Son and Playwright, 1968; O'Neill, Son and Artist, 1973), worked on the Brooklyn Eagle from the mid-30's until its demise in 1955, serving in its last years as drama critic. He was press agent for two legendary Quintero-directed O'Neill productions--the off-Broadway revival of The Iceman Cometh, and the first American production of Long Day's Journey--which activities, combined with an earlier love for O'Neill, led to the biographical project, which has won the undying gratitude of all O'Neill scholars and fans. It is a pleasure to voice that gratitude in 1978, as we celebrate the tenth and fifth anniversaries of the two volumes.

PAUL D. VOELKER, Associate Professor of Drama at the University of Wisconsin Center in Marshfield, is returning to academe after a year's leave of absence during which he served as consultant to the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre's O'Neill project (see "The Milwaukee Rep's Dynamic Duo" in the January 1978 issue of the Newsletter). His previous Newsletter contributions include "O'Neill and George Pierce Baker" (September 1977) and a review of A Moon for the Misbegotten (January 1978).

LATE FLASH! Two O'Neill events at MLA Convention in December (both in the New York Hilton): a three-hour discussion featuring scholars, actors and directors (Bogard, Raleigh, Robards, Dewhurst, Fitzgerald, Brown, Quintero et al.) at 2:30 on December 29 in the Grand Ballroom East; and a meeting to initiate a Eugene O'Neill Society, at 10 a.m. on December 30 in Room 504.

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