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The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

September, 1979

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

'Tis, as readers of this issue will discover, a season for analogues and influences in O'Neill studies. *Strange Interlude* owes much to Ibsen's *Wild Duck*, as does *A Touch of the Poet*, which also owes much to Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. *The Hairy Ape* may owe much to John Howard Lawson's play, *Standards*. And Tennessee Williams' *Kingdom of Earth* owes much to *Desire Under the Elms*, which in turn owes much to Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville and Whitman. Indeed, seldom has there been a season in which O'Neill's particular thread has been so ably and detailedly related to the warp and woof (especially the woof) of modern literature. Which is all to the good. Far from being a unique, exotic sport, he was a full-fledged citizen of the world, as forthcoming books by Horst Frenz and Virginia Floyd will further emphasize. (On the subject of Professor Floyd's volume, see "New Book on O'Neill: A Preview" in this issue.) The Newsletter, whose 185th page this is, hopes, with the aid of its thoughtful contributors, to continue such a delineation of O'Neill's complex place in the fabric of modern drama and thought. "Only connect," urged E.M. Forster. Eugene O'Neill definitely did. Whatever the fate of his lonely protagonists, he himself assuredly "belongs."

Speaking of belonging, all lovers of O'Neill will wish to belong to the nascent EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY, whose birth was announced in the last issue (pp. 11-13). Its first meeting, which will include the adoption of by-laws and the election of officers to be nominated from the floor, will be held at Tao House, near San Francisco, on Saturday, December 29, during the 1979 MLA Convention. Since the details of the meeting and of transportation to its site have not as yet been formalized, fuller information will shortly be mailed to all current

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THE ICEMAN MELTETH:

O'NEILL'S RETURN TO CULTURAL ORIGINS

A humorous passage in *Long Day's Journey into Night* raises the question of Shakespeare's national origin and religion. Edmund taunts his father: "What you want to believe, that's the only truth! Shakespeare was an Irish Catholic, for example." And the elder Tyrone responds defensively: "So he was. The proof is in his plays." If nothing else, the exchange ought to challenge the tiresome complaint that O'Neill lacked a sense of the comic. For all the foolishness in the tiff over Shakespeare, however, what rich implications might be suggested by substituting the name of O'Neill for that of the bard. Such a reading (albeit unfaithful) would render a valuable truth: that in his late plays, the period of his masterpieces, Eugene O'Neill had at last come to terms with his cultural identity. By this time he could depend confidently on two internalized powers—a theatrical sophistication by then a part of blood and bone, and a memory forged by the language and symbols of Catholicism.¹ Always fiercely proud of his Irish heritage, he had now accepted the full implications of his Catholic background. "The proof is in his plays."

This acceptance, of course, signified no theological recanting. Indeed, the point has no parochial importance at all. Speaking of *The Iceman Cometh*, O'Neill stated flatly that the play marked "a denial of any other experience of faith in my plays."² Still, we may wonder what moved him to relive the depths of his life experiences in his late creative burst. It is no doubt true that the dynamics of any masterpiece must always remain something of a mystery. Such works defy total analysis. But we can identify their logic (*praxis*, Aristotle called it, the motivation that impels the action). The logic of O'Neill's last works is profoundly Christian. Thus it was possible for him to remark on the eve of *The Iceman's* first production: "In all my plays sin is punished and redemption takes place."³ It would be difficult to imagine language more convincingly or traditionally Christian.

Sin and redemption—the very words recall the central mystery of Christianity. But if O'Neill's remark cannot be construed as having a theological explanation, what can it mean? Was it no more than

a sentimental or ironic characterization of his work? That seems improbable, as we shall presently see. Nevertheless, it is important to observe something in the psychology of his utterance, a habit of language rooted in memory. By the time he wrote his final plays he had, I believe, settled the question of his identity. And, although it would be silly to speak of him then as a doctrinal or practicing Catholic, it seems perfectly reasonable to think of him as a man who knew himself to be an Irish Catholic. So it was that he could speak without self-consciousness of sin and redemption.

For many years frozen into Nietzschean coldness and Strindbergian hardness, in the end the iceman melted. In the wrenching effort to bring forth *Long Day's Journey*, the playwright had wept so profusely that, as his widow recalled, ridges were etched into his face each day as the work continued. Even so, he maintained thematic fidelity: the results were vintage O'Neill.

For his theme had never really changed. Announced as early as 1922 in *The Hairy Ape*, it would be rendered in variations in all of his later plays. One can state that theme very simply: modern man can no longer integrate with his universe; he has lost his "old harmony" with nature and can find no viable substitute for his old faith. The individual seeks to know, like Yank in *The Hairy Ape*, "Where do I fit in?" As he becomes more articulate and sophisticated, like Larry Slade in *The Iceman Cometh*, modern man knows that he no longer does fit in. Thus defeated by his fate, he creates a life-line, the dream that he counts on and upon which he builds the shaky structure of his existence. Such grim philosophy offers but little consolation.

An ambivalent modernist, O'Neill never wrote except with religious intent, as Virginia Floyd has said. He had always been inclined to mysticism and in a way that juxtaposed oddly with his philosophy. For, while he felt the urge to unite with the sublime, O'Neill questioned whether there is anything beyond this existence (a questioning about which he would always feel guilty). But he was also convinced that to believe we belong is our necessary pipedream, a supportive illusion without which we cannot live. Man's modern tragedy is, then, to seek a higher life but to know that it cannot be attained. This impossible condition, O'Neill held, gives modern drama its stature. It represents the closest imitation of the Greeks he could conceive: "Of course, this is very much of a dream, but where the theatre is concerned one must have a dream, and the Greek dream in tragedy is the noblest ever!"⁴

Despair and exaltation: have they not always fused paradoxically in tragedy? In the modern period, however, O'Neill stands as an anomaly—the classicist who said he accepted the melancholy assumptions of recent philosophy, particularly Nietzsche's. Again and again we find his characters tortured, sick, poorly integrated with their time and world. Defeated and dodging self-knowledge, they seek escape in pipedreams. Yet they experience guilt caused by having embraced the illusions in the first place. Such self-deception requires deft rationalization. As one of them observes, "It's a great game, the pursuit of happiness."⁵ Turning a deaf ear to the ancient maxim, "Know thyself," each feels humiliated in his weakness and becomes, like Edmund Tyrone, "a little in love with death."

If many moderns see guilt as an unhealthy vestige of superstition, O'Neill cannot so summarily

¹ Although several scholars have written on O'Neill's Irish Catholic background, none has, I think, treated the subject as I have here—as a manifestation of Christian identity. A number of papers were read at the 1976 MLA Convention in New York under the general theme "'Behind Life' Forces in Eugene O'Neill." The session was moderated by Professor Virginia Floyd, who has written: "My original intention in attempting to explore the 'behind life' forces that predominate in O'Neill and his work was to examine the playwright's Irish Catholicism and Puritanism, but the scope was broadened to include his mysticism and humanism. O'Neill was a religious playwright."

Chief contributions were papers by John Henry Raleigh ("Irish Catholicism in O'Neill's Later Plays") and by Frederick Wilkins ("Stones Atop O' Stones': The Pressure of Puritanism in O'Neill's New England Plays"). Of course, Professor Raleigh had published his seminal essay, "O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and New England Irish-Catholicism," in the *Partisan Review*, Fall, 1959.

² Crosswell Bowen, "The Black Irishman," in *O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism*, eds. Oscar Cargill, N. Bryllion Fagin, and William J. Fisher (New York, 1966), p. 84.

³ Quoted by Bowen, p. 82.

⁴ A letter to Arthur Hobson Quinn, quoted in *O'Neill and His Plays*, p. 126.

⁵ Eugene O'Neill, *The Iceman Cometh* (New York, 1957), p. 14. (Further page references are given in parentheses following quoted passages.)

grandstand of philosophical detachment" serves only to shield a real vulnerability. Once an agent in the turn-of-the-century Anarchist Movement, Larry now sneers at human nature: "When man's soul isn't a sow's ear, it will be time enough to dream of silk purses" (30).

Larry nevertheless shepherds his fellow lost souls. Indeed, O'Neill stresses his "expression of tired tolerance giving his face the quality of a pitying but weary old priest's" (5). Though he protests that he can no longer believe in the Movement or mankind, he is in truth a deeply compassionate man. Bound by the seal of secrecy, the "old priest" must hear every confession. And his unconvincing detachment and claim of freedom from pipedreams are to be severely tested. In the day-and-a-half covered in *The Iceman*, Larry is destined to collide with two men who will force him to see that he, too, lives a life-lie. As the most cynical, of course, he is the most open to hurt.

The youthful anarchist-on-the-run, Don Parritt, seeks a hiding place at Harry Hope's. This lad has betrayed his own mother, for whom the Movement is a way of life. Parritt knows that Slade had once been close to his mother and asks forgiveness of a man who had himself betrayed the cause. The stage is set for Larry's disillusionment.

Enter hardware salesman Theodore Hickman, an inveterate rounder and drunk, who appears every year to treat the "gang" to a party on Harry's birthday. The son of a backwoods preacher, Hickey has secularized his inherited gift for oratory and put it to the service of salesmanship. Now, recently reformed, he comes on a quasi-religious mission to deliver his gospel of death-to-illusions and thus bring the "Brothers and Sisters" his "line of salvation." Like any missionary spreading the "good news," Hickey must let them have their way for a time. But as he provides drinks, he hopes to force all to jettison their tomorrows and seize the day. If made to live out their fragile dreams, he believes, they will inevitably fail but will no longer experience guilt. To this end he must take on Slade, their stoutest defender, who teaches that "the lie of the pipedream" alone gives life.

As Hickey turns the screw tighter on each of them, the brothers and sisters become testy; the earlier calm breaks up. All grow to hate him and hope that he will be destroyed by his own misguided zeal. Harry Hope's becomes a den of sullen losers, each prepared to tear the heart out of the other. His confidence weakened, Hickey is forced to re-examine his own achievement of peace, to test it by reconstructing the manner of its evolution.

Compulsively ("I've got to tell you!"), he rehearses with them how he delivered his wife Evelyn of her pipedream that he would reform. For years she had forgiven him his infidelity and binges. Unconsciously he had grown to hate her pity: "There's a limit to the guilt you can feel and the forgiveness and pity you can take!" (239). So, to free her of her need to forgive him, Hickey (the Iceman/Death) murdered his wife in her bed. He had grown to loathe her insufferable kindness, just as the derelicts' fondness has now grown into hatred of him. In a brief flash of insight, he recognizes his real motive in killing Evelyn. But almost immediately he denies this truth.

His subsequent treatment of Hickey marks a startling instance of O'Neill's reliance on his Christian memory. One day, at a rehearsal of the 1946 production of *The Iceman*, he spoke of his character in a language whose cultural nuances are everywhere betrayed. Was the salesman a good man, he was asked. "Revenge," he replied, "is the subconscious motive for the individual's behavior with the rest of society. Revulsion drives man to tell others of his sins.... In all my plays sin is punished and

redemption takes place. Vice and virtue cannot live side by side."⁹

"Sin is punished": Hickey is taken off by the police at the end, presumably to face the electric chair. So had Abbie and Eben been taken away by the sheriff for the murder of their baby (*Desire Under the Elms*, 1924). Public knowledge of the sinner and his condemnation might have been O'Neill's meaning, but that is doubtful. In his late plays the "sinner's" torment is often inflicted by conscience and must be confessed. This is Hickey's punishment. He is guilty of the sin of pride which fosters his particular pipedream, a destructive Messianic illusion whose vitality depends upon the weakness of others.

In O'Neill's universe the greatest sin is neither drunkenness nor adultery; it is rather the robbing another of his hopeless hope. Such an act constitutes a profound violation of the individual. To deny one his self-image is to strip him of his dignity and his interior life. Without his pipedream a person becomes merely pathetic. I think it can be argued that even Evelyn's forgiving Hickey was destructive because by this she continually robbed her husband of his feeling of self-worth. "Christ," he shouts, "can you imagine what a guilty skunk she made me feel! If she'd only admitted once she didn't believe any more in her pipedream that someday I'd behave.... Can you picture ... all the guilt she made me feel, and how I hated myself!" (238). For all her long-suffering abjectness, Evelyn's "saintliness" was subtly destructive: "I got so sometimes when she'd kiss me it was like she did it on purpose to humiliate me, as if she'd spit in my face!" (239). Her virtue more apparent than real, Evelyn's forgiveness served only to remind Hickey of his weakness, what O'Neill called "a weakness found in all men."

In historical Christianity redemption does not mean a denial of the sinner's weakness, but it does mean an acceptance of his total humanity through love. In a world where the Christian can no longer locate God, his impulses do not cease to be formed by his tradition. O'Neill's plays picture such a world. The microcosm of Harry Hope's bar is a retreat where men and women find something worthy of love in each other and where they are mutually supportive. But Hickey's relentless campaign to bring them salvation derives not from love, but from a self-hatred born of the guilt Evelyn had made him feel. So there are two kinds of guilt: that borne simply by being a man (which is very Christian), and that engendered by the knowledge that others pity us for being ourselves. Hickey's guilt carries disease to the corporate body. Since he would rob the gang of their feeble illusions, Hickey represents a threat that must be eliminated. He endangers everyone's painfully wrought self-image. He must go.

IV

The portrayal of Larry Slade, however, shows O'Neill's profoundest reliance upon a memory galvanized by Irish Catholicism. It is important to recall that Slade's Irish-Catholic background has been established in the opening character description. Over the years his faculty for belief has been paralyzed, and his sense of lost faith has defeated him. Like Edmund Tyrone, he knows that he can never escape the inevitable tragedy that life is. Yet what he is he is, the compassionate and weary priest. Therefore, in a moment of crisis he reverts to the bedrock of his cultural identity. This marks a brilliant insight on O'Neill's part, an insight into character that staggers us with its dramatic truth.

⁹ Quoted by Bowen, p. 82.



Figure 1

NEW LONDON: A MENTAL TRAVELLER'S NOTES

Downtown New London is by no means as depressed looking as Wilmington, Delaware. Nor is it as physically overwhelming as Baltimore. But, still, it is mostly red brick and low to the ground, which brings to mind these two other aged Eastern coastal cities.

And, too, New London's squat red brick 19th century architecture is being rediscovered and freshened up in all manner of pedestrian malls and recycled buildings, which again brings to mind Wilmington and Baltimore.

But, of course, what New London has that no other American city has is James O'Neill, Sr.'s summer home, Monte Cristo Cottage; the cottage that in no small way contributed to the creation of one of the most powerful plays in American literature, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (Figure 3, below).

it's an inhabitable stage prop with unusually tall, but small, rooms downstairs; even smaller, cramped rooms upstairs (Figure 6), and an incredibly steep staircase connecting the two divergent floors. (Figure 4).

Fittingly, the left of the Cottage's double front doors boasts not one but two keyholes (Figure 5). And in keeping with the O'Neillian penchant for symbols, a monstrous elm can be found hard by the Cottage, stage left (Figure 7). This behemoth tree all but dominates the landscape when one peeks out the upstairs side windows.

Lamentably, the bathroom on the second floor (Figure 8) had not been restored to its original splendor (if indeed a bathroom it was in the O'Neills' time) when the accompanying photographs were taken. Yet the tiny



Figure 2

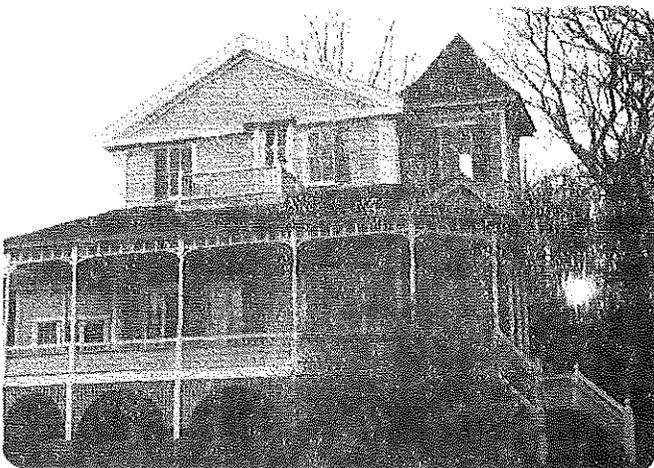


Figure 3

Monte Cristo Cottage, which has been revitalized under the auspices of the Eugene O'Neill Center (Waterbury, Connecticut) quite honestly lives up to its reputation as an architectural fiasco--at best,



Figure 4

EUGENE O'NEILL, DRAMATIC INNOVATOR

[One of the services that the Newsletter can and should provide is to make available to its readers essays of interest that may have escaped their notice because of their date or the limited distribution of their original publications. Such a publication was *Chrysalis*, "the pocket revue of the arts," edited in Boston by Lily and Baird Hastings from 1948 to 1959 and perhaps beyond that date. Studies of O'Neill were frequently included in the pages of *Chrysalis*; among them, with no authors listed, "Eugene O'Neill: A New Phase" (Volume IX, Numbers 5-6, 1956) and "Ideas of Good and Evil in Plays of Eugene O'Neill" (Volume XII, Numbers 5-6, 1959). The following essay, published in *Chrysalis* in 1952 (Volume V, Numbers 7-8), is perhaps the most interesting of the three, partly because of Professor Packard's intimate familiarity with his subject: he acted in and was assistant stage manager of the original production of *The Great God Brown*. If readers express an interest in more, I will reprint other *Chrysalis* articles in future issues. Incorporated into the text that follows are asides and expansions by the author, who notes, "Since this is 'as of 1952,' readers are invited to project their appreciation of O'Neill's 'Great Innovator' aspect through the remainder of his works." --Ed.]

From the earliest character-dialogues of his Provincetown Theatre days as an unknown to *The Iceman Cometh*, Eugene O'Neill was forever striving to expand dramatic expression. Our greatest playwright has profoundly influenced theatre throughout the world. His plays are perhaps more widely performed (and admired) abroad than in the United States. While the present essay cannot pretend to be definitive, it will show the major outline of O'Neill's significant contributions and their meaning today.

I see O'Neill's influence strongest in the innovations he employed to achieve freedom of expression for the theatre. He emancipated theatre writing from many of the strictures of form and technique inherited from the past, but he was no bull-in-the-china-shop iconoclast. However just his early critics may have been in dubbing his plays somber and violent--"the gloomy Gene, crass purveyor of morbid realism"--he knew his theatre, and he knew what he was doing. As a youngster touring the west in his famous father's version of "Monte Cristo," he recognized that our inherited theatre conventions were a cold menace to that swift and burning communication that keeps theatre alive.

While he had to apply strict disciplines in order to cram his dramatic urge into conventional straight-jackets to win a fair hearing (*Beyond the Horizon*, which came in 1919 and was O'Neill's first full-length success, was surely a "straight" play), our dramatist never relaxed his hungry search for means of reaching beyond the expected. By this constant striving he gave to theatre writing a daring and a flexibility that has blue-printed whole new dimensions for drama in the future.

Immediately following the series of plays which culminated with *Beyond the Horizon*, O'Neill launched his highly original *Emperor Jones*, a play in one act (nine scenes, all differently located), and down went the old rules of dramatic technique one after another. "Keep unity of time and space." -- "Don't bring your chief character on stage too early." -- "Use no long speeches" (the play is practically a monologue) -- "Avoid monotony" (the drums of the savages are incessant, beating a terrorizing crescendo that envelops the action) -- "Don't combine fantasy and realism" (Jones' psychological retrogression to raw primitive emotions, the central story-line of the play, is cast in a progressive phantasmagoria ranging from stark realism to pure dream).

Each of the plays that followed in O'Neill's rapid rise to fame staked out its own claim to originality and effectiveness, and each successive play was dubbed his "best": *Anna Christie* (1921) and *The First Man* (1922)--"works of astonishing power"; *The Hairy Ape* (1922)--"expressionism masters realism";

Dion's personality. But whenever, however subtly, a character undergoes an inner change which the world does not recognize as that person, he then goes masked--although he still whips it off if what he happens to say represents his *true* rather than his social thought.

This "shorthand" method of swiftly alternating subjective and objective facets of character adds a startling thrust to the matching of the auditor's thought with that of the playwright!⁴ The use of the masks to indicate the shells into which the characters are driven is particularly well drawn in the case of the men--showing the antagonism of the Dionysian and practical temperaments.

Try to imagine the presentation in stage terms of this extraordinarily complicated dramatic sequence: a man self-destroyed by inner conflict dies in the presence of his envious adversary, and in so doing condemns the adversary to the same self-destruction by willing him his personality. The device of the masks tells the story with sure impact. Dion says, "I will myself to you"; and as he dies the mask falls off; Brown steals it, saying to the mask, "It was *this* I feared, not you--not *you!*" and surreptitiously he puts on the mask as Margaret appears. She, seeing only her Dion (the mask), assumes his "illness" is past, and Brown goes home with her, accepted as Dion.

O'Neill hoped that his Symbolism would clarify the Mystery--for it is a mystery in a very real sense--but a month after it opened we find him "explaining" his drama in the *New York Sun*. [Professor Packard here quotes O'Neill's lengthy analysis of his characters, which I shall delete since it is now readily available elsewhere; in Barrett H. Clark's *Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays* (rev. ed., 1939, pp. 159-162), for instance, and in the Gelbs' biography, pp. 580-581. It should be read in connection with this essay since, in Professor Packard's words, "it makes clearly apparent the inspired suitability of the mask device." --Ed.]

II

The great innovation in *Strange Interlude* is more widely known: the courageous adoption, as a serious dramatic technique, of the old stage device of the "aside," that shabby convention of the burlesque and vaudeville stage, where a character left the "play," "sachayed" to the footlights and hissed a revealing quip or comment to the audience from behind his hand. This lowly device (which effectively annihilated *any* vestige of stage illusion!) O'Neill transformed into the central medium of expression for a profound and dazzlingly brilliant psychological drama which kept audiences enthralled for four and a half hours. Here no masks were needed, nor could they be used, for the alternation between words of the characters' inner thoughts and those intended for the other characters to hear is nearly continuous throughout the play. At no point are we left in the least doubt as to what is going on in every character's mind; each mind is audible--just as if it were our own. The cumulative effect of this inner-thought communication is tremendous: every soul on the stage lies naked and bare. Yet because of the skill of presentation there is no embarrassment, although the burden of the actor is increased immeasurably. A wise director of *Strange Interlude* will rise to the challenge of blending realistic techniques with a stylized acting similar to the presentational mode of the Greeks. He will be careful to keep his whole group "alive"--that is, in overt or very subtle *motion* during all speeches between actors or intended for them--and equally careful that all other characters "freeze" (become *quite* motionless) while one character is voicing his or her inner thoughts. It is fascinating to see how quickly audiences totally unaccustomed to

⁴ O'Neill showed a special personal interest in this play--it was the first of his works of which he voluntarily attended all rehearsals, making such changes as were needed. Concerning *The Great God Brown*, the author received the following from Eugene O'Neill from Paris ca. 1945:

It's very near--and dear--to me, that play--(I'm not sure it isn't the best beloved of them all)--and I'll never forget the fine cooperative spirit that got such a difficult thing on and put it across convincingly.

my viewpoint as being almost "a counterpart of O'Neill's credo in *Dynamo*,"* Krutch observed that "no one else in America (with the possible exception of John Howard Lawson) has ever written plays which are so frankly the expression of an individual quest for the meaning of existence."** According to Richard Watts, Jr., "The most direct and recent predecessor of *Dynamo* was the work of John Howard Lawson ... the author of an unjustly ignored and absurdly unappreciated play called *Nirvana*, which makes him at least the John the Baptist of the new dispensation."***

When I read the published play, I found it unbelievably close to *Nirvana*, in details of characterization and lines of dialogue. But what struck me most forcibly was the total difference in our handling of an identical theme. In *Nirvana*, Bill Weed talks of an "Electromagnetic Christ," and O'Neill's Reuben Light asserts that "There is no God but electricity."

But I dreamed of a mystic reconciliation of science and religion, a cosmic victory for the human spirit. O'Neill saw no hope of reconciliation and no hope for Man: he went back to the old idea of an absolute enmity between religion and science: without God, we were doomed and science is the agent of our destruction.

Dynamo celebrates the collapse of reason. The words make sense, but frenzy dissolves the psyche. There is the Freudian passion between son and mother, but the monstrous dynamo takes the place of the human mother and commands senseless violence. *Nirvana* ends with a rocket in space; *Dynamo* ends with murder and suicide. The murder in O'Neill's play is the sacrifice of a young girl which is in many of my plays, including *Nirvana*, but O'Neill has stripped it of its ritual significance: it is the irredeemable blood guilt of fallen man, who disintegrates as he falls. Reuben Light is as much a broken puppet as Humpty Dumpty.

The dry desert wind whipped dust around the train. I could see the fallacies in O'Neill's work. But I had no answers to the questions that burned in my mind. I wanted to create living people. I wanted to *be* a living person, and I knew there was a great power of life in me.

[Lawson was very bad on dates, but on pages 302 and 303 of a chapter entitled "Through the Calendar," he refers to an incident in June 1926.]

I drove to Ridgefield, Connecticut, with a group of friends, to see O'Neill. We were not welcomed with enthusiasm. We brought a quantity of bootleg gin with us. Gene was on the wagon, and Agnes looked upon us as troublesome intruders.

I wanted to talk to O'Neill, about *Nirvana* and about the theatre. He had read *Nirvana* before he left New York for Bermuda early in the year. Macgowan had told me that he admired the play, and was in part responsible for its replacing *The Great God Brown* at the Greenwich Village Theatre. I considered *The Great God Brown* was O'Neill's most important play since the early dramas of the sea. The conflict between the business man and the artist and the interchange of their masks was a painful confession, not unlike the confession I had made in *Nirvana*.

Obviously, I could not blurt out what was in my mind--that O'Neill and I were moving in similar directions and faced similar problems. But I found him so withdrawn that there was no communication at all. He was about to go to Yale to receive an honorary degree. I thought this was comical, but there was no doubt of the seriousness with which O'Neill viewed it.

* *New York American*, February 12, 1929.

** *The Nation*,

*** *New York Herald Tribune*,

[These are Lawson's uncompleted footnotes.]

creative artist"; and a third period (1932-1945) when he "was the compassionate 'great spirit' who understood human tragedy because he himself had lived it."

Chapter Two, "The Pattern of O'Neill's Tragedies," shows how the plays "seem to describe the successive stages of a spiritual quest"--one that moved from the early plays, which combined a romantic dream of ideal beauty and perfection with a realization of the impossibility of its attainment; through a second, more realistic period, which focussed on the "ugliness of reality" and rejected it because of "the remembrance of the romantic dream"; to the major period, in which he neither "described the ideal perfection" nor "denounced the material imperfection" but portrayed "the inner conflict of good and evil leading to the great renunciation"; and finally to the period of the great last plays, which "took off in a new direction" because, impelled by O'Neill's hard-won "disinvolvement" and "objectivity," they "transcended the romantic logic which had governed his earlier work." (These stitched snippets hardly do justice to Professor Carpenter's masterful, carefully-reasoned overview of O'Neill's spiritual career. This seminal chapter is the high point of the book.)

Chapters Three through Seven describe and criticize the twenty "best plays"--twenty-one, actually, since an essay on *Hughie*, which first appeared in the September 1978 Newsletter (pp. 1-3) has been added to the previous studies of *S. S. Glencairn*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Emperor Jones* (which draws interesting parallels between Jones and Hickey), *Anna Christie* (which emphasizes how much of Anna's nature "is derived from O'Neill's own psychological experience," and defends the play's ending: "It is not tragic, but it is true to life.... The play is not a tragedy, and should not be damned for its 'failure' as one"), *The Fountain*, *The Hairy Ape*, *All God's Chillun*, *Desire Under the Elms* (whose "true hero" is Ephraim, though its "final hero is the spirit of Nature"), *The Great God Brown* (which "attempted everything, but achieved final success with nothing"), *Marco Millions* (an unsuccessful blend of "realistic satire" and "romantic myth"), *Lazarus Laughed* ("the most ideal of all O'Neill's works" and "his finest drama of ideas"), *Strange Interlude*, *Mourning Becomes Electra* ("his most perfectly designed play"; "the very logical perfection of its artistic design may constitute its greatest fault"), *Dynamo*, *Days Without End*, *Ah, Wilderness!* ("the dark side of the picture" is emphasized, as it is in the Van Laan essay abstracted in this issue), *A Touch of the Poet* (whose "two separate plots," linked by "Sara, the determined realist," are delineated, and the second is shown to be superior to the first), *The Iceman Cometh* ("O'Neill's testament to humanity at its lowest," which combines the three levels of "concrete autobiography," "abstract allegory," and "modern myth"), *Long Day's Journey* (his "most perfect play"), and *Moon for the Misbegotten* (unique in its juxtaposition of "grotesque myth" [the Hogans] and "autobiographical actuality" [Jim/Jamie], and in its combination of "purposeful confusion" and "melodramatic exaggeration").

The individual analyses are brief, running from two to six pages. But they are concentrated pages; much less has been said at much greater length. Perhaps the best part of these central chapters is the treatment of *Lazarus*, *Interlude* and *Electra* as "a kind of trilogy"--one that reverses the pattern of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, since the first was an attempt "to create a *Paradiso*, an ideal image of man," the second is "a purgatory of human compromise," and the third "an inferno of human depravity."

The eighth chapter "discusses the chief criticisms of his work" and finds that he is praised and censured for the same elements--"passionateness" and "mysticism"--both of which are parts of "the essential O'Neill." It also explains O'Neill's theory and philosophy of tragedy, which had been described on page 77 as the "modern" one "which sees man's life as necessarily doomed to defeat, but also suggests that man's recognition of the necessity of defeat constitutes a kind of victory...."

The bulk of the action unfolds on the main floor; this is where Cregan and Maloy meet, Sara and Nora have a conversation, Melody and Nora talk, and Melody refuses to take breakfast. Below this level is placed a subterranean layer: the bar from which Dan Roche, Paddy O'Dowd, and Patch Riley emerge, and to which Cornelius Melody, after his tragicomic transformation, descends. From the middle of the main floor a flight of stairs leads up to the third level of the action. This is where the mirror has been transferred before which Melody strikes his Byronic poses and is caught in the act by Sara, Deborah and Gadsby; and this is where the love scene between Sara and Simon takes place. It remains, of course, unseen, but we get a momentary glimpse of Sara rising gently from Simon's bed.

While one may wonder whether this explanatory revelation was necessary and how far O'Neill would have tolerated the restructuring of the stage which he described with such meticulous care, it cannot be denied that the division of the acting space into three physical levels throws into relief three layers and realms in the total meaning of the play, and even assumes a symbolic significance by separating the vulgar, the commonplace and the elevated. Con Melody's middle position between the illusion of his gentlemanly pretenses and the ultimate reality of his tragicomic existence and fall is thus also graphically defined in well-visualized scenic terms.

A special difficulty presents itself in the choice of the right tempo. This seems to be a perennial problem in mounting O'Neill's late plays. Inasmuch as they retain a measure of the outward plot of the traditional drama, they require a certain pace of presentation to keep the ball rolling. Since, however, they are also characterized by the gradual unfolding of an inner drama implying sensitive modifications of vulnerable states of mind, they also lay claim to a more restrained, subdued and lyrical acting style. It is not easy to find the proper balance between these two conflicting theatrical claims.

At the end of 1977 I had the good luck to see productions of *Long Day's Journey into Night* in both Budapest and Milwaukee within a fortnight. The performance in Budapest adopted a slow acting style, emphasized the psychological drama in the play, underlined its Chekhovian aspect, and was saturated with poetry; but it needed some of the vigour of the American production. The presentation in Milwaukee was much more dynamic and focused more attention on the outer plot; indeed, it seemed to adapt to *Long Day's Journey* part of the acting style of *Ah, Wilderness!* (The two plays were shown--by way of an interesting experiment--on two consecutive nights with a similar cast.) But while this style of acting coped with the comedy very effectively, it was, at least for me, too rapid to sound the psychological and lyrical depths of the tragedy. Mary Tyrone's frequent evasions ("I don't know what you're talking about") have two distinctly different meanings when they are preceded and followed by a pause and when they are not. With the pauses they express the idea, emotion and attitude "I refuse to discuss the matter." Without the pauses they simply mean "I am silly." A too rapid tempo involves the danger of changing the dramatic message of the line.

Occasionally a similar danger crops up in the last act of this latest Hungarian production of *A Touch of the Poet*. Before the ominous duel takes place and Melody kills his mare, it has its Quixotic drive, and, not unlike Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*, it has a tragicomic plot leading to a dramatic culmination. However, after Melody becomes thoroughly disillusioned, fails to punish Harford (as Voynitsky fails to kill Serebryakov), backs out of suicide (as Voynitsky also allows Doctor Astrov to talk him out of suicide), and is content with murdering his mare, a symbol of the painfully tragicomic pretensions of the Major,--then his inner psychological drama comes to the limelight of interest, and the acting style requires a slower pace and a broken bar.

Apart from this, Mr. Sárosdy, a Merited Artist of the Hungarian People's Republic, provided a memorable interpretation of the role with talent, inspiration, insight and a touch of tragicomic poetry.

"Nan and Nick pay Joe a compliment that is remarkably similar to one Joe likes to quote from Kenneth Tynan on O'Neill--that he was able to enter without condescension a world of rejected people. This seems natural to Joe, who says O'Neill's people are the real world, the same as the people in the hospital."

5. Thomas Lask, "Publishing: Robards On the Touch of O'Neill," *New York Times* (June 1, 1979), p. C22:

"If Jason Robards, our most illustrious O'Neill actor, can ever put some free time together, he may well finish that autobiography he has promised Nan Talese and Simon and Schuster, of which she is a vice president. Autobiography may not be the precise word, however.

"When Mrs. Talese approached the actor about a year or so ago, he was then in O'Neill's *A Touch of the Poet* at the Helen Hayes Theater. Mr. Robards indicated he would be doing no narrow autobiography. Mrs. Talese told him, though, that that wasn't what she had in mind. What she was thinking of was a book about the influence and place of O'Neill in his life. That notion seemed to open the floodgates....

"She recalls Mr. Robards' account of how he became involved with the play that made his reputation, *The Iceman Cometh*. He was then doing a soap opera on radio and read in a newspaper that there were openings for the O'Neill play at the Circle in the Square, then downtown.

"He had no strong feelings about O'Neill at the time," Mrs. Talese said. "But some sort of instinct guided him to it. He was married with children, but he spent his last penny rehearsing for the part." The rest as they say in bad plays is history.

"There are intriguing parallels between the playwright and the actor. Both had fathers who were well-known actors. Each had a brother involved in strained family relations.

"After his talk with Mrs. Talese, the actor was so excited by the idea for the book that he was all for doing it instantly. Since then, he has been involved in a number of film and television projects.

"It's now way in the future," Mrs. Talese said, but with not even a suggestion of finality in her voice."

6. Thomas P. Adler, "Two Plays for Puritans," *The Tennessee Williams Newsletter* (Spring 1979), pp. 5-7.

Professor Adler cites "numerous correspondences in plot, stage setting, characters, language, imagery, use of Biblical allusions and the Oedipal motif, and even similar quasi-religious or philosophical attitudes" which suggest, quite persuasively, "that Tennessee Williams had Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* at least unconsciously in mind when he wrote *Kingdom of Earth* (*The Seven Descents of Myrtle*)." He also offers two major reasons to "explain how, with two such similar plays, one--*Desire Under the Elms*--succeeds, while the other--*Kingdom of Earth*--fails."

7. Judith E. Barlow, "Long Day's Journey into Night: From Early Notes to Finished Play," *Modern Drama* (March 1979), pp. 19-28.

In his dedication of *Long Day's Journey into Night* to his wife Carlotta, Eugene O'Neill states that he wrote the play "with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones." One of the most fascinating aspects of O'Neill's composition of *Journey* is that this pity, understanding and forgiveness are largely absent from his early notes and drafts. In early versions the Tyrones' anger and cruelty are so predominant that it is difficult for an audience to sympathize or empathize with the characters. Through revisions O'Neill modified his initially very harsh portrait of the haunted Tyrones.

O'Neill, a lesson in compassion. The early drafts seem written in anger, the later ones with growing perception and forgiveness.

It would be patently untrue, of course, to say that anger and resentment are not major components of the published play. The warp and woof of *Journey* are the inextricably woven threads of love and hatred in the family. But the fabric is more darkly colored in early drafts. The final *Journey* makes it clear that the Tyrones' bitterness grows out of the very bonds of need and love that hold the family together. (J. E. B.)

8. Winifred L. Frazer, "'Revolution' in *The Iceman Cometh*," *Modern Drama* (March 1979), pp. 1-8.

The importance of Hugo Kalmar's oft-repeated poetic quotation--"The days grow hot, O Babylon! 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!"--is explained in marvelous detail by Professor Frazer, who identifies it as the last line of a forty-line poem, "Revolution," by German Marxist poet Ferdinand Freiligrath (1810-1876), a work which "plays on the theme of *Psalms* 137" and which would have been known to Hippolyte Havel, O'Neill's model for Kalmar. (Havel helped Emma Goldman edit *Mother Earth*, in which the poem was printed in full in 1910.) Havel's frequent repetition of the line must have embedded it in O'Neill's memory, though when he came to write the play he had forgotten its source.

Professor Frazer, besides offering relevant facts from the lives of Freiligrath and Havel, shows how the line "is one key to the whole truth-illusion theme of the drama," how it "reinforces the connotation of the title, wherein the warm, loving bridegroom of the Bible is replaced by the cold, profane iceman of death," and how it "refers to both the love-hate and the anarchist-betrayal plots and illustrates in its variations O'Neill's disillusionment with both love and revolution." While an error in O'Neill's transcription--the original, *Der Tag wird heiss*, is correctly translated as "The day grows hot," as it is by Ernest Jones in *An Anthology of Revolutionary Poetry*, ed. Marcus Graham (New York, 1929)--turns a revolutionary line into a more romantic one, O'Neill retains the balance of the two elements "by naming [Kalmar] for Karl Marx and by working Marxian jargon into his mouthings of the poem." The retention of this romantic-revolutionary duality is important to the play because, as Professor Frazer explains, "except for the dream that love is life, [the] dream of a better world through revolution is the most discredited in *Iceman*."

9. Elinor Fuchs, "O'Neill's *Poet*: Touched by Ibsen," *Educational Theatre Journal* (December 1978), pp. 513-516.

Ms. Fuchs finds, in *A Touch of the Poet* (first draft, 1937), striking evidence that a "re-thinking [of Ibsen] may have played an important role" in the radical change in O'Neill's dramaturgy between *Days Without End* (1932-3), "the last gasp of O'Neill's 1920s expressionist experimentation," and *The Iceman Cometh* (first draft, 1939), "which is commonly thought to inaugurate his Aristotelian period." Not that an "Ibsen connection" was anything new: in a letter in this issue of the Newsletter, Jacob H. Adler cites comparable Ibsenite echoes in *Strange Interlude* (1928). But Ms. Fuchs' study of a connection that "runs from plot similarities to thematic parallels and to an apparent structural relationship between two Ibsen plays [*Hedda Gabler* and *The Wild Duck*] and *A Touch of the Poet*" challenges the traditional assumption "that the historical material of the play was ... O'Neill's primary interest."* On the contrary, "his chief interest continued to be psychological and metaphysical as it had been throughout the 1920s," but "he was discovering a more compressed dramaturgical language to express it"--a language made up of "Ibsenic compression, irony, and ideas of genre." Her persuasive conclusion is that *A Touch of the Poet*, which has been "oddly

[* O'Neill himself had written to Lawrence Langner in 1936, "I don't want anyone to get the idea that this Cycle is much concerned with what is usually understood by American history, for it isn't." (Quoted in the Gelb biography, p. 804.) --Ed.]

actually depicts a wilderness." To achieve this, O'Neill "emphasizes three familiar American clichés, compares them to the actuality they distort, and concludes that as truths they are sham but as sustaining pipe-dreams they are serviceable and necessary."

The first cliché, "the gallery of sentimental stereotypes in the mode of Norman Rockwell," should not blind us to the fact that O'Neill's characters are members of an "established," "oppressive" "network of roles" that they "have adopted or have had imposed on them." Van Laan finds a "ubiquitous discrepancy between pose and actuality," each character's surface being "a mask that cannot quite conceal the reality lurking beneath it.... They try to convince themselves that they *are* what they have to be in order to ward off the pain and anguish caused by their having to be exactly that."

As for the second cliché, "the Fourth-of-July myth of independence and equality," O'Neill exposes its falseness on both national and family levels. Neither Richard Miller's "excessive, adolescent rhetoric" nor the responsive "twinkle in the eye" of his father should blind us to the reality of "social injustice and human suffering" of which O'Neill expected his audience to share his awareness. And the Miller home, "a rigid hierarchy that relegates most of its members to outcast or second-class status" ("all children, all women, and all males who for some reason fall short") is itself "an oppressive social reality that diverges sharply from the independence and equality promised by the myth"--which in turn demolishes the third cliché embedded in the play: "the notion of family life as the ideal form of existence." In fact, according to the dinner scene in Act Two, "the function of the family is not to nurture and sustain but to curb and inhibit, and, alternatively, to provide captive victims for relieving one's hurt and frustration."

What, then, of the "emphatic notes of affirmation" in the play's closing moments? Professor Van Laan explains them as a bow to "commercial success," a "response to genre," a reflection of the "moonshine" in which the last scene is bathed, and an evidence of "genuine ambivalence" on O'Neill's part; and he urges us not to "emphasize these final notes at the expense of countless earlier notes insisting that, far from compensating for the wilderness of existence, family life in fact constitutes one of its most oppressive elements."

One may quibble with one or two of his conclusions, but Professor Van Laan certainly demonstrates that *Ah, Wilderness!* is indeed "a much richer and more interesting play than it is generally taken to be."

NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. L'AFFAIRE CHABROWE. Leonard Chabrowe's *Ritual and Pathos--the Theatre of O'Neill* has had a mixed response from critics. A review by H. N. Levitt of Hunter College appeared in the October 1977 issue of *Educational Theatre Journal*. Mr. Chabrowe, wishing "to correct a crucial misunderstanding" in that review, wrote a letter that was printed, along with a reply by Professor Levitt, on page 142 of the March 1979 issue. Both the Chabrowe letter (a) and the Levitt reply (b) are reprinted here.

a. "Professor Levitt stated that my book 'purports to categorize many of O'Neill's plays according to the rituals they contain and the degree of pathos (suffering) exhibited by their characters.' But that is not quite the case. The book actually purports to show how O'Neill's plays were aimed at giving the audience an aesthetic experience of a religious nature. The ritual and the pathos were just means to that end. So while the book might have fallen victim to the perils of trying to do too much, especially in the subjective sphere of aesthetic experience, it certainly did not fall victim to the 'perils of parochialism in textual analysis.'

The Monte Cristo Cottage, a National Historic Landmark, has been completely restored on the exterior and is to serve the public as a Landmark and Museum. In the summer of 1979 we will begin to move sections of our permanent collection to the Cottage as work continues on the interior restoration.... The Cottage at 325 Pequot Avenue, New London, will be opened by appointment until a Certificate of Occupancy is granted by the Building Inspector of the City of New London.

6. PROVINCETOWN POSTPONEMENT. According to a report in the *New York Times* (June 5, p. C11), the opening of the new Provincetown Playhouse will take place, not on July 4, 1980, as originally hoped, but in 1981, with groundbreaking ceremonies occurring next spring. Owners Adele and Lester Heller and architect William Warner are currently engaged in revising Mr. Warner's prizewinning design to meet theatrical needs, town and state building codes, and "local sensitivities." In addition, the original \$1 million cost estimate has risen to \$2.5 million, and a fund-raising drive is to begin shortly. According to the *Times*, "plans call for the new Playhouse to seat 400 people, to include a rehearsal space with seating for 100 and a Eugene O'Neill Museum and Library, and to be a center for O'Neill scholars."
7. Roger Copeland, in "Theater in the 'Me Decade'" (*New York Times*, June 3, 1979, Section II, pp. 1, 20) attacks most modern American drama for its "utter indifference to public life." Citing "the essentially public nature of the theater," he asks whether our theatre has not "actually sacrificed more than it has gained from [its] immersion in private life." O'Neill figures interestingly in Mr. Copeland's reply to his own question:

Perhaps, which is not to say that isolated masterpieces won't continue to be created in this highly private age. One need only think of Eugene O'Neill, whose native talent reached fruition when he stopped straining for "universality" and concentrated instead on his own painful family experiences. Miraculously, his greatest play, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, transforms the claustrophobic family unit into a microcosm of society at large. Only a diehard ideologue would deny that O'Neill's masterpiece is a greater and more lasting work than anything the American theater created in its most politically engaged periods, the 1930's and the 1960's."
8. A meeting of the American Theatre Association O'Neill Committee, chaired by Eugene O'Neill Society President Travis Bogard, was held on August 13 during the ATA annual convention in New York City.
9. The editor salutes fellow editor Stephen S. Stanton, whose *Tennessee Williams Newsletter* began publication with a Spring 1979 issue. Persons interested in subscribing can get information from Professor Stanton at the Department of Humanities, College of Engineering, the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.
10. WORK IN PROGRESS.
 - a. Three doctoral dissertations wholly or partly devoted to O'Neill are scheduled for completion in 1979. The information about each is in the following order: author, title, university, department, and supervisor.
 - (1) An Min Hsia, "The Tao and Eugene O'Neill." Indiana, English, Horst Frenz.
 - (2) Myla Lichtman, "Mythic Plot and Character Development in Euripides' *Hippolytus* and Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*: A Jungian Analysis." Southern California, Drama, H. M. Stahl.
 - (3) Susan Harris Smith, "Masks in the Modern Drama." Northwestern, English, Douglas Cole.
 - b. Robert K. Sarlos has completed the study of the Provincetown Players that was announced in an earlier issue. The work, which had not found a publisher by last

- A Moon for the Misbegotten*. New England Repertory Theatre, Worcester, MA. Fourth of five productions in 1979-1980 season. For dates, tel. 617-798-8685.
- A Touch of the Poet*, dir. Antal Rencz. Hungária Chamber Theater, Debrecen, Hungary, spring 1979. (See review in "Reviews, Reprints and Abstracts" section of this issue.)
- A Touch of the Poet*. Ionia Summer Theater, New Rochelle, NY. In repertory, summer of 1979.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1. From Kristin Morrison, Associate Professor of English, Boston College, May 30, 1979:

I am concerned about the inaccuracy of a statement in the January 1979 Newsletter. In the abstract of Eugene K. Hansen's dissertation, reported on p. 24, reference is made to O'Neill's mother as "a devout Irish Catholic who left the convent to marry O'Neill's father." Has the word "school" been omitted? To be enrolled in a convent school is quite different from entering a convent (and surely the whole focus of Mary Tyrone's cherished fantasy/disappointment is the fact that she was *not* encouraged by Mother Elizabeth to become a nun.) Ella Quinlan was a student in parochial school and at St. Mary's Academy; she was never a postulant in a religious order. In O'Neill's Irish Catholic world that distinction would not have been a trivial one.

2. From LeRoy Robinson, Professor of Basic English Conversation, Nagasaki University, June 10, 1979:

Patrick Bowles' piece on *The Hairy Ape* [May 1979 issue, pp. 2-3] reminded me of a sort of coincidence. In a play called *Standards* (apparently begun in 1915--but maybe in 1914--and produced in 1916 in upstate New York), John Howard Lawson briefly brings on stage a deus ex machina burglar called the Figure. (His given name is John.) He is of "gigantic build." His hair is unkempt; he is unshaven; he seems a "huge animal." Yet in his "fierce ruggedness" there is a "certain dignity." A Lawyer describes the Figure: "He's the Caveman. The caveman, the monster butting his shoulder against civilization." At this, the Figure utters the only word he speaks in the play: "Fools!"

When I summarized *Standards* [in the first published summary of that unpublished play--Ed.] in "John Howard Lawson: The Early Years II," *Keiei to keizai*, Vol. 57-2, No. 147, December 1977, I footnoted: "Lawson's Figure, the Caveman, predates Eugene O'Neill's Yank, an inarticulate '20th century Neanderthal Man' in *The Hairy Ape*." Rudimentarily.

On the other hand, I think O'Neill introduced a character like Yank in a short story of 1915. Was that story published where Lawson could have read it? Or is it possible that in the fall of 1916 O'Neill could have seen *Standards* in Utica or Syracuse, or read reviews of it? (Which I haven't.) [Readers with information that would help answer these intriguing questions are urged to submit it for inclusion in the next issue of the Newsletter or for forwarding to Mr. Robinson. --Ed.]

I have been reading some plays that Lawson wrote in 1914, '15, '16, never produced, never published, and one of them, called *Souls*, uses techniques and ideas similar to those in *Strange Interlude*, and a reading of it throws new light on Lawson's chapter on O'Neill in *Theory and Technique of Playwriting*. Does any of this interest you? [It does indeed, and I herewith offer space in any future issue of the Newsletter for the sharing of that new light with its readers! --Ed.]

3. From Jacob H. Adler, Head, Department of English, Purdue University, July 23, 1979:

"In *Educational Theatre Journal* for December 1978, Elinor Fuchs has an excellent

literature. The title, *Eugene O'Neill: A World View*, is particularly appropriate as the book offers a global view of O'Neill, world dramatist and native son--with essays by distinguished experts from both Western and Eastern Europe and various regions in our own country.

The first section, "A European Perspective," shows the dramatist turning to the Old World for theatrical, literary and philosophical inspiration; provides information about the many European productions during the past fifty years; and suggests reasons why he is rejected in this country and respected abroad. Because O'Neill was able to transcend international language and cultural barriers with a universal vision of man, it is incomprehensible to the Europeans represented why the dramatist has not received the recognition he deserves in this country. "Perhaps," writes Dr. Floyd, "what Americans are really rejecting is the playwright's message to them, for he shows the dichotomy in the American character--that while it has idealistic longings, it reaches out for material possessions. O'Neill says, 'Its main idea is that everlasting game of trying to possess your own soul by the possession of something outside it.'" In "A Russian View: One Hundred Percent American Tragedy," a perceptive analysis of O'Neill's development and efforts to write in terms of American life and experience, Maya Koreneva of the Gorky Institute of World Literature defines the dramatist's recurring theme as the "hostility of bourgeois society imposing dull utilitarianism through the tyranny of the moneybag, to art and artist, to the spiritual aspirations of man in general." She also discusses Tairov's Kamerny productions of the plays, which O'Neill saw and praised when they were presented in Paris. Tairov's affinity with O'Neill was also shared by other European directors: Olof Molander and Karl Ragnar Gierow of the Royal Dramatic in Stockholm, and Karel Hugo Hilar of the National Theatre in Prague, as Tom Olsson and Josef Jařab point out in their essays.

While O'Neill was the son of an Irish immigrant, he was an *American* Irishman and influenced by the social and cultural environment of the New World. The essays in the second section of the book, "An American Perspective," examine four aspects that contributed to his formation: Irish Catholicism, New England Puritanism, mysticism, and humanism. In their totality, the essays in Professor Floyd's book present a world view--scholarly and theatrical--of O'Neill; the American and European influences that affected his work; and the evaluation of that work in the playwright's own country and abroad.

PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

MARSHALL BROOKS, essayist and printer, is the editor of *Nostoc*, associate editor of the *Eugene O'Neill Newsletter*, and, as his photographs in the current issue attest, a seeker-out of the less touristy touches in landmarks and shrines. He has completed an essay on Harry Kemp that will be included in the next issue of the Newsletter.

PETER EGRI, Professor of English at L. Eötvös University, Budapest, Hungary, is completing a book on *Chekhov and O'Neill*. His previous contributions to the Newsletter's pages have included a letter on O'Neill in Hungary (May 1977) and "O'Neill Productions in Hungary: A Chronological Record" (September 1978). His "The Iceman Cometh: An Epic Tragicomedy of Illusion and Reality" appeared in *Hungarian Studies in English* XI (1978), 95-105.

FREDERICK C. PACKARD, JR., former Professor of Speech at Harvard University and initiator of Harvard's acclaimed collection of recordings of poets reading their own works, became Professor of Public Speaking Emeritus in June 1965, and has since resided on Casco Bay in Maine, where he and his wife own shore property and a small island: "Paradise enow," they say! Professor Packard has tentatively agreed to reminisce in print about the first production of *The Great God Brown*, in which he both acted and served as assistant stage manager. A treat for a future issue.