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1980

### The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter, January 1980

Eugene O'Neill Society

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# The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

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January, 1980

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD: ENTERING THE O'NEILL DECADE

As the Newsletter follows America's greatest playwright into the 1980's, completing its third year and volume with the present issue, it is gratifying indeed to review the mass of information and insights, both penetrating and peripheral, that its existence has permitted to be shared by an ever-growing readership. Judging from your affirmative comments, I infer that the publication's *raison d'être* and value have been firmly established; and I will use your many helpful suggestions in striving to make subsequent volumes even richer and more valuable than the three now completed.

O'Neill's presence will loom large in the years ahead. The recently begun centennial efforts of the Theater Committee for Eugene O'Neill and the growth in membership and activities of the Eugene O'Neill Society, whose first plenary session will be held at Tao House on December 29, are enough by themselves to suggest that the 1980's will be an O'Neill Decade. Add to them the growing number of books and articles on the playwright, and the increasing frequency of productions of his plays—the list of them in this issue is the longest yet—and one's excitement can really blossom! It will continue to be the Newsletter's goal, however arduous the task may become, to gather and relay all that is happening; to provide an avenue of communication among the various centers of O'Neill activity, both theatrical and scholarly; and to print as much as it can, about the playwright's life, times and work, that deserves publication but might not otherwise achieve it. The continued support of a dedicated and informed readership will make that goal realizable. Many thanks to you all.

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Yank Smith, Jim Harris, Ephraim Cabot, Dion Anthony, and other characters to follow, Brutus Jones is animated by Nietzsche's Dionysian pulse, a force surging beneath the twentieth century's mask of shrewdness and materialism. Like so many other O'Neill characters, Jones is at once an incarnation and a destroyer of this vital force. But what is significant here is that his journey on stage is one into history as well as into the unconscious, a flight backwards in time toward the uncovering of the original sin that, in O'Neill's view, marred the Edenic harmony of the New World. That sin was slavery: the possession of those who cleared the wilderness as well as of the wilderness itself. In this respect, then, O'Neill is not exploring in *The Emperor Jones* "the collective unconscious of the American Negro" so much as he is exploring the collective conscience of Americans. To O'Neill Jones is America almost in the same sense that Oedipus "is" Thebes. He therefore is a character invested with tremendous dignity and power, entrusted to embrace and purge a moral plague afflicting not simply his little island empire, but the spirit of the nation that corrupted him. Brutus, O'Neill begs us to remember, "has a way of carrying it off."

Jones's opening speech ("Who dare wake up de Emperor?") already is an invitation to unmasking, the first step into a spiritual enclosure from which there is no exit. Unlike Oedipus, Jones is wily but incapable of introspection. This may be a flaw in the play's structure, for it mars the action by eliminating the possibility of the protagonist acquiring complete self-knowledge. Yet O'Neill's goal is for his hero to spark a shock of recognition in the spectator. Toward this end Brutus is thrust into a series of encounters which eventually lead him back, like Oedipus, toward the hidden meaning of his past. In O'Neill's play Jones's "messengers" are his visions.

This progressive uncovering of identity is prefigured symbolically in the pattern of color imagery set forth in the opening scene. The entire setting is a projected wish fulfillment of Jones's power-crazing self. His place is situated on "high ground with bare, white-washed walls," white floor tiles, and a "portico with white pillars." The other major color in the decor is the "eye-smiting scarlet" of the painted throne, a huge chair made of uncut wood. The palace carpet is bright scarlet; so are Jones's trousers. But red also is the color of the native woman's bandana handkerchief, Smithers' nose when colored by the "native rum," and the painted body of the witch doctor who accosts Jones in the forest. Scarlet, then, suggests the Dionysian phase of Jones's divided nature, linking him not only with a lost past, but with the vitality of the native community over which he presumes to rule. The extent to which Jones has estranged himself from that community is revealed by his having to ask Smithers, the white trader, the meaning of the drums that have awakened him. Smithers, who functions as the play's ironic chorus, has to tell him, "That means the bleedin' ceremony 'as started" (I, p. 14).

Jones's purpose is to outwit the natives by taking refuge in the forest. ("Trees an' me, we 'se friends.") He scoffs at the power of their heathen witch doctors ("De Baptist church done perfect me and land dem all in hell"), although, business being business, "I 'se after de coin, an' I lays my Jesus on de shelf for de time bein'" (I, p. 15). Should all else fail, he will bank on a myth of his own creation (invented earlier to keep the natives awed) that he can be killed only by a silver bullet. He has five lead bullets in his revolver "good enuff fo' common bush niggers—and after dat I got de silver bullet left to cheat 'em out o' gittin' me" (I, p. 14). At the very least he will die unbowed as befitting an emperor—in the height of style.

But no sooner does Jones enter "the Great Forest" than he is lost, the supposedly friendly trees now "enormous pillars of deeper blackness." "Can't tell nothin' from dem trees! Gorry, nothin' round heah looks like I evah seed it befo'" (II, p. 17). Jones is correct in more ways than he can understand, for

he has entered now a symbolic forest of the psyche, endowed, as it were, in Nietzsche's words, with the power to discharge itself ever anew in a dream world of Apollonian images. (In the stage directions for Scene IV, the forest specifically is granted volitional powers; it stands aside momentarily "to let the road pass through and accomplish its veiled purpose. This done, the forest will fold in upon itself again and the road will be no more.") What follows may have been suggested by this passage in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

In several successive discharges this primal ground of tragedy radiates this vision of the drama which is by all means a dream apparition and to that extent epic in nature; but on the other hand, being the objectification of a Dionysian state, it represents not Apollonian redemption through mere appearance, but, on the contrary, the shattering of the individual and his fusion with primal being. (BT, p. 65)

As Jones begins to hallucinate, his mask of Apollonian control progressively is shattered, and Dionysian ritual takes over. "Woods," the Emperor asks defiantly, "is you tryin' to put somethin' ovah on me?" (II, p. 20).

Equally important, the forest into which Jones has wandered is symbolically American, a mythic testing ground toward which characters have been drawn since the earliest days of our national literature. As John Henry Raleigh points out, O'Neill is very much an American writer, and for American writers the wilderness is mythical.<sup>8</sup> It is always in the forest where masks are shed, where truth breaks out. The play may be set in the West Indies, and its conception may be Nietzschean, but along with Cooper, Hawthorne, Twain and Faulkner, we have visited this place before. (It can be said in passing that O'Neill's symbolic portrait of a self-absorbed protagonist, alone in the forest, cut off from the community and searching for the meaning of experience, is prefigured in Cooper's "Leather-Stocking" novels, Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," and Henry Fleming's flight in *The Red Badge of Courage*; while it also anticipates Nick Adams in "Big Two-Hearted River" and Thomas Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* crashing through the woods in pursuit of his strayed architect.) For O'Neill the forest represents the loss of self-assurance. It contains also the glimmer of a golden past.

When Jones fires his pistol at the first apparition, "The Little Formless Fears," he initiates a pattern that contributes directly to his inevitable downfall. Each time he fires he illustrates a refusal to face truth. In this lies the great irony of the plot, for Jones's determination not to submit to the revelations of his visions only drives him deeper into the forest and brings him closer to the brink of panic. At the end Jones wastes his silver bullet, the symbol of his myth-making ability, his creative imagination, by firing at the apparition of the crocodile—the final clue to his identity. That croc, O'Neill suggests, is the symbolic epiphany of the false god Mammon, upon whose altar Jones has sacrificed throughout his life: "the long green," a perversion of the green life force of the forest. "I gives it to 'em an' I gits de money. (*With a grin*) De long green, dat's me every time!" (I, p. 7). In the end the natives mimic their emperor's ingenuity and hoist him with his own petard. As Lem tells Smithers: "Lead bullet no kill him. He got um strong charm. I cook um money, make um silver bullet, make um strong charm, too" (VIII, p. 34).

Jones's journey into the forest, then, is a journey of missed opportunities, a series of failures to discover the reality of his condition. But as the dream sequences progress, his personal encounters are transformed into a ritual pattern of communal significance. His encounter with Jeff, the Pullman porter, is a first step in this direction. Jones had killed Jeff in a dice game in which Jeff had cheated for "the long green." Jones, too, has cheated the island's natives for "the long green," but he "remurders" Jeff's apparition, repressing its significance rather than confronting it. In the following scene he reenacts his error by firing at the white

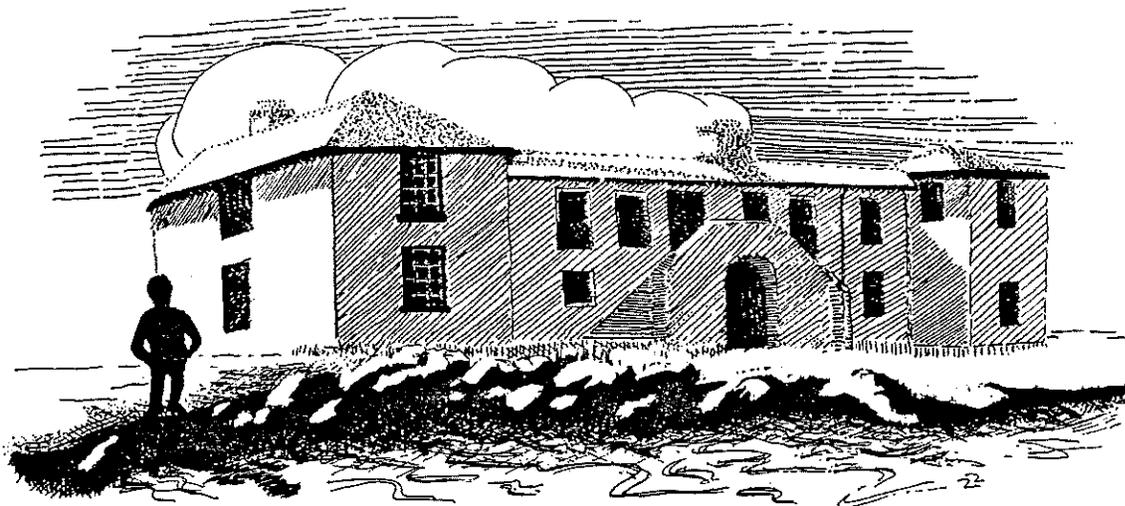
<sup>7</sup> *Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Modern Library, 1954), *The Emperor Jones*, Scene I, p. 6. Additional references to the play are cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>8</sup> See Raleigh's chapter, "O'Neill as an American Writer," in *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill*, op. cit. Oddly, Raleigh does not consider *The Emperor Jones* in his otherwise excellent discussion of O'Neill and history in the same volume.

## SPITHEAD REVISITED, 1979

Eugene O'Neill's Bermuda home during the late 1920's was Spithead, a pink sandstone bay-side villa with a long view of Hamilton Harbor some three miles away. I managed an evening's journey into night there after a sweaty Sunday sunset in a guest house opposite Hamilton Harbor, on the same side as Spithead in adjoining Paget Parish. [Spithead is in Warwick Parish. --Ed.] Spithead is not open to the public *anytime*.

Dressed in my most correct tourist brochure bittersweet chocolate sportcoat, yellow shirt, orange medallioned dark-brown tie, and yellow cotton pants, I set out along Harbor Road, a winding grey-coral-lined speedway for mopeds and mini-cars. The sole walker at a dangerous hour. Sunset.



Three miles and an hour later I was at the gatehouse to Spithead, drenched with sweat. Humidity: 80%. Temperature: 80° in the shade. Time: late July. I left a postcard of Brookline, Massachusetts, in the basket used as a mailbox on the front porch bannister of the main house and walked back up the heavily parked circular carriage drive toward the gatehouse, now a separate home. But neighbors told me They—the Blucks, the present owners—were out on the motorized sailboat which we could see skimming the harbor a few yards off the veranda dock to the right of the house. I went back and stood on the dock with two dogs sniffing me, one wailing weakly that I was intruding, and waited for the boat to dock.

When it did, a young crew disembarked. Celia Bluck-Waters, daughter of the family, was entertaining a group of Bermudan, English, and American friends with a chartered cruise of the harbor. It was after 9 p.m. and I was summarily invited to a veranda/dockside dinner of cold fried chicken, salad, white wine, and the obligatory Bermudan swizzle (high-powered pink lemonade, heavy on the gin cum rum). Everyone unwound and reminisced about the 60's.

It was now ten years later. Celia had been at Radcliffe in 1968 while I was active in Cambridge radical newspapers. Noel Dyer, Jr., the only black Bermudan present (with white wife) had been in the RAF in the Near East together with his Midlands UK friend who was returning to England the next day. A friend of Celia's was returning to Vermont the next

Before both protagonists reject, by snuffing out life, a meaningless existence, they are offered the same alternative to the unnatural bourgeois system—the socialist alternative, sympathetically presented by both writers, especially by London. While both protagonists *reject* the socialists, the implications of their rejections are different, for London believed in revolutionary socialism whereas O'Neill had moved toward a dark mysticism of evolution and the life force.

O'Neill, who had voted for Eugene Debs and early considered himself a socialist, is sympathetic to his socialists, though not so much to the sloganeering Long, who reveals the class struggle to Yank, as to the open and aboveboard IWW men who reject Yank's wish for a conspiracy of violence. But he has Yank (his Everyman) express the basic human problem as alienation from nature rather than as class struggle due to bourgeois exploitation, for human nature, in the eyes of Yank and his creator, is in a transitional stage of evolution, having lost clear guidance from instinct without having perfected thought—a painful diagnosis recalling Theodore Dreiser's naturalism.

*The Hairy Ape* derives from O'Neill's questionings about what might have caused the suicide of his friend Driscoll, a tough, proud stoker who had leapt from his ship to drown (ironically, Martin Eden's way of suicide). On the other hand, *Martin Eden*, originally titled *Success*, is a carefully elaborated, at times overwritten, warning that both bourgeois success and Nietzschean individualism (considered here as the lonely achievement of the true philosopher, scientist or artist) are paths of death for a gifted member of the working class who is drawn to the false idols of "culture," "refinement," "love," "success," "art" and "achievement," as these are defined by bourgeois society. Martin's rejection of the compassionate, revolutionary movement of socialism is a fatal error: that is London's warning to his readers.

Both London and O'Neill were torn by conflicts between their marked individualism and their social concern and sympathy for the masses (or, in Nietzschean terms, their pity for the weak, the herd). Caught between Nietzsche and Marx, Jack London favored Marx, worked hard for the socialist cause, and yet, like his Martin Eden, ended in depression and suicide. O'Neill took a different philosophical road. In her excellent study, *The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill* (New York, 1962), Doris Alexander has shown how O'Neill, influenced by the "life force" preached by Bernard Shaw (pp. 95-96) and more especially by the Hindu and Buddhist mysticism of his friend Terry Carlin, resolved "the conflict between Marxian socialism and Nietzschean individualism in favor of individualism. Through his friendship with Terry Carlin, Eugene O'Neill became a philosophical anarchist and a confirmed mystic" (p. 214). Thus, despite the parallels in character, conflict and resolution, *The Hairy Ape* and *Martin Eden* reach differing conclusions.

Young, poor, rough, gifted Martin Eden's initial illusion is that there is a "finer life"; a life he has read about in romantic fiction; a life of culture, art and refinement lived in beautiful great houses by marvelous, intelligent, kind people. People not like the likes of him, unless he prove himself worthy by educating himself; by improving his appearance, speech and manners; by earning and achieving a signal success. In love with romantic love, the infatuated Martin mistakes a repressed, uselessly educated, wealthy girl, Ruth, for a goddess of beauty, culture and purity whom he will worship and serve with all his intense genius and energy. She will improve and inspire him, until he is worthy of her and her family. Unlike Yank, who fights the bourgeoisie, Martin's initial wish is to join them after proving his worthiness to do so. A true student, he drives himself into literature, science, philosophy; he proves himself in debates with college people, going so far ahead intellectually that he begins to look down on the bourgeois as being timid conformists—a conforming herd like the working class; not brave, original thinkers like his new found heroes, Herbert Spencer and Nietzsche. But Martin does not see through Ruth,

## THE HAIRY APE GOES TO DARTMOUTH

The Dartmouth Players Repertory Company's 1979 summer season at the Hopkins Center in Hanover, NH, featured, from August 8 to 24, a splendid production of *The Hairy Ape*. The dedicated teamwork of a group of skilled theatre artists—two of whom are represented in articles following this report—turned an all-student performance into a memorable and revealing dramatic experience. Lighting, sound, sets, costumes, and coordinated stage movement—especially the kinetic energy in the forecandle and stokehole; the cinematic flow between scenes; and the choreographed mannerisms of the dancing, half-masked aristocrats on Fifth Avenue—combined to create a unified impact both cerebral and visceral.

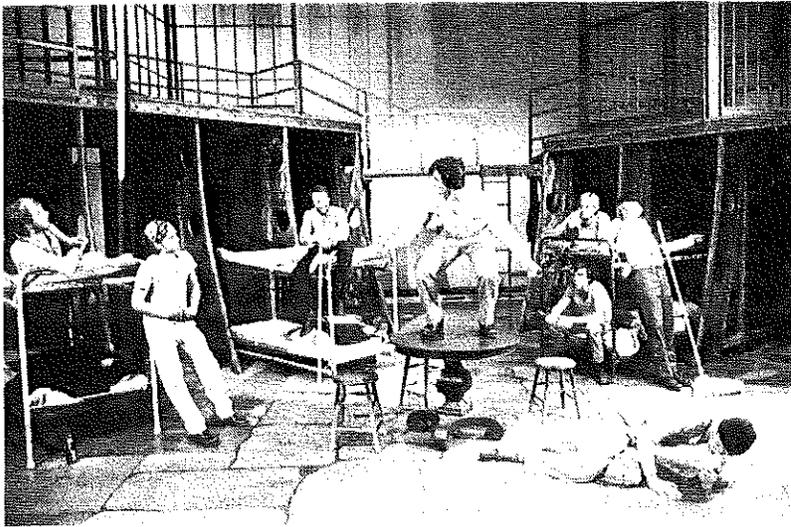


Figure 1

As the accompanying rehearsal shots by Stuart Bratesman may suggest (figures 1 and 4), the stokers looked neither sea-seasoned and coal-smear'd nor old and bent from labor; but they handled O'Neill's challenging dialects effectively, and the lengthy Scene-One aria of Paddy (figure 4)—uttered to harmonica accompaniment with all action temporarily frozen around him—was a moving lament for a happier (though probably illusory) past.

Mark L. Lotito (figures 2 and 3) was outstanding as Yank. A performer capable of both gruffness and lyricism, both brawny aggressiveness and balletic grace,

he created a protagonist in whom one could believe and for whom one could feel great pity when, after ejection from the IWW headquarters in Scene Seven, he wills his own death by entering the gorilla's cage and inviting the embrace of a killer (another "member of dis club") who will go on, briefly, to wreak the revenge that Yank had found himself incapable of carrying out. When he arrives at the zoo, he discards a bag of peanuts that he had purchased—throwing it away as he will also throw away the unspent portion of his life. After the gorilla deposits Yank's crumpled form in the cage, bangs the door shut, and prepares to exit, it picks up the discarded bag, and the last sound we hear—in a production rich with vocal and electronic sounds by George B. Todd—is the cracking of one last peanut. Undeniably a directorial interpolation, but a most evocative one.

Despite several stylized moments—the freezing of all other actors during Paddy's aria, the use of slow motion in the ejection of Yank from the IWW office and his hosing at the end of the prison scene, the aura of ritual in the bandaging of hands and Yank's presentation of

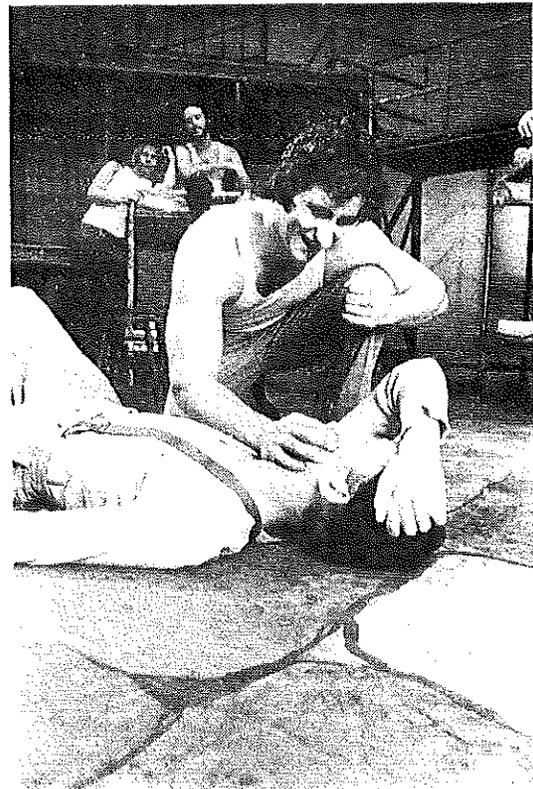


Figure 2

BOB SMITH AIN'T SO DUMB: DIRECTING *THE HAIRY APE*

[Michael Rutenberg directed the Hopkins Center production of *The Hairy Ape* in Hanover, NH, last August. The following is an excerpt from the director's log dealing with the character of Yank. --Ed.]

Who is Bob Smith? Most O'Neill scholars would be hard-pressed to recognize the name. Even Smith can't quite remember who he is.

SECRETARY. What's your name? I'll make out your card.

YANK. (*confused*) Name? Lemme timk.

SECRETARY. (*sharply*) Don't you know your own name?

YANK. Sure; but I been just Yank for so long—Bob, dat's it—Bob Smith.

But Bob Smith ain't so dumb. A lummoX can't go through an identity crisis; it takes intelligence. Still, because of O'Neill's description of the man, plus his Brooklyn accent and what other characters say about him, the impression is that Yank is a dolt. And audiences don't empathize with blockheads. The lack of audience involvement with Yank has plagued the play from its inception. O'Neill has said, "Yank is really yourself, and myself. He is *every* human being. But, apparently, very few people seem to get this."<sup>1</sup>

The essential question for the director, then, is how to find a way to make the audience identify with Yank. A closer look at O'Neill's text provides the answer. On first examination, the doltish image remains with us. O'Neill's description reads as follows:

*YANK is seated in the foreground. He seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest. They respect his superior strength—the grudging respect of fear. Then, too, he represents to them a self-expression, the very last word in what they are, their most highly developed individual.*

And what is it that they are? O'Neill describes the men more fully:

*The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. All are hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes.*

There is no mention of intelligence. The description is essentially physical, alluding to a diminished brain capacity. But Neanderthal Man's brain was as large as modern man's. The only certainty for the director so far is that he must cast a powerfully-built man who is capable of savage emotion. Where then is the impression that Yank is a dumb ox?

Perhaps a look at what others say about him will help explain the image. Mildred calls him "the filthy beast!" Well, yes; he is filthy. Anyone shoveling coal in the stokehole would be. And he does use foul language. But she doesn't comment on his mentality. O'Neill, however, adds more to the brutish image at the start of Scene Three, when he describes the stokers as being "*outlined in silhouette in the crouching, inhuman attitudes of chained gorillas.*" (The play's title doesn't help offset the image of stupidity either. Still, looking like a gorilla doesn't ipso facto mean that one must have a gorilla's intelligence.) Paddy, in Scene Four, is the next to add to the infamous image: "In this cage is a queerer kind of baboon than ever you'd find in darkest Africy." He goes on to say,

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<sup>1</sup> Mary B. Mullett, "The Extraordinary Story of Eugene O'Neill," *American Magazine*, XCIV, No. 5 (November, 1922).

One might even go so far as to say that his analysis of governmental control, corporate power and institutionalized religion borders on the profound. But it is his ability to think metaphysically that totally separates him from the brutes of the world. *He sees himself as omnipotent—the prime mover!*

...Sure, on'y for me everyting stops. It all goes dead, get me? De noise and smoke and all de engines movin' de woild, dey stop. Dere ain't nothin' no more! Dat's what I'm sayin'. Everyting else dat makes de woild move, somep'n makes it move. It can't move witout somep'n else, see? Den yuh get down to me. I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither. I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somep'n and de woild moves! It—dat's me!

To be both the beginning and the end. To be able to see oneself as infinite. That takes intelligence!

He's not a bad comedian either, and cracking a joke takes a clever mind—if it's the same mind that thought it up. He talks to Paddy: "But aw say, come up for air onct in a while, can't yuh? See what's happened since yuh croaked." Sometimes he throws in a clever alliteration that brings with it an amazing clarity of thought. "He's hittin' de pipe of de past, dat's what he's doin'"; or, "she was all in white like dey wrap around stiffs." But the most insightful metaphor is "... if she tinks she—She grinds de organ and I'm on de string, huh? I'll fix her!" Not bad for a moronic brute. When the men kid him about Mildred, telling him that he has fallen in love with her, he retorts: "I've fallen in hate, get me?" A nice turn of phrase for someone supposed to be brainless.

Yank also sees more deeply than the other men. Note the description of Mildred's skin: "Did yuh pipe her hands? White and skinny. Yuh could see de bones through 'em." Later he describes her in more detail: "Her hands—dey was skinny and white like dey wasn't real but painted on somep'n. ... She was like some dead ting de cat brung in."

When Long suggests a pacifist approach to a proletarian revolution, using a slightly more sophisticated language than what we have heard from the stokehole, Yank has no difficulty understanding it. He grasps it immediately and responds with his own philosophy: revolutions are won by force.

LONG. Easy goes, Comrade. Keep yer bloomin' temper. Remember force defeats itself. It ain't our weapon. We must impress our demands through peaceful means—the votes of the on-marching proletarians of the bloody world!

YANK. *(with abysmal contempt)* Votes, hell! Votes is a joke, see. Votes for women! Let dem do it!

LONG. *(still more uneasily)* Calm, now. Treat 'em wiv the proper contempt. Observe the bleedin' parasites but 'old yer 'orses.

YANK. *(angrily)* Git away from me! Yuh're yellow, dat's what. Force, dat's me! De punch, dat's me every time, see!

As the play progresses, Yank comes to realize more deeply that he can no longer return to the stokehole, having had a glimpse of the power of wealth. When asked by the IWW Secretary about the other stokers like himself, he replies that "dey're all dead to de woild." There is nothing else for him to do. He can't return, and the rich won't have him; and so he concludes that the only way out of his insignificance is to commit an act of destruction. Then he'll be noticed. It is an awful insight he has reached. Man can rise above his fellow men by creativity or by destruction. It is the philosophy assassins are made of.

YANK. ...I mean blow up de factory, de woiks, where he makes de steel. Dat's what I'm after—to blow up de steel, knock all de steel in de woild up to de moon. Dat'll fix tings!

*affirmative.* YANK goes on with a sort of furious exaltation) Sure! Yuh're reg'lar! Yuh'll stick to de finish! Me 'n' you, huh?—bot' members of this club! We'll put up one last star bout dat'll knock 'em offen deir seats? Dey'll have to make de cages stronger after we're trou!

If the actor who is cast can believe that Yank is not stupid, that he can think quite insightfully, that he is vulnerable and human, then the audience will identify and empathize with Yank and the play will become a modern tragedy. Perhaps the most significant way to conclude this examination of Yank's intellect is to remind oneself that O'Neill's use of Rodin's "The Thinker" as a running motif is not as ironic as one might at first assume.

--Michael E. Rutenberg

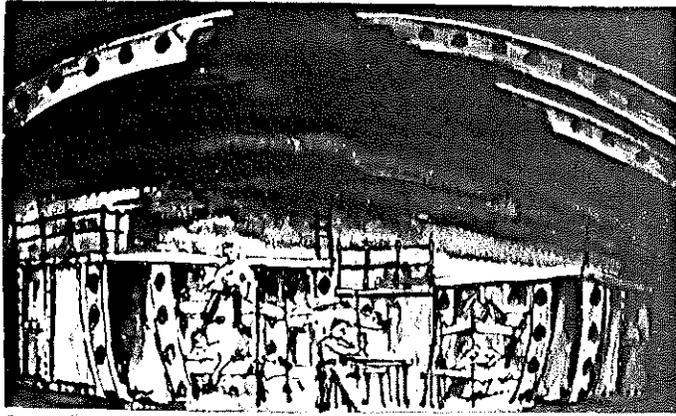
#### DESIGNING O'NEILL'S *THE HAIRY APE*

[Mr. Vyzga kindly consented to describe the concept underlying his set designs for Dartmouth's production of *The Hairy Ape*. In his essay he makes detailed reference to the portfolio of drawings that accompanies it. It must be noted—with yet another apology to the artist—that financial restrictions prevented the Newsletter from capturing much of the vivid brilliance of his sketches. (The subtle gray wash of the sky, for instance, is not captured in the print of the Scene 2 sketch, nor is the more pervasive blue in Scene 8. The fiery background in Scene 3 is closer to rust brown than to yellow in the original, and the aqua of Scene 7 was more gray.) We have discovered the inadequacy of color xerography, but we felt that enough remains, and is of sufficient value to others contemplating productions of the play, to justify the inclusion of what we *could* afford. If it becomes possible to offer more faithful prints to readers interested in purchasing them, an announcement to that effect will appear in the next issue. --Ed.]

Designing O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* provides an artistic and technical challenge for any scene designer. Furthermore, designing this production to work within the 1979 Dartmouth Summer Repertory season with Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* and Moliere's *Tartuffe* made the process even more complicated. Consequently, production meetings began almost six months prior to the opening, and involved the director, Michael Rutenberg, the costume designer, John Sullivan, and myself.

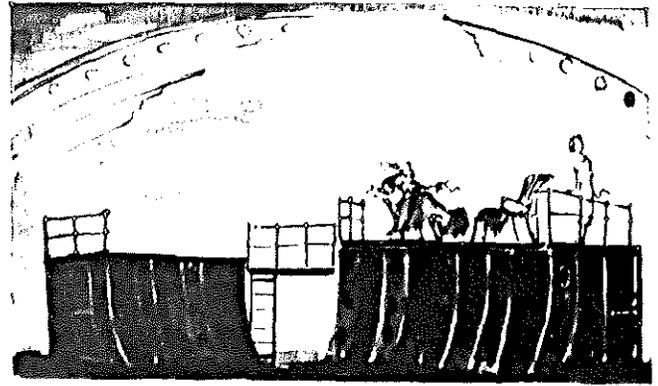
Central to the design is the director's idea of the play as a study of a man's process toward suicide. Also, images of heaven and hell, steel, cages, and man's lack of harmony with nature were discussed. The director's idea and the aforementioned images were eventually to merge into the central concept of man thrust into an industrialized/dehumanized world in which death is an inevitability. In order to provide visual unity, to aid the director in creating the play's central rhythms, and to create a manageable repertory production, I designed a flexible unit set.

Within the unit set are a series of levels which both metaphorically create man's (Yank's) place in society (see sketches for Scenes 1 and 2 and note that the picture of Scene 2 is reversed) and establish certain character relationships (see sketch for Scene 3). Through direct manipulation of these scenic levels, the juxtaposition of characters and



Scene 1

The Forecastle



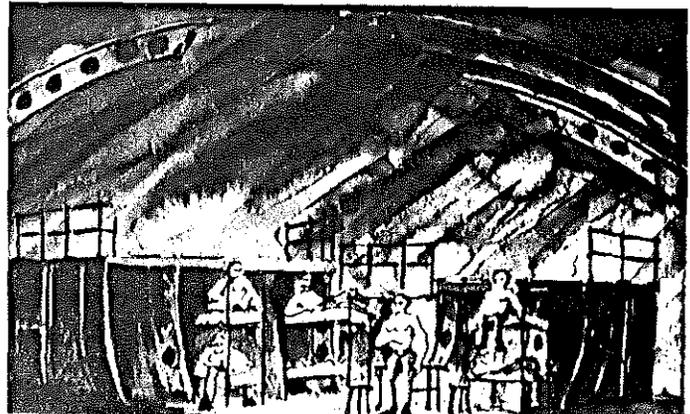
Scene 2

The Deck



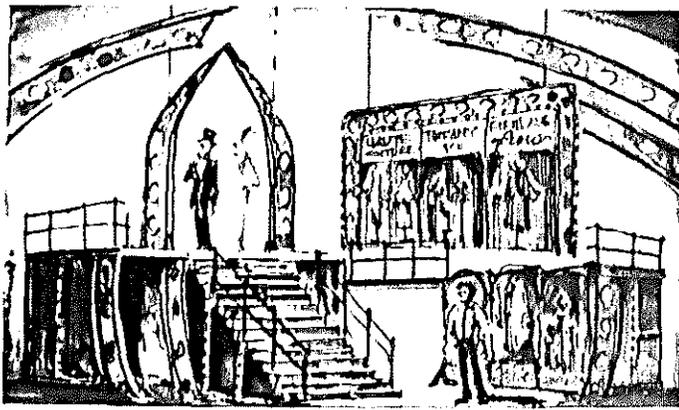
Scene 3

The Stokehole



Scene 4

The Forecastle



Scene 5

Fifth Avenue



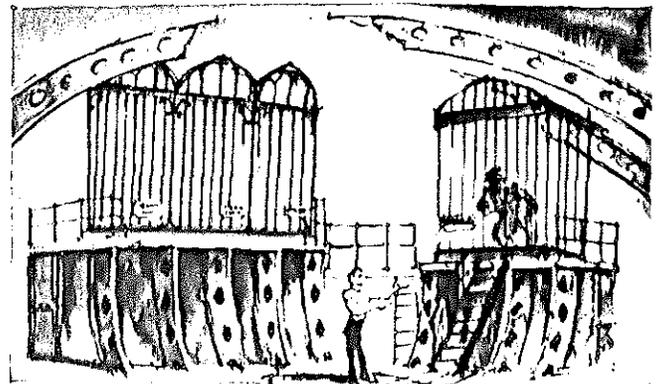
Scene 6

The Prison



Scene 7

The IWW Hall



Scene 8

The Zoo

Every time I've been involved with one of O'Neill's plays I've had a sense of existing in two entirely different kinds of realities: the commonplace, photographic reality; and the interior reality of fantasy. I think the struggle of these two realities—where the impossible can happen among the commonplace, where the figures become regal, monumental, and totally equipped for tragedy—gives that unbelievable tension to his works.

4. James A. Robinson, "O'Neill and Albee," *Philological Papers* (West Virginia University Bulletin), 25 (February 1979), 38-45.

The lives, careers and plays of Eugene O'Neill and Edward Albee exhibit an intriguing number of similarities. As a child, each experienced real or symbolic abandonment by his parents, and failed at formal schooling; as young playwrights, both moved quickly from off-Broadway acclaim to Broadway success, partly through their skillful adaptation of contemporary European expressionistic techniques to the American stage. The shapes of their subsequent careers likewise run parallel. Their first five years as popular playwrights found them focusing on social themes like urban alienation (*The Hairy Ape*, *The Zoo Story*) and racism (*All God's Chillun Got Wings*, *The Death of Bessie Smith*), but both concluded this phase with baffling allegories that confounded both audiences and critics (*The Great God Brown*, *Tiny Alice*). Later plays, like *Strange Interlude*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *All Over* and *Listening*, displayed resigned protagonists in a death-centered world. Similar character types and motifs also characterize their drama. The figure of the dead or dying son recurs in their plays, which also frequently feature manipulative mothers presiding over deteriorating families; and in both, the disintegrating family represents the declining sense of community in American culture.

O'Neill's and Albee's work has many techniques in common as well. The central symbol unifies *Desire Under the Elms*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, *Tiny Alice*, and *Box/Mao/Box*; the musical device of variations on a theme structures *The Hairy Ape*, *The Iceman Cometh*, *All Over* and *Counting the Ways*; confessional monologues dominate *Iceman*, *Long Day's Journey*, *Zoo Story*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *A Delicate Balance*. The two playwrights also verge occasionally into allegory (*Hairy Ape*, *Great God Brown*, *Zoo Story*, *Tiny Alice*), largely because they share a vision of the symbolic and mysterious nature of existence.

Finally, O'Neill and Albee reach similar conclusions about this world: they suspect (especially in *Strange Interlude* and *Tiny Alice*) that we are ludicrous victims of a cosmic comedy; they suggest (Albee more ambiguously than O'Neill) that existence is insupportable without sustaining illusions. These and the many other parallels between O'Neill and Albee can perhaps be attributed to similar personal backgrounds, similar cultural assumptions, and the resemblance of the 20's to the 60's in American theatrical history; but they also argue for an important, albeit limited, influence of O'Neill on Albee. (J.A.R.)

5. James A. Robinson, "O'Neill's Symbolic Sounds," *Modern Language Studies* (Spring 1979), pp. 36-45.

Eugene O'Neill's claim that "I have always used sound in plays as a structural part of them" applies especially to his expressionistic dramas, which frequently feature aural environments that symbolize man's victimization by irrational, demonic forces. The sounds made by the tom-tom, the ghosts and the protagonist himself in *The Emperor Jones*, for example, dramatize the gradual victory of Jones's primitive unconscious over

which resulted in "Cardiff" before Cook made his script (presumably in the summer of 1916). This suggests that O'Neill did not make the changes because of what he saw in the rehearsals of his very first production.

So why did he make the changes? Did he, in fact, respond to Baker's criticism that "Cardiff" was not a play? O'Neill reported this comment to Barrett Clark, but when Baker wrote about O'Neill in 1926, he cited "Cardiff" before noting that O'Neill first perfected his art in one-acts, then in longer plays. Did Baker change his mind or had O'Neill changed his play?

Or did O'Neill respond to the suicide (by jumping overboard) of his real-life friend, Driscoll, in the fall of 1915, by rewriting "Children" and making the death of Yank more heroic and the tone of the play more elegiac? If so, this might explain why O'Neill brought "Cardiff" to the Provincetown Players in 1916, rather than a play he had completed after May of 1914.

Whatever motivated O'Neill to make his revisions, there is at present no proof that he did so before he went to Harvard. In fact, at present, no manuscript of the final "Cardiff" has been found in any of the major O'Neill collections. Yet he must have had one in Provincetown in the summer of 1916. If such a manuscript could be found, and dated with accuracy, it might serve to close the two-year gap and to indicate whether O'Neill finished "Cardiff" before, during, or after he went to study playwriting under Professor Baker. (P.D.V.)

#### O'NEILL ON SCREEN: *NEW YORKER* IN AUDIENCE

[The Public Theater's recent screening of six films based on O'Neill plays, plus a simultaneous run elsewhere in New York City of the Lee Marvin *Iceman Cometh*, elicited a series of evaluative ripples in the capsule-film-review pages of the October 15, 22 and 29 issues of *The New Yorker*. Given Brendan Gill's oft-repeated views on the playwright (see page 15 of the September 1977 issue of the Newsletter for a characteristic slam), one can't expect eulogy, but the film capsules, reprinted below, are, of course, anonymous. --Ed.]

1. *Ah, Wilderness!* (1935). "This piece of ordinary-family-life Americana, centering on the sweet love pangs of adolescence, is so remote from Eugene O'Neill's life and his other work [? --Ed.] that it's something of a freak. O'Neill said that the play came to him at night, as a dream, but it seems to be a dream based on Booth Tarkington's world. Eric Linden (who always looks as if he's just about to cry) plays the mooning high-school-valedictorian hero in the era of choking starched collars; that cloying old fraud Lionel Barrymore is his father; Wallace Beery is his tipling uncle; and Aline MacMahon and Spring Byington wear neat shirtwaists and make themselves useful about the house. If it sounds Andy Hardyish, it is, and more than a little; in 1948, MGM tried to capitalize on the resemblance by starring Mickey Rooney in a musical version of the play, called "Summer Holiday." The musical turned out to be an abomination, but this early version, directed by Clarence Brown, while not a world-shaker, and rather dim as entertainment, has at least a nice sense of period."
2. *Anna Christie* (1930). "One waits for an eternity for Garbo to show up and utter her first talking-picture line—'Give me a whiskey, ginger ale on the side. And don't be stingy, baby.' This is not one of Eugene O'Neill's best plays, and dat-ole-davil-sea stuff is pretty hard to take in this version, directed by Clarence Brown."
3. *The Emperor Jones* (1933). "Eugene O'Neill's play about a black man's disintegration was conceived in a semi-Expressionist style, and it was filmed in that style by Dudley Murphy, from a screenplay by DuBose Heyward. Murphy, a director with ideas but almost

## NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. The editor is saddened to report the death, on August 8th after ten months of struggle against cancer, of Leonard Chabrowe. "At the end," writes a friend, "he was resigned, regretting many lost opportunities and, most immediately, the impossibility of saying goodbye in the personal way he would have liked." Readers of Mr. Chabrowe's *Ritual and Pathos—the Theatre of O'Neill*, whatever their reactions to its content, will doubtless join the editor in mourning the loss of a dedicated O'Neill scholar.
2. *O'Neill and Carlotta*, a dramatic collage by Barbara Gelb, was given two staged readings at Joseph Papp's Public Theater in New York City last October 14. Coming just two days before the ninety-first anniversary of the playwright's birth (October 16, 1888), the performances marked the first in an annual series of O'Neill birthday events, sponsored by the twelve-person Theater Committee for Eugene O'Neill, and culminating in an O'Neill Centennial Celebration in 1988. *O'Neill and Carlotta* combined sections from letters and interviews by the playwright and his third wife, passages from O'Neill's published non-dramatic writings, and scenes from a number of his plays. The format was an abridged version of the one used in the Gelbs' 1962 biography of O'Neill. "Though I narrowed the focus to O'Neill and Carlotta for the stage reading," Mrs. Gelb noted, "I used the same technique we used in the biography. I tried to intertwine his life and his work, and illustrate his emotional climate with dialogue from his plays. What I have tried to write is a kind of introduction to O'Neill's genius." Directed by Robert Allan Ackerman, the collage was performed by Jason Robards, Colleen Dewhurst, Geraldine Fitzgerald, José Quintero (in his acting debut), Philip Anglim and Madeleine Kahn. Also included was the 1961 tape-recorded voice of Carlotta herself—a touch that, according to *New York Times* reporter Michiko Kakutani, "added a ghostly presence" ("A Long Evening's Journey Into a Past," October 15, 1979, p. C15).
3. The second activity to be sponsored by the Theater Committee for Eugene O'Neill will occur at the Public Theater next summer: a repertory season of O'Neill plays directed by José Quintero and performed by a company including Jason Robards, Colleen Dewhurst and Geraldine Fitzgerald. Further information, if available, will appear in the May issue of the Newsletter.
4. *O'Neill, Son and Artist*, the Pulitzer Prize biography by Louis Sheaffer, was among the approximately 300 books in the American display at the Moscow International Book Fair last fall. The American exhibit was put together by a committee chosen by the Association of American Publishers. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., chairman, said that the committee was "left entirely on its own after receiving these simple instructions: 'Please make a small but representative display of current, popular and readily available books which will give our friends in the Soviet Union some notion of America's amusements and arts and concerns right now.'" The catalog for the display said the following of the Sheaffer entry:

Eugene O'Neill's plays won him the Nobel Prize for literature, four Pulitzer awards and acclaim as America's foremost dramatist. Yet he died, at 65, in 1953, with plays that could find no producers. His affecting *A Touch of the Poet*, written in 1940, and his towering, searing masterpiece, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, saw their first productions not in the United States but in Sweden four years after his death. *O'Neill, Son and Artist* is the second and final volume in Louis Sheaffer's exhaustive, prize-winning biography—the life, the work, the tortured family relationships—of this tormented genius of the stage, "who transmuted private history and secret agony into art."

One other O'Neill film, though not included in the long day's screening, was added to the quintet during the subsequent week: *The Emperor Jones* (1933), dir. Dudley Murphy, screenplay by DuBose Heyward, with Paul Robeson and Dudley Digges. For the capsule evaluations of these six and one other film of an O'Neill play that appeared in *The New Yorker* last October, see "O'Neill on Screen: *New Yorker* in Audience" on page 21 of this issue.

9. RECENT, CURRENT AND FORTHCOMING O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS.

- Ah, Wilderness!* Boston University Stage Troupe, Hayden Hall, Boston University, Oct. 26 - Nov. 3, 1979.
- Ah, Wilderness!*, dir. Will Maitland Weiss. Apple Corps, New York City, Nov. 8 - Dec. 1, 1979.
- Ah, Wilderness!*, dir. R. Falls. The Wisdom Bridge Theatre, Chicago, March 19 - April 20, 1980.
- Ah, Wilderness!*, dir. James E. Runyan. American Theatre Company, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 21 - April 5, 1980.
- Ah, Wilderness!*, dir. A. Fletcher. American Conservatory Theatre, San Francisco, April 3 - May 30, 1980.
- Beyond the Horizon*, dir. Christian Renaud. 78th Street Theater Lab, New York City. Closed on Nov. 18.
- Desire Under the Elms*, dir. Irene Lewis. Playwrights Horizons, Queens, New York, Oct. 13 - Nov. 4, 1979.
- Desire Under the Elms*, dir. Robert Berlinger. Dartmouth Players, Warner Bentley Theater, Hopkins Center, Hanover, New Hampshire, Feb. 26 - March 1, 1980. (An illustrated review will appear in the May issue of the Newsletter.)
- The Emperor Jones*, with Stephen D. Agins as Brutus Jones. Presented by "American Theatre Experiment" at Fordham University Theatre, New York City, Sept. 10-22, 1979.
- Hughie*. In repertory in the Black Swan Theatre, Oregon Shakespearean Festival, Ashland, Oregon, July - Sept., 1980.
- The Iceman Cometh*, dir. Larry McCarthy. Performed by Pegasus at the New Theater (Hasty Pudding Playhouse), Holyoke Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, April 10-27, 1980. This revival of a successful former production by a young and highly-praised company will be performed in repertory with a new play that will also be of interest to O'Neillians: *Scrimshaw*, by Robert Rees Evans, which opens on April 11 and will alternate with *Iceman* thereafter. The play, originally commissioned by the Provincetown Playhouse, concerns an aging and diseased author who reviews his life when his artistic conscience is confronted by acquisitive exploiters. The protagonist is a composite of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Faulkner and O'Neill, and much of the flashback material was derived from the Gelbs' biography of O'Neill. Illustrated reviews of both productions will appear in a future issue of the Newsletter.) Information about both may be obtained from Professor Evans, who teaches drama at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Tel. (617) 287-1900, ext. 2971. Closer to production time, ticket information will be available at the New Theater box office: (617) 547-6360.
- Long Day's Journey into Night*. Queens College Summer Theatre, Flushing, New York, August 9-11, 1979.
- Long Day's Journey into Night*. Stratford Festival, Stratford, Ontario. In repertory, Summer 1980.

The events will include several one act plays, some workshop productions and readings of scenes from the longer O'Neill plays, the film of *The Iceman Cometh*, a photography exhibit of O'Neill's life and times, a gallery show inspired by themes in O'Neill's work, a lecture on the architecture of O'Neill's homes, an original piece of choreography based on *Desire Under the Elms*, and selections from *Take Me Along*, the musical version of *Ah, Wilderness!* Additional lectures on O'Neill's life and the history of his times are being considered. For further information, contact Ms. Sullwold at the Academy, 1500 West Kennedy Road, Lake Forest, IL 60045. Tel. (312) 234-3210.

12. O'NEILL FORGOTTEN? That's what actor-director Charles Hallahan thinks, and he's doing his best to jog our memories. Lawrence Christon reported Hallahan's views and activities in an issue of the *Los Angeles Times* last winter:

The appearance of *Bound for Cardiff* and *Hughie* at the Theater of Arts is a reminder that, with the exception of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, which played the Ahmanson and Colony theaters last year, Eugene O'Neill seems to have become a forgotten playwright. "Americans don't give a damn," said Charles Hallahan, who will direct the first play and appear in the second. "We tend to take him for granted or else produce him badly. The 'Electra Trilogy' that was done on PBS recently was treated in modern style that made no attempt to solve the characters' behavioral problems, so it came off like a soap opera.

"The impetus to do these plays came from a trip some of us took to Russia last year. I was with ACT in San Francisco, and when we mounted *Desire Under the Elms* I was amazed at how high Russian audiences got from seeing O'Neill, and how much they knew about him."

13. When the Theater Hall of Fame, housed in Broadway's Uris Theater, held its first awards ceremony in six years last November 18, five of the fifty-one initiates summoned memories of monumental O'Neill activities in the past. The five (in alphabetical order): Harold Clurman, Katherine Hepburn, Sir Laurence Olivier, José Quintero, and Jason Robards. Worthies all! We applaud the much-deserved tribute.
14. Paul Voelker, resident O'Neill consultant to the Milwaukee Repertory Theater Company during its 1976-77 production package of *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, reports the results of an audience survey conducted during the two-play run. Of the 1,353 persons who responded, 97% attended both productions. 21% preferred *Journey*, 47% preferred *Wilderness*, and 26% expressed no preference. 71% said they wanted to see more O'Neill plays, and 62% said that their wish to see more O'Neill was a result of the MRTC project. (Only 47% had seen an O'Neill play before.)
15. The reopening of Lincoln Center's Vivian Beaumont Theater, under a new six-member board of directors, has been postponed until the fall of 1980. Richmond Crinkley, the Beaumont's executive director, has announced (*New York Times*, October 25, 1979, p. C15) that a new production of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* is "being discussed" as part of an eight-play first season.

#### PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

NORMAND BERLIN, Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and recipient of the University's Distinguished Teacher Award, teaches Shakespeare, Elizabethan-Jacobean drama, modern drama, and O'Neill. He has published two books—*The Base String: The Underworld in Elizabethan Drama* and *Thomas Sackville*—and about two dozen articles ranging from medieval literature to modern drama and film. He is seeking a publisher for a third book, *The Secret Cause: A Discussion of Tragedy* (which contains a section on *Desire Under the Elms*) and is working on a book on O'Neill for the "Modern Dramatists" series published by Macmillan of London.

BILL COSTLEY, poet and journalist, has had work appear in numerous publications across the country. Most recently, his poetry appeared in "Lynn Voices"—a collaborative collection of poems and pictures about Lynn, Massachusetts—in *Radical America* magazine. Mr. Costley grew up in Lynn—a former shoe manufacturing center—and now lives in the Boston area.

MICHAEL HINDEN, Associate Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, teaches modern drama and has published a variety of essays on O'Neill. The current essay on *The Emperor Jones* marks Professor Hinden's third straight January appearance in the Newsletter—an anniversary that the editor celebrates with praise! The previous essays were "Ironic Use of Myth in *The Hairy Ape*" (January 1978, pp. 2-4) and "'Splendid Twaddle': O'Neill and Richard Middleton" (January 1979, pp. 13-16).