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The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

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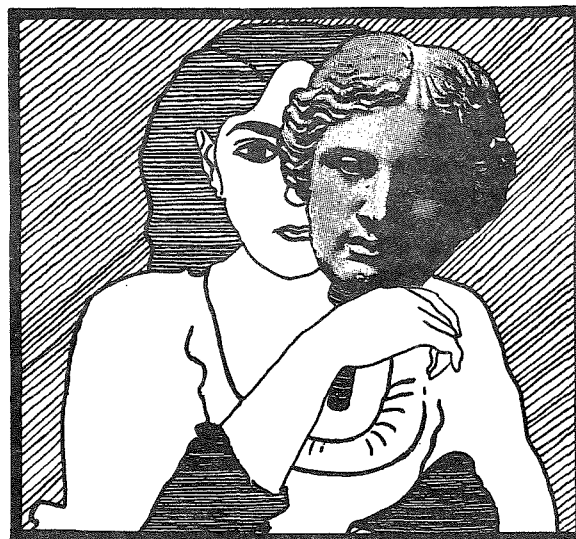
* O'NEILL'S WOMEN: A SPECIAL SECTION

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O'Neill's Women:

A Special Section...

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EDITORIAL FOREWORD: APOLOGIES AND A SPECIAL SECTION

Periodically, when I begin to receive discreet notes from faithful readers asking if their subscriptions have prematurely expired (they have not, nor have I!), I feel particular regret that, because my editorial bowler must frequently do battle with a chairmanly chapeau, each issue is not always ready at the start of its appointed season. Rather than offer an inferior journal by bowing to equinoctial dictates, I prefer to heed Friar Lawrence's advice to that amorous speedster, Romeo: "Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast." And I hope I may say to you what Romeo said to *his* friends (and receive more indulgent retorts than he did from Mercutio): "Pardon, ... my business was great, and in such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy"! While I must not sacrifice quality to punctuality, I assure you that, when a season arrives unaccompanied by its designated issue, you can confidently say, with another of the Bard's unhappy heroes, "if it be not now, yet it *will come*" (*italics added*)! And please accept my apologies--especially authors eager to see their words in print--for taxing your exemplary patience.

This is not the first issue to feature a "special section." Four times in the past the Newsletter has presented groups of articles focusing on a specific title or topic: twice on *The Hairy Ape*, and once each on *Hughie* and O'Neill's plays in performance. But those groups happened by chance, and the collection presented herewith is doubly "special" because it marks the first time that articles on a particular subject were specifically solicited, and because the subject, "O'Neill's Women," is particularly timely.

I am grateful to everyone who submitted an article; I offer sincere apologies to those whose work, because of spatial and fiscal restrictions, had to be omitted; and I also apologize--in what must be my most penitent preface to date--to any readers, feminist or other, who were offended by my chosen title for the section. One mentioned it to me, and I agree that there is a condescending tone in the phrase "O'Neill's women," especially when the section includes an essay on Susan Glaspell. (As Linda Ben-Zvi's brilliant introduction to the career and work of Ms. Glaspell amply demonstrates, she was very definitely her *own* woman!) However, since the other five essays concern characters of O'Neill's creation, I have chosen to let the section title stand, but I will happily--or, at least, unreluctantly--print any letters of chastisement that may be forthcoming.

I recently saw a book-length study of (if I may say it) Shakespeare's women that pointed out how free he was of the sexist prejudices of his age. The essays which follow will show, I fear, that the same cannot be said of O'Neill, whose avowed interest in "the relation between *man* and God" (*italics added*) can be taken more literally than he consciously intended, and who probably deserves the combined criticism of Professors Nelson and Drucker. But the collection, far from being a concerted cry of condemnation, also shows that "O'Neill's women," despite their "diminished destiny" (the phrase is Professor Nelson's), are a fascinating subject for study and contemplation.

I close with special thanks to Marshall Brooks for the striking cover illustration, and to my colleague, Bette Mandl, who served tirelessly as consultant and guide in the preparation of the special section, and who would, did she not have an excellent essay of her own to submit, have been officially designated its guest editor. To her belong any laurels you're moved to send; to me, any contumely. I know she joins me in eagerly awaiting your responses to the section--and your suggestions for similar special sections in the future.

O'NEILL'S WOMEN

When Eugene O'Neill's place in American drama is assessed by critics and literary historians, the comment most often made is that he "revolutionized" the American theatre, that serious American drama really began with him. If his work is to be accorded this status, the plays deserve to be examined for their implications as social documents as well as for their value as works of art. This essay attempts one part of that examination.

O'Neill's often quoted remark that he was interested, not in the "relation between man and man," but only in the "relation between man and God"¹ shows us what his intentions were: to transcend the social role of his characters in order to examine their place in the universe, to look at the "impelling, inscrutable forces behind life."² Though this attempt sometimes failed--especially in a play like *All God's Chillun*, where the social context was too powerful to be transcended--we can see O'Neill's major characters as "romantic idealists" trying to "clutch" their dream,³ trying to see beyond the horizon.

However, in his major plays, he had to root his characters in the real world, to provide some recognizable environment for them as a metaphor for the human condition as he saw it. Whatever their particular niche in society, whether humble or lofty, the protagonists have a starting place from which to begin their quest for the ideal. The seamen of the S.S. Glencairn frame their inexpressible longings against the eternal sea, which is both their work and their life. Yank, in *The Hairy Ape*, finds his identity and his self-worth in his work until that world is shattered. Even the more articulate protagonists define themselves by their professions, their place in the world. In *The Great God Brown*, the conflict between Brown and Anthony, businessman and architect, is a conflict between materialist and artist. In these instances, social roles define the characters' humanity and serve as foils for their aspirations.

The male characters, that is. The female characters, with few exceptions, are defined only by their biological roles--in other words, by their relationships to the men in their lives. Other than being daughters, wives, mothers, or lovers, the women have no significant careers, except for Eleanor Cape, an actress in *Welded*. Even then, she is her husband's creation, acting in plays he writes for her. The prostitutes, of whom there are many, obviously have a profession, but one which depends exclusively on the favors of men.

Despite this limitation, female characters can be, like the men, dreamers, searchers after some unrealized goal. Ruth Atkins Mayo, Abbie Putnam, Nina Leeds and Sara Melody, for example, all search for something beyond their present existence. However, in all these cases (and others) the search is a quest for the perfect marriage, the perfect love, the perfect son. The women's struggles may have ideological content, but their ultimate questions relate to personal relationships, like those in a marriage or a family. Christine Mannon's plaintive appeal, "Why can't all of us remain innocent and loving and trusting?"⁴ sounds much like Mary Tyrone's, "None of us can help the things

¹O'Neill's full statement, appearing originally in Joseph Wood Krutch's introduction to *Nine Plays*, is quoted in Oscar Cargill et al., eds., *O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism* (New York University Press, 1961), p. 115.

²Cargill, p. 100 (from a letter written by O'Neill to Barrett Clark).

³Cargill, p. 104 (from an article originally published in the *New York Tribune*, February 13, 1931).

⁴*Mourning Becomes Electra*, in *Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Modern Library, 1954), Act One of *The Hunted*, p. 759.

life has done to us."⁵

Though male characters do sometimes share these aspirations, and though their struggles are often inextricably bound up with the women in their lives, they usually dream of things beyond the domestic sphere. Robert Mayo dies, dreaming, not of his marriage, but of what lies beyond the horizon. Con Melody dreams of castles in Ireland and past military glory. Dion Anthony--later, Billy (Dion) Brown--struggles with life's meaning in an indifferent, materialistic world. James Tyrone's deepest regret is the loss of his promise as a serious actor.

Though women do figure in the illusions of several male characters in *The Iceman Cometh*, Larry Slade and Hickey among them, these relationships do not constitute the sole cause of the despair afflicting the major characters. Other than Parritt's illusion, perhaps the bartender's is the most directly connected to women. These women, the only ones to appear in the play, are prostitutes, their profession the one most often represented for women in O'Neill's plays. Prostitutes play major or important roles in *Anna Christie*, *All God's Chillun*, *The Great God Brown*, *Welded*, *Ah, Wilderness!* and two one-act plays, "The Web" and "Moon of the Caribbees." And prostitutes are referred to in *Desire Under the Elms*, *Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, and *Hughie*.

The prostitutes serve many functions in the plays, from providing escape for the Cabots and Jamie Tyrone to offering a kind of folk wisdom in *Welded* and *The Great God Brown*. John Henry Raleigh points out that, for the male characters, "the prostitute means two complementary but contrasting things: first, bawdy and therefore enjoyable conversation; and, second, guilt-ridden sexual intercourse."⁶ The men go to prostitutes to punish themselves for their guilt feelings toward the chaste women in their lives.

Anna Christie, as the protagonist of her play, has, of course, a more complex role than most of the other prostitutes. Though she has become free of her past, it will not leave her alone. When marriage is proposed to a prostitute, complications ensue, even though the proposer has a sexual past to match that of his prospective bride. Anna's protest to that effect is brief and easily passed over by both men in the play and by the author. Matt brings his pride as a seaman to this marriage; Anna has nothing to offer but a tarnished body.

Similarly, Abbie Putnam has nothing else to offer, so she must sell herself in marriage in order to stake a claim on the farm (her first real home) which father and son struggle over as a matter of right. Sara Melody ensures her marriage to Simon through seduction, and then, later in the marriage and at his request, she plays a strange role of harlot to her husband (*More Stately Mansions*).

The point of all this is that the male characters, at least a large number of them, operate from two dimensions: their work, which gives them a place in the larger world, and their relationship to the women in their lives. The female characters for the most part operate in a more limited sphere, fulfilling the traditional roles for women.

It is natural that critics, in their exploration of the deeper levels of meaning

⁵*Long Day's Journey Into Night* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), Act Two, Scene two, p. 61.

⁶John Henry Raleigh, *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), pp. 121-122.

in O'Neill's plays, look for mythic qualities, for characters as archetypes.⁷ O'Neill himself declared his interest in the "impelling, inscrutable forces behind life," and in man's struggle "to make the Force express him instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression" (Cargill, pp. 100, 125-126). Doris Falk finds both Freudian and Jungian concepts in O'Neill's plays--the Oedipus and Electra complexes providing a source of conflict for the characters, the Jungian male/female archetypes operating through O'Neill's men and women.⁸ The animus or male principle, Falk points out, is equivalent to the "Spiritual Principle" of the universe, the female to the "Physical Principle" (p. 76). This philosophy seems to be corroborated in the roles played by men and women in O'Neill's plays (indeed, in much of literature). Men seek the larger goals: the meaning of the universe and man's place in it; women pursue more personal goals--usually, fulfillment in love.

Characters in the plays reflect O'Neill's personal life as well, representing the various aspects of love, comfort, and support that he needed from women and perhaps found in his third wife. Carlotta Monterey revealed how O'Neill, during their courtship, never directly expressed his love for her, but rather his strong need of her.⁹

Even those female characters whom O'Neill gives symbolic qualities seem to suggest these roles. Cybel, in *The Great God Brown*, partakes of the nature of the Earth Mother, as her name implies. Though O'Neill is borrowing from mythology, the implications of the character are both Freudian and, for the author, personal. Cybel functions at various levels for both Brown and Anthony. At the most basic level, she offers escape and a placid, undemanding companionship, a function which prostitutes similarly provide for Michael Cape in *Welded* and for Jamie Tyrone. Though Brown needs to possess Cybel sexually, Anthony finds in her a different kind of love. "You're strong. You always give. You've given my weakness strength to live."¹⁰ But both men need much more from Cybel; they need the all-encompassing love of a mother, which becomes the compassion of a goddess. Anthony addresses her as "Miss Earth" and "Earth Mother." She responds by expressing her pity for all men. "I'm so damn sorry for the lot of you... that I'd like to run out naked into the street and love the whole mob to death" (p. 48). In their dying moments, both men call her "mother" as she becomes an "idol of earth," giving assurance of the continuity of life: "Always spring comes again bearing life!" (p. 95). Though Margaret does not play so exalted a role, she too, true to her lineage from Faust, represents woman in her various roles. When her husband Dion Brown dies, she calls him "My lover! My Husband! My Boy!" (p. 95).

The male characters seem to be insatiable in their need for love of various kinds. Abbie Putnam and Josie Hogan, like Margaret Anthony, offer both maternal and sexual

⁷Among these critics are Travis Bogard, *Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Edwin Engel, *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1953); and Dhupaty Raghavcharyulu, *Eugene O'Neill: A Study* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1965). In these critics' analyses of the male/female principles in O'Neill's plays, the male is always assigned power, the female the supportive qualities.

⁸Doris Falk, *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1958), p. 76.

⁹Frederick Carpenter finds the pattern of O'Neill's emotional life reflected in his three successive marriages, a pattern which is also reflected in his professional life, as he moved from portraying the quest for ideal beauty, through despair, to an acceptance of reality. Frederick I. Carpenter, *Eugene O'Neill*, rev. ed. (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979), pp. 35-37.

¹⁰*The Great God Brown*, in *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Random House, 1941), III (Act Two, Scene one), 48.

love. But sometimes the two kinds are separated. In *Moon for the Misbegotten*, Jim Tyrone rejects Josie's sexual love, needing to purge himself and to keep his mother's memory pure. Josie plays the role of confessor, then lets him go; her part in his life is ended. In *More Stately Mansions*, Simon's wife and mother struggle for sovereignty over him. Sara, who is both wife and harlot, wins because she is the stronger.

In those plays, then, where the relationship between the sexes is explored, the men look to the women, not as intellectual companions, but as lovers, mates, parents--all biological roles. Even in plays like *Desire Under the Elms*, *Beyond the Horizon*, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, and *Moon for the Misbegotten*, which confine the action to domestic settings, there is the chance for the men to expand their horizons. Ephraim Cabot is tempted to leave the farm, as he had once before and as two of his sons have done. Andrew Mayo takes the adventurous trip his brother Robert dreamed about. Though the lives of the three male Tyrones are static at the time of *Long Day's Journey*, they all have more mobility than Mary Tyrone.¹¹ And Josie Hogan remains on the farm as Jim Tyrone brings his world of troubles to her. In contrast, the women's roles--their experiences, whether literal or symbolic--are always filtered through their place in the domestic world.

This is true even of plays with female protagonists. *Strange Interlude*, which O'Neill called his "woman play," seems at first glance to reverse the pattern of some of the other plays. This time it is a woman, Nina Leeds, who needs four men to fulfill biological roles in her life: father, husband, lover, son. When Nina says at the end of Act Six,

My three men!...their life is my life...husband!...lover!...father!...
little Gordon!...he is mine too!...that makes it perfect!...,¹²

she encapsulates the destiny of women in O'Neill's plays.

By making Nina the protagonist, O'Neill necessarily subordinates the men and their lives in the outside world to the main theme of the play--Nina's search for fulfillment and her ultimate acceptance of her diminished destiny. However, the men's occupations have significance in defining their characters. Nina's father, described as a "fugitive from reality," is, appropriately, a professor of classics, a believer in tradition, whose selfish reluctance to accept a change in his situation triggers the action that severely affects his daughter and colors all her subsequent behavior. Marsden, a writer of effete novels of manners, is also in retreat from life, content to be a spectator until the time comes for him to replace the professor in Nina's life. Not only does Nina complete her life cycle between these two men--from being the professor's daughter to becoming Marsden's wife/daughter--she gives up her rebellion, her search for fulfillment, as she returns to the security of life with a father figure, and thus to a passive existence with a passive man.

Her active life, the years of her rebellion and her quest, are associated with younger, more active men. The lost lover, a pilot downed in the war, takes on a glamor that can never be tarnished by the mundane world. Her son Gordon seems to embody all the talents of his spiritual father, a kind of reincarnation for Nina; hence her fierce possessiveness of him. Even though her husband, Sam Evans, seems as banal as any Sinclair Lewis character, he is financially successful and can therefore claim a

¹¹James Scrimgeour seems to miss the significance of this fact in Mary's life when he contrasts her with the rest of the family. Mary, Scrimgeour states, unlike the other Tyrones, "journeys into isolation from--rather than involvement with--other human beings." James R. Scrimgeour, "From Loving to the Misbegotten: Despair in the Drama of Eugene O'Neill," *Modern Drama*, 20 (1977), 50.

¹²*Strange Interlude*, in *Nine Plays by Eugene O'Neill*, Second Part--Act Six, p. 616.

certain status in the world. Ned Darrell, as a scientist, assumes his ability to remain detached in his and Nina's experiment, and is, consequently, trapped by his emotions as he becomes a bitter and frustrated man. Later, when he achieves a kind of acceptance of his fate, his profession does save him by providing meaning for his life.

Nina Leeds is certainly the strongest character in the play in the sense that she initiates action. She acts and the men react out of their need for her. Indeed, it is each man's need of her that makes him vulnerable. Her father earns her hatred through his machinations; Darrell runs away to avoid emotional bankruptcy; Marsden spends his life waiting, only to claim his reward when Nina is emotionally exhausted. Though Sam's lack of perception keeps him from too much unhappiness, his vulnerability becomes apparent in his work when Nina appears to be drifting away from him.

Nina is, of course, vulnerable too, in spite of her evident power over the men around her. She has not been able to control events and, after her son's marriage, is ready to accept a diminished life. Her resignation comes at the age of forty-five, a symbolic age for women and a further indication that O'Neill defines his women biologically. The stages in her life correspond to physical rather than intellectual changes. Even her concept of God suggests these roles: "God the Father," the "Boss," is "thoroughly comfortless." "God the Mother" offers peace to "Her children," whose life rhythm "beats from Her great heart, torn with the agony of love and birth" (pp. 524-525).

That is the dilemma of the play. Nina is the center of focus for four men, three of whom were her sexual partners; she is one of O'Neill's "romantic idealists" who spends her adult life trying to replace Gordon's love. But her horizons were inevitably limited by the nature of her goal. The cast of this play might very well read: Mr. Leeds--professor; Charlie Marsden--writer; Ned Darrell--scientist; Sam Evans--advertising man; and Nina Leeds--WOMAN. Suppose *she* had been a writer, a scientist, a professor. (At least, she would have had twenty more years before retirement.) What kind of play would that have been? Could O'Neill have written it? Or was his need for love and support so great that he had to view women only in their elemental nature? If so, the result was not necessarily misogyny, but certainly a somewhat limited view of half the human race.

--Doris Nelson

SEXUALITY AS DESTINY: THE SHADOW LIVES OF O'NEILL'S WOMEN *

*A living doll, everywhere you look.
It can sew, it can cook,
It can talk, talk, talk....*

-- Sylvia Plath, "The Applicant"

Scholars and critics of O'Neill's plays have not failed to note how he stereotypes women. The All-Loving Mother and the Gold-Hearted Whore are favorites. I do not dispute the charge; far from it. My purpose in this paper is to identify and categorize

* This paper is dedicated to Professor Dorothy B. Bland.

certain female types that recur, predictably and relentlessly, in almost all of the plays. **

The prostitutes are so characterless they are hard to tell apart. Mostly, they are good women undone by circumstance; Rose of *Web**** initiates the collection with her "What job c'n I git? What am I fit fur?" The Glencairn cycle is full of peripheral women who can only batten on the bestiality of men. Anna, the best of the group, shares with Cybel of *Brown* and Josie of *Misbegotten* a phoenix-like ability to renew their chastity through some ideal love. The ambiguity of Josie's past--is she a virgin or a whore or somehow magically both?--might reflect O'Neill's own inability to decide the sexual configuration of his ideal woman. The most materially successful prostitute is Sara of *Mansions* who day by day on the ornate couch of her husband's office earns--piece by piece--a vast financial empire.

O'Neill's notable inability to distinguish virgin from whore reflects the generally faulty sense of identity shared by most of his women. The result is not poetic mysticism but psychological myopia. In *A Drama of Souls*, Egil Törnqvist noted O'Neill's fondness for doubled or overlapping personalities, occurring far more commonly in women than in men. For example, Lavinia of *Electra* merges with Christine, and Deborah and Sara of *Mansions* exchange roles at will. In *Dynamo* the fusion becomes ludicrous as Mrs. Fife exchanges herself with the machine. Quite a number of women have no solid outlines at all: Beatriz of *Fountain* is, like her Dantean model, all symbol and no substance. In *Marco* there's little difference between the heroines: Donata waits and Kukachin withers, all for love of O'Neill's gabby Babbitt.

With few exceptions, the women in the plays don't have legitimate jobs. There are some incidental nurses in *Straw*, the odd stenographer here and there, the off-stage Anarchist of *Iceman*, and the actress of *Welded*. Shall we include the Dancer in that atrocious play *Thirst*? She dances not for art but for men, money, and power, and then will sell her body for a drink of water. Couldn't we have some women librarians, teachers, and secretaries even if it's too early for the physicians, managers, and artists? An O'Neill woman who is not supported by father or husband has two choices: to become a prostitute, or to slog away on the farms and in the bars of her male relatives. This is a situation untrue to O'Neill's times, when large numbers of women entered the working force, and it's even less true to his own life. O'Neill found friends, colleagues, lovers, and wives among some of the most vital, over-achieving and independent women of his time: Louise Bryant, Carlotta Monterey, Armina Marshall, Agnes Boulton, Ilka Chase, Lillian Gish, Susan Glaspell. Why did he never draw from life? Did he, like his acknowledged mentor Strindberg, feel uncomfortable with women who were not satisfied with prescribed and limited sexual roles? Louis Sheaffer suspects that O'Neill was neither sensitive to women nor particularly sensual, despite the exuberant romanticism of his letters and play inscriptions.

One might deduce from O'Neill's disdain for prostitutes that he placed a high value on virginity--until we note what happens to his virgins. Evidently a woman's rejection of sex repelled him as much as her indulgence in it. Emma of *Diff'rent* seems to want a sexless marriage, and she pays for this aberration by falling in love

** For the present study I considered only the standard, readily-available O'Neill canon, excluding the unfinished work presented so temptingly by Virginia Floyd in *Eugene O'Neill at Work* (New York: Ungar, 1981) and plays that are accessible only in private or university collections.

*** I have used the abbreviated play titles initiated by Egil Törnqvist in *A Drama of Souls* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

eventually with a young man to whom she was "almost a mother." (O'Neill had a career-long fascination with incest, but either fear of the censors or innate diffidence kept him from confronting the subject head-on.) Mildred of *Ape* is the archetype of neurotic sexual fastidiousness. If the fantastically complex problems of Nina in *Interlude* can be said to have a specific beginning, it was in her refusal to sleep with Gordon before he went off to be killed in the war. Deborah of *Mansions* loathes her dealings with the selfish, threatening opposite sex; she "uses love but loves only herself." Having failed to role-play the "slavish loving mother," she opts for alternative fulfillment in that perfectly sexless activity, grandmotherhood.

In the bodies of O'Neill women there resides a mystical ability to save or destroy men. Sara of *Poet* and *Mansions*, Ada of *Dynamo*, and Cybel of *Brown* come immediately to mind. (We must find room for Essie of *Wilderness* somewhere, and perhaps she belongs here. A *Ladies-Home-Journal* wife-and-mother can be savior of a sort.) Margaret of *Brown* has all the requisite feminine charms and domestic virtues, but she is unequal to either of the men who love her, and ultimately she fails them both. Certainly Dion is more than she can manage. Like Miriam of *Lazarus* and Mrs. Loving of *Days*, she finds it a distinct nuisance to be bonded to a saint.

A favorite theme of O'Neill, which he handled with great feeling, was the plight of a woman restless in unbreakable alliance with the wrong man. This character-type emerges first as some secondary figures in the early plays. Mrs. Knapp, the poverty-ridden wife in *Warnings*, wonders, "Why did I ever marry such a man?" Yvette, the off-stage heroine of *Wife*, is similarly beset but gets one of O'Neill's rare reprieves. Until Mrs. Frazer of *Servitude* was able to delude herself that slavery is freedom, she had found herself "being ground smaller day by day." For Elsa of *Days*, a marriage based on false assumptions "had become all beauty and truth to me"; when the illusion was lost, not enough personality remained to make a life. Mrs. Keeney of *Ile* had no choice but "waiting, watching, fearing," and soon enough she will accompany her deranged husband into madness.

Mary Tyrone is of course the epitome of the woman married to the wrong man, forced on a feminine course that is repugnant to her. Not coincidentally, her drug addiction began with the specifically feminine function of childbearing. By the time we meet Nora of *Poet* she is too tired to be of much interest, but we see her past burdened life through the clear eyes of daughter Sara. Even women we are expected to dislike, such as off-stage Evelyn in *Ice-man* and the nasty Mrs. Rowland of *Breakfast*, made bad marriages before they had a real chance to find their better selves.

O'Neill once told his secretary that the role a woman should play is that of sacrifice to her man, and in several plays he indicates that this is the woman's choice that will bring happiness to both partners. Cape of *Welded* is honestly surprised that Eleanor feels the need "of what is outside"; why isn't *he* enough for her? *Recklessness* is a failed attempt to work with materials that Strindberg could use superbly, just as *Servitude* proposes a solution of which Strindberg would probably have approved. Mrs. Baldwin, the trapped woman of the former play, never learns the "joy" of marital bondage that Mrs. Roylston and Mrs. Frazer of the latter play are so happy to embrace. Ruth of *Horizon* has yoked herself on the farm to the wrong mate; when she gets a chance at the right one, it is no longer her decision to make.

With the exception of Mary Tyrone, O'Neill's most tragic women are those for whom sexual passion has become a disease from which no recovery is possible. Abbie of *Desire* is O'Neill's first attempt to deal full-scale with a figure of this type, and thereafter she abounds, to reach perfection in Nina and Lavinia. I would include Ella of *Chillun* in this group. First produced sixty years ago, the play depicts a white woman passionately in love with a black man. To the audiences of the time, Ella's choice would indeed have seemed pathological and her eventual madness the

reasonable and predictable consequence of a choice as "sick" in its way as Lavinia's sex-tinged love for father and brother, and Nina's horrendous search for a father in the bodies of weak or stupid men.

This narrowly sexual view of the behavior and destiny of women is not characteristic of the men. They can fail or succeed in work as well as love, have ambitions and interests outside the bedroom, and dream in every sphere imaginable. But a woman's force, aspiration and achievement are focussed on relations with a man or men. Martha of *Man* makes a valuable contribution to her husband's work--but it isn't her work or her choice. She longed until she died to get out of someone else's dream and into her own fulfillment; she got understandably tired of being "a slave to Curt's hobbies."

"Why have you never asserted yourself, claimed your right as an individual?" asks Mrs. Frazer of Mrs. Roylston in *Servitude*. It is a question one would like to ask nearly *every* woman in the plays of Eugene O'Neill.

--Trudy Drucker

ABSENCE AS PRESENCE: THE SECOND SEX IN *THE ICEMAN COMETH*

The principal women of O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* remain offstage. They never appear to the audience in full complexity as characters to engage us in various ways, to elicit a range of response. This design has special virtues for a consideration of some aspects of O'Neill's treatment of women in his work. The invisibility of the significant female figures, Evelyn and Rosa, brings their purpose in the play into relief, uncomplicated by their presence. O'Neill makes palpable here the contribution of women to the symbol pattern of *The Iceman Cometh*, to the ways in which it makes meaning.

Three women do, of course, figure in lively exchanges at Harry Hope's. But O'Neill's stage directions describe Margie and Pearl, who are somewhat younger versions of Cora, as "sentimental, featherbrained, giggly, lazy, good-natured and reasonably content with life."¹ The description alerts us to their marginality in a setting where alcohol and a protective male camaraderie are the substance of life. The "tarts" are external enough to the central movement of the play, and innocuous enough in this context, for Travis Bogard to call Hope's saloon "a world without women."² There are no women present who will impinge on the experience of the men.

The habitués of the backroom have managed to sustain a long-term, uneasy harmony--an equilibrium that is disturbed by the unexpected entrance of the tormented Parritt, and the eagerly awaited arrival of Hickey for Harry Hope's birthday. The force of the

¹ Eugene O'Neill, *The Iceman Cometh* (New York: Random House, 1946), p. 62. Subsequent page references to the text will appear in parentheses following the quotations.

² Travis Bogard, *Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 416.

two men's impact on the backroom is directly related to the experiences they have just had with women. Parritt has betrayed his mother, Rosa, by giving the police the information that led to her arrest; and Hickey has murdered his wife, Evelyn. The stasis of life in the saloon has been contingent on keeping at bay the influence of women outside this haven. The center no longer holds once the proximity of such influence increases.

Simone de Beauvoir says of woman in her book, *The Second Sex*, "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man.... He is the subject.... She is the other."³ The "otherness" of Rosa and Evelyn is intensified for us by their invisibility. They emerge exclusively in relation to the male characters. Rosa Parritt is a "new woman," dedicated to the Movement, to anarchy and free love. She seems a foil for Evelyn, a traditionally submissive wife. "Sweet and good" (p. 233), Evelyn maintained an unshakeable faith in Hickey, forgiving his drinking and his sexual escapades, even when he infected her with venereal disease.

The audience quickly understands the frustration and hostility such women might have provoked. O'Neill need use little more than a kind of shorthand of familiar feminine images to suggest the fiercely, though ambivalently, independent woman, as well as the long-suffering wife, something of a martyr. John Henry Raleigh says of Rosa and Evelyn, "So fully drawn are they, the strong and domineering woman and the sweet self-effacing one ... that they hover over the play like ghosts."⁴ We help to fill in the sketch O'Neill provides with detail from a reservoir of notions about types of women.

Jean Rhys in her novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, imagines a life for Bertha Rochester, the madwoman in the attic of *Jane Eyre*. We might--with some wistfulness--be tempted to conceive of Rosa as a modern female hero living a life of commitment and risk. Or we might consider what the experience of Evelyn might have been, the isolation and thwarted possibilities of her life. What these women as protagonists in their own dramas might have been like, we can't know from *The Iceman Cometh*, because in this work, as in so many others, the women tend to be merely representative of that which men struggle with and against in enacting their destinies.

Throughout there are clues to the nature of the process that distances woman as "other." The pipe dreams themselves that give "life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober" (p. 10) turn out to be, for the most part, dreams about women which barely conceal the underlying nightmares. The extent to which a woman is inextricably linked with these illusions is a measure of the degree to which she has been removed from the realm of experience and located in an individual symbol system. When Rocky gives expression to his pipe dream early in the play, he sets out features of fantasy that will recur. He claims that he is not a pimp for Margie and Pearl, but just a bartender who is "pals" with them, and who takes their money because, "Dey'd on'y trow it away" (p. 12). His illusion is a comic, parodic prelude to the other pipe dreams to be articulated. Rocky's fantasy about himself distorts his actual relationship to the women he depends on. The major characters have corresponding dreams of self that deny the truths of their attachments.

When Hickey arrives and sees Parritt, he recognizes something about him. "We're members of the same lodge--in some way" (p. 84), he says, sensing that they have in common some essential guilt. He also intuitively accurately that at the heart of Parritt's trouble is an anguished experience with a woman. "Hasn't he been mixed up with some woman? I don't mean trollops. I mean the old real love stuff that crucifies you" (p. 118.)

³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), p. xvi.

⁴ See John Henry Raleigh's introduction to his edition of *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Iceman Cometh"* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p. 11.

Of course, Hickey has no suspicion that the "woman" involved is Parritt's mother; but his good guess suggests that if a man is going through some profound turmoil, a woman is likely to be implicated.

Still, it is not a woman herself who is necessarily the problem. Arthur and Barbara Gelb report, "The truth of the play, as O'Neill explained to [Dudley] Nichols and to two or three other close friends, was that Hickey had long ago begun to harbor a murderous hatred for his wife; she represented his own, punishing conscience."⁵ O'Neill, then, was highly aware of the symbolic function of Evelyn for Hickey. He also had great insight into the risk of violence inherent in a too-seamless fusion of person and symbol.

The revelations about women that emerge in the play are revelations of hatred. Parritt's early outcry, "I hate every bitch that ever lived!" (p. 71), foreshadows the confessions to be made. When pipe dreams are temporarily dispelled, Harry Hope, who had clung to a sentimental vision of his marriage and a claim that Bessie's death is the reason for his inactivity, makes a telling remark to Hickey: "Bejees you're a worse gabber than that nagging bitch, Bessie, was" (p. 202). And Ed Mosher talks of his delight in cheating Bessie, who was his sister: for him, "Dear Bessie wasn't a bitch. She was a God-damned bitch!" (p. 132). Similarly, Jimmy Tomorrow acknowledges that he had been a drunkard long before his wife committed adultery, though he's always offered her infidelity as his perennial excuse for his drinking. In fact, he felt no love for her.

Helen Muchnic points out:

The poor harmless souls at Harry Hope's--good natured, easy going, and rather appealing with their vague beliefs in love and honor so long as they remain in their drunken stupor--exhibit, as soon as they are forced to consciousness, unsuspected deep-seated murderous hatreds.⁶

And, with great consistency, the hostility is directed toward a woman. Winifred Frazer compares *The Iceman Cometh* with *No Exit*, suggesting that in both, "'Hell is other people,' especially people of the female variety."⁷

Hickey, adopting an evangelical stance, offers to bring his somnolent friends release and serenity. He believes that he killed his wife, whom he says he'd always loved, because murder was "the one possible way to free poor Evelyn and give her the peace she'd always dreamed about" (p. 226). The truth, however, is wrenched out of him, as he describes his torment. "There's a limit to the guilt you can feel and the forgiveness and the pity you can take. You have to begin blaming someone else too" (p. 239). A woman comes to share in the blame in this case as in the others. Finally, he shocks himself by recalling what he said to Evelyn at the last: "Well, you know what you can do with your pipe dream now, you damned bitch!" (p. 241)

Parritt, who at first concealed that it was he who betrayed Rosa, gradually admits to more hostility toward his mother while Hickey makes his extended confession. As Travis Bogard says, "There are not many moments in theatre comparable to the canonical weaving of the narratives of betrayal, Hickey's and Parritt's, toward the end of the play."⁸ As an intermediate step, Parritt says that he betrayed Rosa for money, a motive that seems less reprehensible to him than his own. And finally, at the moment when Hickey is about to utter his ultimate secret, Parritt, limp with "exhausted relief," says, "I may as well confess, Larry. There's no use lying any more. You know, anyway. I didn't give a damn about the money. It was because I hated her" (p. 241).

⁵ Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 832.

⁶ Helen Muchnic, "The Irrelevancy of Belief: *The Iceman Cometh* and *The Lower Depths*," *O'Neill and His Plays: Four Decades of Criticism*, ed. Oscar Cargill, N. Brillion Fagin and William J. Fisher (New York: New York University Press, 1961), p. 440.

⁷ Winifred Frazer, *Love as Death in "The Iceman Cometh"* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1967), p. 21.

⁸ Bogard, p. 409.

The outbursts of hostility are as similar as the cacophonous, joyful songs at the conclusion of the play are disparate. The power with which they are invested no doubt derives, in part, from O'Neill's own troubled personal experience, as Louis Shaeffer suggests:

In the interlocked stories of Hickey and Parritt, he at last gave full vent to his fury against Ella Quinlan O'Neill, drug addict, the chief source of the bad conscience and the feeling of self-hatred that would fester in the playwright till the end of his days.⁹

But O'Neill manages to convey more here than a parable of misogyny. He recognizes, and gives eloquent expression to his understanding, that women are often interposed between men and the realities of life and death they have to face. Simone de Beauvoir says, "In all civilizations and still in our day woman inspires man with horror: it is the horror of his own carnal contingency, which he projects on her."¹⁰ In *The Iceman Cometh*, the hatred of woman that emerges is itself something of a screen. After the betrayals are enacted and the confessions are made, vital tasks still remain to be done. Hickey has to face judgment, and Parritt must go to his suicide. As the former said to Harry Hope when prodding him to take his walk, "You've got to keep a date with yourself alone" (p. 194).

The responses to the confessions of Hickey and Parritt emphasize further woman's place in this cosmos. Harry Hope, feigning aggrieved indifference, wishes Hickey would interrupt his compelling story: "Give us a rest, for the love of Christ! Who the hell cares? We want to pass out in peace!" (p. 240) And all but Parritt and Larry loudly second him. Of course they don't want to hear, as Larry says, "things that will make us help send you to the chair" (p. 227). More significantly, however, in the backroom--where fantasies mask feelings that approximate violence toward women--evidence that such violence can be acted out is threatening and unwelcome. Even Hickey himself had come to see Parritt as a dangerous intruder. While he recognized their kinship at the outset, Hickey later says, "I wish you'd get rid of that bastard, Larry. I can't have him pretending there's something in common between him and me" (p. 227). Parritt later concurs. "You know what I did is a much worse murder," he says to Larry. "Because she is dead and yet she has to live" (p. 247).

It is not only because Rosa is consigned to a living death that Parritt's was "a much worse murder." He has come close to committing matricide, an act that evokes a feeling of primal horror. And matricide in this context is also the ultimate embodiment of the varying degrees of hostility toward women that find expression throughout the play. Raleigh refers to Parritt as a "moral leper."¹¹ No doubt he inspires such repulsion because, by his own example, Parritt locates in the mother-child bond the genesis of the tormented relationships the men have experienced and mythologized. Hickey might get a light sentence if judged insane. Parritt, on the other hand, seems a scapegoat, whose death is necessary for the restoration of order and life-sustaining illusion.

The iceman, prominent symbol of the play, is almost invariably linked with women. Rocky, for example, associates the iceman with Hickey's wife: "Remember how he woiks up dat gag about his wife, when he's cockeyed, cryin' over her picture and den springin' it on yuh all of a sudden dat he left her in de hay wid de iceman?" (p. 13) And Chuck later says of women that they can't be trusted: "De minute your back is toined, dey're cheatin' wid de iceman or someone" (p. 214).

O'Neill had discussed the iceman's role with Dudley Nichols, whose report of the playwright's comments is recorded by the Gelbs:

⁹Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 495.

¹⁰de Beauvoir, p. 138.

¹¹John Henry Raleigh, *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965), p. 163.

The iceman of the title is, of course, death.... I don't think O'Neill ever explained, publicly, what he meant by the use of the archaic word, "cometh," but he told me at the time he was writing the play that he meant a combination of the poetic and biblical "Death cometh"--that is, cometh to all living--and the old bawdy story ... of the man who calls upstairs, "Has the iceman come yet?" and his wife calls back, "No but he's breathin' hard."¹²

Cyrus Day extends the analysis by tracing parallels between the iceman and Christ as bridegroom: "Waiting for the bridegroom symbolizes man's hope of redemption."¹³

Women are expected to betray men with the iceman. They are, indeed, his proper consort here. Like him they bear the signs of death, sexuality, and salvation. Not simply creatures of the imagination as the iceman is, however, they suffer for having been transmuted into symbol by the men in their lives. Although the feminine is cast into protean forms--Evelyn and Rosa are strikingly contrasting figures--woman here is always the second sex.

Chuck's pipe dream of a happy marriage to Cora functions as relatively gentle mockery of all such aspiration. His picture of Cora, the whore as bride, settled with him on a farm out in the country, seems an absurd reminder of the failed unions of the play. When pimp and prostitute irritably evade marriage in spite of Hickey's prodding, the couple seem spared the ancient enmities of male and female that arise when the real vies with the illusory.

The theme of woman's otherness is, perhaps, made most clearly manifest in the transformation that Larry Slade undergoes during the course of the play. While much of our attention is riveted on Hickey and his struggle to promote and achieve a catharsis, it is Larry whose pipe dream is the first to be revealed and the only one to be absolutely dispelled. Still more engaged in life than he can acknowledge, Larry imagines that his illusions are behind him and that he is waiting dispassionately for death. He no longer sees himself as an anarchist:

I saw men didn't want to be saved from themselves, for that would mean they'd have to give up greed, and they'll never play that price for liberty. ... And I took a seat in the grandstand of philosophical detachment to fall asleep observing the cannibals do their death dance (p. 11).

He claims, that is, that his motives are philosophical, political, impersonal. Not only is he in error about the degree to which he is aloof from experience; he is also deceiving himself about the "purity" of his reasons for detachment.

The events of the play are cumulatively a catalyst for change in Larry. In some important way, what happens in *The Iceman Cometh* happens to Larry Slade. Though he tries to remain an observer, he is forced to move beyond the inertia he cultivates. The drama he would be content to be audience for, turns out to be a participatory one for him. Parritt, desperate in his need for Larry to play, if not to be, his father, knows intuitively that he must get Larry to face the truths of his own experience before he will respond to him. So he goads him about his relationship with Rosa, trying to show him that she is responsible for the wreckage of Larry's life as well as his own.

Early in their exchange, Parritt asks, "What made you leave the Movement, Larry? Was it on account of Mother?" And Larry retorts, "Don't be a damned fool! What the hell put that in your head?" (p. 29) But Parritt is on the right track. He remembers an important quarrel Larry and Rosa had had before Larry's departure, and reacts "with a strange smile" to Larry's reply that their quarrel was about Larry's disenchantment with the Movement. When Parritt talks insistently about Rosa's behavior as a sexually "free woman" (p. 32), Larry's defensiveness is revealing. Then, when Hickey shows up, with

¹²Gelb, p. 832.

¹³Sheaffer, p. 495.

his perspicacity about the pipe dreams of others, he hurts Larry by suggesting that he hasn't retired from life and offering to "make an honest man" (p. 83) of him, to Parritt's satisfaction. Later Hickey says to Larry, "Hell, if you really wanted to die, you'd just take a hop off your fire escape, wouldn't you?" (p. 116)

By this point Larry is ready for a confrontation with self. The direct assault on his pipe dream by Parritt and Hickey, and the climate of Harry Hope's, in which de-illusionment reigns for this short while, prepare him for the steps he must take. Parritt advances now, pursuing further the subject of Rosa's infidelity and its effect on Larry:

That's why you finally walked out on her, isn't it? ... I remember her putting on her high-and-mighty free-woman stuff, saying you were still a slave to bourgeois morality and jealousy and you thought a woman you loved was a piece of private property you owned. I remember that you got mad and you told her, "I don't like living with a whore, if that's what you mean!" (p. 125)

When Larry says it's a lie, Parritt softens the blow by talking of Rose's respect for Larry for rejecting her:

I think that's why she still respects you, because it was you who left her. ... She just had to keep on having lovers to prove how free she was. (p. 125)

Unable to evade these intense exchanges, Larry is finally moved. He gives Parritt sanction for his suicide, which, it had become apparent, was what he had hoped for from Larry. Ultimately, Larry simultaneously admits and denies, "I sit here, with my pride drowned on the bottom of a bottle, keeping drunk so I won't see myself shaking in my britches with fright, or hear myself whining and praying: Beloved Christ, let me live a little longer at any price!" (p. 197) The truth is out.

Implicit in Larry's transformation is an addition to the indictments of woman as mother, wife, sister, mistress and prostitute that abound here. Having been vouchsafed a critical insight--that his motives for leaving the Movement were alloyed with his disgust at Rosa's promiscuity--Larry no longer has a pipe dream: "Be God, I'm the only real convert to death Hickey made here. From the bottom of my coward's heart I mean that now!" (p. 258)

At the conclusion, Harry Hope's is newly peaceful. Illusion has been restored for all but Larry, whose final bleak vision, though it lacks generativity, seems a kind of triumph. Larry can now face his own reality directly. Woman as other has been exorcised.

--Bette Mandl

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER IN *MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA*

It is often an intellectual game among students of drama to debate who is the center of a play, whose story is being told. With some plays it's not much of a game: *Hedda Gabler*, for instance, is appropriately named since Hedda is, shall we say, the cornerstone of nearly all the triangular relationships in Ibsen's play. Ultimately all roads lead to Hedda (until of course the very end, when George and Thea get together). Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* is also, I think, properly named; but here, despite the title, it is not quite so clear to whom the play belongs. O'Neill set out to write a trilogy that would do for Electra what Aeschylus had done for Orestes, and in some ways he succeeds. In the end it is Lavinia, the American Electra, who must rid the world of the Mannons while simultaneously becoming a strange apotheosis of what it means to be a Mannon. Yet it not Lavinia but her mother, Christine--Clytemnestra's counterpart--who is the most tragic member of the Mannon family because she more clearly wishes and strives to be free of the "Mannon curse."

The Mannon curse is to be forever bound to one's dead relatives; it is the fatal web which binds each character to the others and which ultimately binds the play together. The play is their cumulative ghost, and so of course it is not quite accurate to single out one character as the heart of the trilogy. But even within the inextricabilities of the Mannon web, the stories of the two women dominate the drama.

The main story is Vinnie's desire to be more like her mother. However, Vinnie never knows this is the story: even at the end she won't admit that she's never had a life of her own. And it is for this reason, this blindness, that Vinnie is more pathetic than tragic. Only at the very end does she take on tragic dimensions, when she realizes that there is no running from her punishment and indeed that she must punish herself.¹

But up until the final part of the trilogy it is Christine's play. Christine sees--she sees the oppressive nature of her Christian responsibilities; she sees her life slipping by--and she wants her freedom. The underside of American literature--the vast sensual wilderness underneath the Puritan ideal--that Lawrence describes in his *Studies in Classic American Literature*, becomes manifest in Christine's desire for Captain Adam Brant and a life on the virgin soil of a faraway island. Caught in what Lawrence calls "the mechanical bond of purposive utility,"² she feels she has a "right" to love, as her son Orin later says of her (827). Interestingly, when Vinnie virtually "becomes" her mother toward the end of the play, she *too* believes she has a "right to love" (842). Vinnie cannot imagine another life without becoming someone other than herself. But once Christine gets a taste of love and freedom she will not give it up, and she will not be beholden to Vinnie. In the end, rather than submit to Vinnie's blackmail, she quite literally takes her life in her own hands. Christine's main failing, beyond a certain pathetic longing for youth and beauty, is that she doesn't see clearly enough that she's acted too late, and acting too late is the heart of tragedy.

Vinnie wants her mother to live according to the way things are, to live up to the traditional standards of mid-nineteenth century New England. Appalled at learning of her mother's adultery, she threatens to tell her father unless Christine gives up Brant: "You ought to see it's your duty to Father, not my orders--if you had any honor or decency" (718). Vinnie is ever cognizant of her Puritan chores: "I'm not marrying anyone," she tells her mother. "I've got my duty to Father" (729). Christine's immediate answer shows an awareness of responsibility as well as its traps, something Vinnie would never admit: "Duty! How often I've heard that word in this house! Well, you can't say I didn't do mine all these years. But there comes an end." There comes an end to "duty," and to life itself. Vinnie can only see the timeless portraits of the Mannon line and their stony pride reaching through history. Indeed, Vinnie is herself described as having the timeless quality of an "Egyptian statue" (727).

But Christine has been married for twenty years to a man she doesn't love. She has become less and less her husband's lover and mate and more and more the person who takes care of the family. She is mother to all and yet finally rejects her role and family, and the Mannon "tomb," for her pagan Captain (who turns out, ironically, to have a fair share of Mannon in him) and the promise of romance and adventure in the South Seas, where the Christian doctrine of sin is unknown.

¹Eugene O'Neill, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, in *Nine Plays* (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 866. (Subsequent page references will be given parenthetically within the text.)

²D. H. Lawrence, *The Symbolic Meaning: The Uncollected Versions of "Studies in Classic American Literature"*, ed. Armin Arnold (New York: Centaur Press, 1962), p. 27.

I've been to the greenhouse to pick these. I felt our tomb needed a little brightening. (*She nods scornfully toward the house*) Each time I come back after being away it appears more like a sepulchre! The "whited" one of the Bible--pagan temple front stuck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness! It was just like old Abe Mannon to build such a monstrosity--as a temple for his hatred. (*Then with a little mocking laugh*) Forgive me, Vinnie. I forgot you liked it. And you ought to. It suits your temperament. (699)

Yes, mourning becomes Lavinia. Even in the end, when she nails shut the windows and retreats inside to punish herself and end the Mannon line, her sacrifice fulfills the Puritan creed. A noble act, perhaps; a necessary act; but still too willingly accepted. Why didn't she stay on the South Sea Islands where she had become a more natural woman? The answer, it seems, lies in the double edge of the play's message: consequences must be faced and in doing so you simultaneously fulfill and carry on the need for Puritan sacrifice. Vinnie's response to her mother's "there comes an end" is, "And there comes another end--and you must do your duty again!" (729) Ad infinitum!

But even if one accepts Lavinia's sacrifice as an act of courage, and a moment of insight, on the whole she is more pathetic than tragic. She doesn't see, or if she does she won't admit what she sees. She won't admit what is obvious to others--that she is a poor imitation of her mother. Brant describes Vinnie's face as a "dead image" of Christine's (704). Orin realizes that Vinnie can never admit that she wanted Brant.

ORIN: And that's why you suddenly discarded mourning in Frisco and bought new clothes--in Mother's colors!

LAVINIA: (*furiously*) Stop talking about her! You'd think, to hear you, I had no life of my own!

ORIN: You wanted Wilkins just as you'd wanted Brant!

LAVINIA: That's a lie! (841)

Only Vinnie's subconscious allows her to admit her desire for Brant. She mistakenly calls out for "Adam" when asking Peter to make love to her (865).

Christine is a tragic figure because she possesses more of a mind of her own and realizes, nevertheless, that she has wasted much of her life. She doesn't fully realize, however, what the past has done to her, how cruel she's become. For much of the play Christine underestimates the Mannon curse--to be forever tied to one's dead relatives because of an unwillingness to face the truth about one's living relatives. As Adam returns too late to his dying mother's bedside, and as Ezra tries too late to be open and loving with Christine, so Christine responds too slowly to years of bitterness toward Ezra and Lavinia. And bitterness is the handmaiden to cruelty. But it does not undermine Christine's victory as the central tragic figure of *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

--William Young

O'NEILL AND FRANK WEKEKIND (CONCLUSION)

[The first half of Ms. Tuck's essay appeared in the last issue of the Newsletter (Spring 1982) on pp. 29-35. Since this second half features a comparison of two major female characters--O'Neill's Nina Leeds (in *Strange Interlude*) and Wedekind's Lulu (in *Erdgeist*)--it forms an appropriate part of this special section on O'Neill's women. --Ed.]

III

While the possible influence of Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* upon *Ah, Wilderness!* is largely thematic and general, the imprint of his *Erdgeist* on *Strange Interlude* is more clearly and specifically discernible. It is significant that in the first German study in book form of O'Neill,²³ Otto Koischwitz devotes several paragraphs to the O'Neill-Wedekind relationship. He maintains that Lulu, Wedekind's fateful "woman-become-flesh" by whom man is destroyed, had made a strong impression on the American playwright. He interprets O'Neill's Nina as a civilized American Lulu to whom men of all ranks, professions and ages gravitate. Koischwitz sees in Nina "eine Banalisierung der Lulu" and concludes that she reminds him of the tame house pets of whom Wedekind makes fun in his prologue to *Erdgeist*. The American critic Edwin Engel has developed this idea when he maintains that both dramatists succeeded in creating "animals," except that "the jungle beasts have become cows; the *Erdgeist*, Lulu, emerges as the civilized and sophisticated Nina."²⁴

Civilized or not, Nina nonetheless shares many qualities with Lulu. Most immediately discernible are their similar names, each composed of four letters, two syllables, and ending with a vowel. (In this respect, several other literary women come to mind, all fatal to men: Zola's Nana, Heinrich Mann's Lola, and Ibsen's Hedda.) Lulu and Nina are belle dames, modern-day Liliths who are forever untouchable, catalysts who elicit desire but never seem able to give any real affection in return. Neither Lulu nor Nina is capable of contentment; both are irresistible forces who draw men to them with unerring sureness.

For all their fatal allure, however, neither Lulu nor Nina is physically a voluptuous Earth Mother. Lulu is essentially a mythic character and therefore, in spite of the sexual responses she elicits, essentially bodiless. While we know precisely what Nina looks like at all the "stages" of her life, we never see Lulu. Her portrait--which features her mocking figure in the apparently irresistible Pierrot costume--produces a spellbinding effect on her male viewers, but we never know if her hair is long or short, if her eyes are (like Nina's) mysterious and alluringly large, if her mouth is voluptuously tempting or scornfully aloof. Unlike the sensuous Abbie Putnam in *Desire Under the Elms* or the earthy Cybel in *The Great God Brown*, Nina is more boyish than sexy: "tall with broad square shoulders, slim strong hips and long beautifully developed legs--a fine athletic girl of the swimmer, tennis player, golfer type."²⁵ Neither Nina nor Lulu fits the standard belle dame requirements. We are never given a specific description of Lulu because she is *simultaneously* different things to various men. All Lulu's admirers make her into something different: to Goll she is Nelly; to Schwarz, Eve; to Schöen, Mignon. Nina, however, is different things to various men *at different times* in her life. Hence O'Neill painstakingly describes her at various stages of womanhood: as Professor Leeds' daughter, as Gordon's almost-widow, as Sam's wife, as Ned's lover, as young Gordon's mother, and as Marsden's companion in old age.

Lulu's nature is dichotomous and ambiguous. Early in the play Schwarz says, "I have never painted anyone whose expression changed so continuously. I could hardly keep a single feature two days running."²⁶ Alva and Escerny argue about which dress she should

²³Otto Koischwitz, *O'Neill* (Berlin: Junker und Dunnhaupt Verlag, 1938).

²⁴Edwin Engel, *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 84.

²⁵Eugene O'Neill, *Strange Interlude*, in *Nine Plays* (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 494. Subsequent quotations will be given parenthetically within the text.

²⁶Frank Wedekind, *Tragedies of Sex*, tr. Samuel Eliot, Jr. (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1914), p. 120. Subsequent quotations will be given parenthetically within the text.

wear, yet neither can decide which Lulu she should be: rose makes her look "too animal," and white makes her appear too "child-like" (p. 187). Schön despairingly calls her a "destroying angel" (p. 211), and the oxymoron is apt. Yet Lulu herself is without illusions. She tells Schön, "You believe not only that I'm an ensnaring daughter of Eve; you believe, too, that I'm a very good-natured creature. I am neither the one nor the other. The bad think is that you think I am" (p. 192).

In a similar fashion, much of *Strange Interlude* is devoted to the "spoken thoughts" of Nina's men as they ask themselves over and over what Nina can possibly mean. They analyze her motives, dissect her comments, ponder over her actions. Nina's admirers, like Lulu's, are unaware of her true nature, and they all see her differently. Marsden, for example, refuses to acknowledge her sexual nature. Sam Evans, "timorously happy" (p. 535) to be married to her, radiates a "boyish adoration" which is totally incapable of comprehending her. Ned Darrell is able to resist his feelings for Nina and to remain "scientifically" detached for quite some time, just as Schön was able temporarily to withstand Lulu. But Darrell, like Schön, surrenders his self when he succumbs: "God, I'm licked!...no use fighting it...I've done my damndest...work...booze...other women...no use...I love her!...always!...to hell with pride!..." (p. 606). To love Nina--or Lulu--means relinquishing one's very identity.

Unlike the more calculating Nina, Lulu seems essentially passive; she simply elicits the worst in men. From the beginning of *Erdgeist* to the violent conclusion of *Die Blüchse der Pandora*, Lulu is more acted upon than acting. She is essentially self-sufficient, impervious, and curiously detached. Nina schemes, maneuvers, plots; Lulu just *is*.

And Lulu and Nina are quite different in the way they control their men. For example, Lulu states succinctly and rather indifferently, "Love at command, I can't" (p. 159). The men who pursue her are the ones who attempt to do the commanding. Goll dies trying to get her away from Schwarz's advances; Schwarz kills himself rather than admit that she is something different from his artistic idealizations of her; Schön, unable to kill her or himself, weakly begs her to commit suicide because he has strength enough to realize only that he is being devoured by her. Lulu's power is clear when Schön writes the letter to his fiancée and Lulu dictates his message: "For three years I have tried to tear myself free; I have not the strength. I am writing you at the side of the woman who commands me." Lulu even orders him to add a postscript: "Do not attempt to save me." Schön sums up his own future with her: "Now--comes the--execution" (p. 195).

Lulu does not exult about her power as does Nina, who revels in her strength and consciously, even joyfully, exerts it. Nina's moment of triumph at the end of Act VI is achieved because for one brief moment she has simultaneous control of all her men:

My three men!...I feel their desires converge in me!...to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb...and am whole...they dissolve in me, their life is my life...I am pregnant with the three!...husband!...lover!...father!...and the fourth man!...little man!...little Gordon!...he is mine too!...that makes it perfect!...(p. 616)

Sam, Ned, Marsden, little Gordon--each performs a specific function, rather like drones for the queen bee. It takes all of them to satisfy her.

Similarities between *Erdgeist* and *Strange Interlude* need not be based only on Nina and Lulu. When we examine the various male characters, more resemblances arise. For example, there is a marked likeness between the two artists, Alva and Marsden: they hold the same relative position in the constellation of males around the "heroine." In addition, they are ineffectual, somewhat sterile men; their "artistic" achievements are mediocre and strictly commercial. Marsden describes his novels as "long-winded fairy tales for grown-ups" and Darrell accurately sums them up as "well-written surface...has the talent but doesn't dare...afraid he'll meet himself somewhere...one of those

poor devils who spend their lives trying not to discover which sex they belong to!" (p. 516). When Lulu asks Alva why his pieces are not "as interesting as life," he shrugs and replies, "if we did no man would believe us" (p. 179). The analogy between Alva and Marsden grows stronger when we remember that they both represent happy childhood memories and that, moreover, they end up in possession of the woman because she has "nothing to fear" from them.

Just as Alva and Marsden serve the same function, so also do Doctor Goll and Professor Leeds, Walter Schwarz and Sam Evans, and Doctor Schön and Doctor Darrell. Goll, Lulu's first husband, and Leeds, Nina's father, are authority figures from whom the women break away as the plays open. The result?--death for both men. Goll and Leeds, unable to face old age, view Lulu and Nina as vehicles for sustaining their youth. Professor Leeds' nearly incestuous love for his daughter and the fact that Goll makes Lulu perform erotic dances for him intensify the artificiality, absurdity, even sordidness of the relationships.

The next men to enter the plays, Schwarz and Evans, are both forced on Lulu and Nina by the "real lovers," Schön and Darrell, who do so in an attempt to avoid the truth of their own love. Schwarz and Evans are shy, bashful, boyish, naïve. Neither has any experience with women nor knows anything of her past promiscuity, and the wife's affair with the "real lover" becomes the central problem. Schwarz obligingly slits his throat when Schön discloses Lulu's past. Comparable information about Nina is kept from Evans in the fear that he would lose his mind if he learned the truth. Both Schwarz and Evans imagine their wives to be paragons of purity, ideal mates. They attain manhood on the sexual level and status in the social world from their marriages, and this new confidence stimulates them so much that they become successful and rich. That Schwarz paints only Lulu and that Evans can achieve success only when Nina bears him a child demonstrates their dependency on the women.

These will-less husbands contrast sharply with Schön and Darrell. Ambitious and highly intelligent, both are debilitated by a conflict between the love they helplessly feel and their ideal self-image. Both put their respectable professions above their emotions; love's weakness, they think, will not touch *them*. Schön and Darrell, journalist and scientist, regard their respective women as an experiment. Schön, for example, is very proud of the fact that he picked Lulu out of the gutter and made her what she is: "Twice I've married you off. You live in luxury. I've created a position for your husband" (p. 159). Darrell, too, is trying to form Nina's life according to his own dictates: she should have a husband and children, a home and a garden. In essence, he places himself in the role of psychoanalyst, although we should remember that his field is biology. He is performing a dangerous experiment indeed. In both men, the real love is repressed; only the possessiveness of love, rooted in sexual attraction, remains.

A juxtaposition of two scenes, the first with Schön and Lulu (p. 194), the second with Darrell and Nina (p. 579), illustrates the very similar nature of their relationships:

LULU. You conquer half the world; you do what you please;--and you know as well as I that--

SCHÖN. (*sunk in the chair, right center, utterly exhausted*). Stop.

LULU. That you are too weak--to tear yourself away from me.

SCHÖN. (*groaning*) Oh! Oh! You make me weep.

LULU. This moment makes me I cannot tell you how glad.

SCHÖN. My age! My position!

LULU. He cries like a child--the terrible man of might.

DARRELL. (*suddenly taking her in his arms and kissing her frantically*)
Nina! Beautiful!

NINA. (*triumphantly--between kisses*) You love me, don't you? Say you do, Ned!

DARRELL. (*passionately*) Yes! Yes!

NINA. (*with a cry of triumph*) Thank God! At last you've told me! You've confessed it to yourself!

The common elements in the scenes are the reluctance of the man to submit to the woman, his eventual submission, and her triumphant attitude. Yet neither Wedekind nor O'Neill allows such female supremacy to triumph in the end. At the conclusion of *Erdegeist*, Lulu is literally forced by Schön to kill him; there is no sense of victory in her act, however, and she mourns over and over, "The one man I loved!" (p. 215). Her eventual fate, which we see in *Die Büchse der Pandora*, is slaughter at the hands of Jack the Ripper. Nina's end is not as dramatic or violent, but it is no less dismal. She gratefully and exhaustedly embraces Marsden; together they will "rot away in peace" (p. 679). Having seized what she wanted for so long, the Nina of Act Nine says she can "no longer imagine happiness" (p. 678), and the evening shadows, which close in on her sleeping form as the final curtain falls, seem as black as the end that Wedekind reserved for Lulu.

--Susan Tuck

SUSAN GLASPELL AND EUGENE O'NEILL

Susan Glaspell is cited for three things in most O'Neill studies: bringing O'Neill and the Provincetown amateur theatre group together, through her chance encounter with Terry Carlin on the streets of the resort in July 1916; describing the group's reaction that evening to the reading of *Bound East for Cardiff*; and recording the subsequent performance of the work--the first O'Neill production--on July 28, 1916. After these three almost obligatory references--and, perhaps, mention that she and her husband, George Cram "Jig" Cook, were the first to hear *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Diff'rent*, and *The Dreamy Kid*--Glaspell is allowed to fade to the background, consigned to "one of" status: one of the members of the Provincetown Players, one of the prolific writers associated with the group, one of the neighbors O'Neill knew in Provincetown.

Contrary to this limited role that critics have assigned her, Susan Glaspell was far more than a peripheral figure in the playwright's life. From the time they met in 1916 until the Cooks left for Greece in March 1922, Glaspell and O'Neill enjoyed a close personal and professional relationship, one unique in O'Neill's experience because it cut across the usual demarcated needs he sought to fulfill in relations with women and men. In an introductory essay for the collected letters of O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan, Travis Bogard describes the usual schism in O'Neill's friendships:

What O'Neill needed, what he searched throughout his life to find in one person or another, was a caretaker. In a woman, performance of the functions of wife, mother, mistress, and chatelaine were sought; in a man, a combination of editorial solicitude, listening ability, financial acumen, and a producer's willingness to serve the demands of the artist were essential. At the time he met Macgowan, he was served less by his wife, Agnes, than by the director of the Provincetown Players, the idealistic enthusiast, George Cram Cook.¹

In the years preceding 1921, the dual role Bogard describes was more often filled by Glaspell than by her husband. Because of the inherent tensions existing between the director and his most important playwright over the nature of the theatre they founded--the "beloved community of life-givers" or the pragmatic Playwright's Theatre, a place to

¹"The Theatre We Worked For": *The Letters of Eugene O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan*, ed. Jackson R. Bryer, intro. Travis Bogard (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 15-16.

mount productions--O'Neill sought support, solace, and advice from Glaspell, not Jig.² For example, in a letter to Macgowan in 1921, O'Neill muses over a dream theatre:

Two playwrights, your humble & (?) devil take me if I know! You want a playwright who loves the theatre outside of his own plays, who is interested in the theatre as theatre--a writer of comedies & a lover of them preferably. Who is? (p. 38)

The next words are "Susan would." They are crossed out, however, and instead O'Neill inserts, "You will know, if anyone." Whether O'Neill was referring to Glaspell as such a playwright or, more likely, as one who would know of such a writer, he seems by habit to have initially thought of her. The conditional form is replaced by the future tense when he addresses his newly found protégé, Macgowan; but up until 1921, it was Glaspell who usually performed the role Macgowan was to undertake.³

In *Part of a Long Story*, written in 1958, Agnes Boulton recalls the close relationship that existed between her husband of three months and their neighbor, Susan Glaspell, during the summer of 1918 in Provincetown. She says that, besides visiting the Cooks most evenings, O'Neill had a daily ritual that involved meeting with Susan. "After Gene was finished working he went across the street to Jig Cook's house, read the headlines, talked to Susan Glaspell, who would be through her work by this time."⁴ These visits caused Agnes to feel a jealousy that she could still recall forty years later:

For some reason I got quite upset at his going over to Susan's as soon as he had finished his work and staying there, often much longer than I thought he should, talking to her.... I suppose I was jealous, which was absurd--but also it made me feel very much *out* of things. ... Susan was very attractive, but she was older than Gene and really very much in love with her husband, Jig Cook, which gave her considerable to think about. ... She talked and thought about her health with some concern--but to women, not to the many men who found her conversation stimulating and helpful. She was a slight and girlish woman who looked attractive even when she was not feeling well; she had a sort of feminine inner spirit, a fire, a sensitiveness that showed in her fine brown eyes and in the way that she used her hands and spoke. She seemed to me an ethereal being, detached and yet passionate. She was so far beyond me in her knowledge and understanding of everything that was going on in the world--economics, the rights of mankind, the theater, writing, people.... (pp. 179-180)

²There was a difference of opinion about the importance of the Provincetown Players to O'Neill's career. In notes for an article to appear in *The Little Review*, Nov. 18, 1920, Cook wrote, "Had O'Neill not been a member of the group which he knows to be ready to make any interesting new departure, to attempt the untried, he would have had no incentive to write *The Emperor Jones*." (The Eugene O'Neill holograph essay, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.) O'Neill, for his part, while crediting the Provincetown and Cook, told Barrett Clark, "But I can't honestly say I would not have gone on writing plays if it hadn't been for them. I had already gone too far ever to quit." (Barrett Clark, *Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays* (New York: Dover, 1947), p. 31.

³O'Neill was not the only writer who found support from Glaspell and, to a lesser degree, Cook. In her copy of Sinclair Lewis's *Our Mr. Wrenn* is the following inscription: "To Susan Glaspell, but for whose encouragement and understanding this book would never have been finished, and to George Cram Cook--prince--from the author." (Berg Collection, New York Public Library.)

⁴Agnes Boulton, *Part of a Long Story* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), p. 178.

The woman Agnes describes, whose conversation men found "stimulating" and "helpful," was 40 years old the summer she met O'Neill. She was already an established writer, having published three novels--*The Glory and the Conquered* (1909), *The Visioning* (1911) and *Fidelity* (1915)--a collection of short stories, *Lifted Masks* (1912), and numerous uncollected stories which had appeared in leading magazines since 1903. Her background was markedly different from O'Neill's. Born in Davenport, Iowa, on July 1, 1876,⁵ she--like Cook, who was also a Davenport native--displayed great pride in her pioneer forebears who had settled the area. Throughout her life, she continued to identify with the vitality and intensity of these settlers, but she was aware of modern distortions in the pioneering spirit that had vitiated its earlier values. Madeline Morton, the young hero in her historical play *Inheritors*, recognizes this loss: "Just a little way back anything might have been. What happened?" Dr. Holden, her college professor, says simply, "It got--set too quickly."⁶ Unlike O'Neill, who blamed the failure of the American dream on rapidity of growth--"it hasn't acquired any real roots"--Glaspell in her writing bemoans the tendency for societies and people to slip too easily into patterns that preclude change and growth.

The most consistent theme in her fiction and plays is the drive of the protagonists--usually women--to escape forms thrust upon them by the society in which they live. The direction in a Glaspell work is outward, from the confining circle of society to the freedom of "the outside." This desire is illustrated in one of her earliest essays, written for the *Davenport Morning Republican*, on which she worked as a reporter after high school: "I am like the flowers in the hot-house, a forced production.... How would it feel to be free? ... and be a free thinker and an eccentric, generally?"⁷ Glaspell uses the same image, without the awkward phrasing, in her most experimental play, *The Verge*.

What probably saved Glaspell from being a local colorist like another celebrated writer from Davenport--Octave Thanet (a.k.a. Alice French)--was her association with a group that formed in Davenport in 1907. Called the Monist Society, it welcomed all who were ready to reject conventional beliefs which were in contradiction to their intellectual convictions. The chief mover of the group was Jig Cook, aided by 17 year old Floyd Dell; and it was Jig's idealism that activated the members to break with tradition, just as it was to galvanize the Provincetown Players which he founded nine years later.⁸

It was under Cook's influence that Glaspell turned to theatre when the two married and moved to Greenwich Village and Provincetown in the spring of 1913. Cook had seen the Irish Players during their tour of America in 1909, and he had been startled by the range of the group, just as O'Neill had been. The Abbey Theatre offered a clear alternative to Broadway fare. In *The Road to the Temple*, Glaspell's biography of her husband, she describes the usual plays they encountered in New York in 1913:

We went to the theatre and for the most part we came away wishing we had gone somewhere else. Those were the days when Broadway flourished almost unchallenged. Plays, like magazine stories, were patterned. They might be pretty good within themselves, seldom did they open out--to where it surprised or thrilled your spirit to follow. (p. 248)

⁵There has been some debate about Glaspell's actual birthdate. Although she listed it as 1882, records indicate that she was actually six years older.

⁶Susan Glaspell, *Inheritors* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1921), p. 140.

⁷Susan Glaspell, "Social Life," *Weekly Outline*, No. 1 (1897); rpt. Marcia Noe, "Susan Glaspell: A Critical Biography," Diss. Univ. of Iowa, 1976. This is the most complete record of Glaspell's life.

⁸For a discussion of the Monist Society, see Susan Glaspell, *The Road to the Temple* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1927), pp. 188-199. Hereafter this work will be cited in the text as *Road*.

Glaspell and Cook tried their hands at playwriting in 1915, doing what Floyd Dell said the Village enjoyed best: ridiculing itself, in this case the new obsession with Freudianism that was sweeping the area.⁹ When the play was rejected by the Washington Square Players, the Cooks, with their friends Hutchins Hapgood and his wife, Neith Boyce, decided, in Boyce's words, to "do it ourselves." Given in the living room of the Hapgood house on the evening of July 15, 1915, *Suppressed Desires* by the Cooks and *Constancy* by Boyce became the first productions of a group that, as Glaspell later wrote, "closed without knowing they were Provincetown Players" (*Road*, p. 251).

On September 5, 1916, at the end of a season in which the small group put on 11 plays in the Wharf theatre, "a place where ninety people could see a play if they didn't mind sitting close together on wooden benches with no backs" (*Road*, p. 253), the participants met to incorporate and write a charter for their theatre. When they disbanded six years later, only O'Neill, Glaspell, and Cook remained of the original 29 signators. During the intervening time the three were continually active in the functioning of the theatre; and because of the democratic nature of the organization, they were called upon to make all major decisions.¹⁰ That meant that before a play was mounted the executive committee, to which Glaspell and O'Neill belonged, would meet and read each work. For example, in a letter to Glaspell on August 27, 1921, Cook writes, "Gene has to read it (to approve it),"¹¹ referring to Glaspell's *The Verge*, which she was then completing.

In its six years of existence the original group compiled an extraordinary record, given its inauspicious beginnings and limited resources. It produced 96 plays by 45 different playwrights. O'Neill was the most prolific writer, with 15 plays given under the aegis of the group; Glaspell was second with 11.

Critics most often concentrated on the works of the two most active members and usually linked their names in reviews, citing both O'Neill and Glaspell as co-founders of a new American drama. For instance, Isaac Goldberg said, when writing about O'Neill in 1922, "This then is the sketch of a man who is but at the beginning, and with him and Susan Glaspell, it may be, begins the entrance of the United States into the deeper currents of continental waters."¹² Lawrence Langner, a founder of the Washington Square Players, noted, "We regarded the Provincetown Players as 'amateurs' in everything except their playwrights O'Neill and Miss Glaspell."¹³ And Barrett Clark wrote, "It is just as true that if it hadn't been for the plays of O'Neill and Miss Glaspell there would not have been much reason for the continuation of the theatre and probably few subscribers."¹⁴ Finally, Ludwig Lewisohn said in 1932, "Susan Glaspell was followed by Eugene O'Neill. The rest was silence; the rest is silence still. The Provincetown Players dispersed."¹⁵

⁹Floyd Dell, *Homecoming: An Autobiography* (1933; rpt. New York: Kennikat Press, 1961), p. 250. Dell provides excellent descriptions of life in Davenport when Glaspell and Cook lived there.

¹⁰Cook later regretted this democratic organization. In a letter to Edna Kenton written in 1922 from Greece, he said: "I have got used to a bunch of self-seeking egotists--the Provincetown Players. They are and have always been subnoxious in ability to work together for a common purpose.... If I am ever again to play that game there shall be absolute tyranny--and the tyrant unquestionably me. A questioned tyrant is bad to deal with." In the same letter he makes this reference to O'Neill: "His mood toward us was bad." (Eugene O'Neill Collection, Barrett Library, Univ. of Virginia.)

¹¹Letter from Cook to Glaspell, August 27, 1921, Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

¹²Isaac Goldberg, *The Drama of Transition* (Cincinnati: Steward Kidd Co., 1922), p. 471.

¹³Lawrence Langner, *The Magic Curtain* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1951), p. 25.

¹⁴Clark, p. 30.

¹⁵Ludwig Lewisohn, *Expression in America* (New York: Harpers, 1932), p. 393.

In short, at least during the period in which they first began to write plays, both Glaspell and O'Neill shared the critical laurels as the playwrights who first brought modern drama to America.

The commitment to drama as a form, however, was never as all consuming with Glaspell as it was with O'Neill. She often said that she began writing plays "because my husband made me." The idea of a theatre seemed to her, as to Cook, an extension of the life they were leading among a close-knit group of friends. Less idealistic than her husband, she did not hearken back to ancient Greece for a model. Instead she simply wrote, "Perhaps we wanted to write plays and put them on just because we knew more intensely than the fishermen that the tide comes, the tide goes. You cannot know that and leave things as they were before" (*Road*, p. 257).

While their motivations were different, the form of their works tended to parallel each other in their early careers. Due to the limited resources of the theatre and the inexperience of the writers, both began with one-act plays which generally had one set, few characters, and little in the way of scenery. The majority of O'Neill's short plays were based on his sea experiences. Glaspell, with no backlog of material, had to search for plots and--like O'Neill--for new dramatic forms. *Trifles*, the play that followed *Suppressed Desires*, is based on an actual experience she had had while covering a murder story as a reporter in Des Moines. However, in the play, her most popular and successful work, Glaspell overthrows the conventional detective story. Slowly, with absolute control of her material, she restructures the familiar genre: the murder is never seen, the murderer absent, the motive unclear, the emphasis deflected from the accused to the accusers, and the attention focused not on the active male investigators who seek clues, but on their passive, accompanying wives, who are gradually drawn into a covenant with the absent woman accused of the crime. The men chide the ladies for being concerned with the "trifles" of the farm kitchen where the action takes place: the unbaked bread, dirty towel rack, sewing left undone. But it becomes clear in the course of the play that in these daily trifles motives for violence can be found, a truth the women recognize through their own experiences with subjugation.

As in her earlier work, Glaspell is able to connect the language and the action. Her characters are inarticulate: they pause, stammer, and speak in half sentences. The most often-used mark of punctuation here, as in most Glaspell plays, is the dash, which indicates lapses in the continuity of the discourse. Unlike O'Neill's inarticulate, whose reticence often stems from poor education, Glaspell's characters generally cannot find words because they are still in the process of discovering what they want to say and are often unable or unsure of their own thoughts. The playwright's great contribution to American dramatic language is her daring act of placing these stammerers in the center of the action, and allowing them to verbally stumble toward some understanding of themselves, often never totally framed in words. Conversely, Glaspell suggests that glibness and verbal dexterity may be the mark of superficiality, used by characters who are spokespeople of a fixed society. For example, while the men in *Trifles* are never at a loss for words, the women must painfully--almost mutely--grope toward some apprehension of the motives for the murder that has taken place. Yet only the women come to any understanding in the play, albeit unclothed in words.

The same disparity between verbal facility, understanding, and the roles of the sexes is also demonstrated in *The Outside*, where two women--a sophisticated city woman named Mrs. Patrick, and her servant, a local woman named Allie Mayo--struggle toward some meaning to the life they share on the outer reaches of Provincetown harbor--a barren buffer of land fronting the sea, called "the Outside." Both have left society because of lost love; but it is Allie, the woman "who has not spoken an unnecessary word for twenty years," who attempts to bring her mistress back to life through a recognition of the bravery inherent in a life lived at the fringe of society. Once again Glaspell focuses as well on the failure of men to accomplish what women can do. Although the

men in the play struggle to resuscitate a drowning victim,¹⁶ they are unsuccessful; physical activity has proven a failure. The passive, mute Allie, however, is victorious in her own personal resuscitation of Mrs. Patrick. As in *Trifles*, the shared experiences of women provide a covenant that is supportive.

The Outside is the one play in the Glaspell canon that makes such specific use of Provincetown, which both she and O'Neill loved so well. In fact, the life saving station in which she places the action is the very one, overlooking Peaked Hill Bars, into which O'Neill would move two years after Glaspell wrote her play.¹⁷

Glaspell wrote seven short plays, but by 1919 she was, like O'Neill, ready for a more extended form. His first full-length play, *Beyond the Horizon*, opened on Broadway on February 4, 1920; her first long work, *Bernice*, had its premiere at the Playwright's Theatre on March 21, 1919, opening to good reviews. While different in details, all of Glaspell's six full-length plays--*Bernice*, *Inheritors* (1921), *The Verge* (1921), and *Chains of Dew* (1922), all written for the Provincetown Players; and *The Comic Artist* (1928) and the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Alison's House* (1931), written after the demise of the group--have elements in common.

First, they usually focus on a fully developed female hero. She may be physically absent, as in the case of the dead Bernice and Alison, but her presence still pervades the atmosphere; and it is her home in which the action takes place, an indication of her importance to those who surround her. Next to these dominant women, the men with whom they live--husbands, fathers, lovers--are painfully lacking in vigor and intelligence. They are all incapable of understanding the women and, for the most part, resent their superiority. Bernice's husband, Craig, is a writer of mediocre talent who has taken no pleasure in his wife's capacity for life--"a life deeper than anything that could happen to her."¹⁸ In *Inheritors*, Madeline Morton also stands in isolation from the men around her. She alone is the true spiritual descendent of her ancestors, carrying on their values in a world that no longer appreciates such beliefs. Even more harrassed is Claire Archer, the hero of *The Verge*. More than any other Glaspell character, she seems to dominate the world in which she lives; however, her intelligence and forceful personality do not guarantee her easy passage to the life of independence she craves. She is surrounded by the proverbial Tom, Dick, and Harry: friend, lover, and husband. None is able to completely understand her desires, none can offer more than passing comfort, and all prove obstacles she must inevitably overcome.

Glaspell wrote *The Verge* on a sabbatical year's leave that she and Cook took during the 1920-21 season of the Provincetown Players. It opened on November 14, 1921, with critics confused about what to make of the experimental scenery and the difficult plot.¹⁹ Despite the critical reception, it is Glaspell's greatest dramatic achievement and her

¹⁶The drowning victim's arm is the only part of his body that is seen, a technique reminiscent of O'Neill's use of the arm of the invisible husband in *Before Breakfast*.

¹⁷For a description of the locale see *Road*, pp. 286-287.

¹⁸Susan Glaspell, *Bernice* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1920), p. 173.

¹⁹Although several critics ridiculed its strange form, Stark Young defended it: "No play of Susan Glaspell's can be passed over quite so snippily as most of the reviewers have done with *The Verge*: for Miss Glaspell is one of the few people we have in our theatre who are watching the surface of life to find new contents and material.... Prattling about new forms in the theatre and then fighting any attempt at new material is a poor game." (Stark Young, "Susan Glaspell's *The Verge*," *New Republic*, XXIX (July 1921), 47; rpt. Gerhard Bach, "An Annotated Bibliography in English," *Susan Glaspell und die Provincetown Players* (1979). The bibliography contains critical reactions to all of Glaspell's major plays, and is an invaluable aid.

most experimental work. In her depiction of a woman who tries to develop new forms of plant life in order to create what has not existed before, Glaspell moves into areas not yet attempted on the American stage. Taking as her point of departure the expressionistic staging that had begun to appear in Europe in the first decades of the century, O'Neill's own groundbreaking experiments in *The Emperor Jones* in 1920, and Robert Edmond Jones's expressionistic use of masks and scenery in the March, 1921 Broadway production of *Macbeth*, Glaspell creates a work in which scenic design and lighting become projections of the main character's inner struggles. And her introduction of visual symbols derived almost directly from Freudian psychology is unique to the American theatre in the 1920's.

The action of the play takes place in Claire Archer's laboratory and her tower retreat. Neither place is meant to be realistically depicted; they are externalizations of states of mind, created as much by light and shadow as by physical properties. The laboratory is a small area with a low back wall and a sloping glass ceiling whose vaulting dimensions indicate the direction in which Claire is determined to go--upward and outward, away from the confines of family and custom. Superimposed upon the scene are complex patterns of light, presumably made by the frost outside the room. In the stage directions, Glaspell calls these patterns "inherent in abstract nature and behind all life."²⁰ It is through this elaborate latticework of design that the audience must glimpse the action. At the back of the room a strange vine "creeps along the low wall, and one branch gets a little way up the glass. You might see the form of a cross in it, if you happened to think it that way" (p. 2). This is Edge Vine, a new plant form that Claire has created. However, it proves an unwilling creation, preferring to retreat to the familiar rather than take hold as a thing that has not been before. In an adjoining room, barely visible, is a more promising hope of new life: Breath of Life, a flower that Claire has bred. Light focuses on this new plant, a symbol of the possibility in nature of new forms unknown in the past.

When the play begins, all is dark in the laboratory except for one shaft of light that comes from an open trap door. It is from the unseen space below that Anthony, Claire's assistant, emerges in response to the repeated sound of a buzzer; and it is into this sanctum that Claire will descend in an attempt to escape the numerous people who invade her work area. The buzzer that precipitates the action of the play is similar to the whistle in *The Hairy Ape*: sharp, mechanical, and able to get humans to respond automatically. It is a sound coming from an unseen place, demanding some action.

The first and third acts take place in the laboratory; the second is set in Claire's tower, an area even more expressionistically rendered. Claire calls it her "thwarted tower" because of its odd shape. The stage directions indicate that "the back is curved, then jagged lines break from that, and the front is a queer bulging window, a curve that leans. The whole structure is as if given a twist by some terrific force--like something wrung" (p. 58). The action is viewed through the distorted window, and the effect is of seeing some womb-like enclosure in which the protagonist vainly attempts to retreat and seek escape and comfort. Yet, like Yank's domain, it does not prove invader-proof. Repeatedly, people enter in order to threaten Claire's territory and dislodge her, ascending the stairs leading to her tower rather than descending as Mildred does to perform a similar function in *The Hairy Ape*.

Again, as in Act I, the byplay of light and shadow is contrived to heighten both the battle between characters and the struggle within Claire. Glaspell indicates that the tower is "lighted by an old-fashioned watchman's lantern hanging from the ceiling; the innumerable pricks and slits in the metal throw a marvelous pattern on the curved wall--like some masonry that hasn't been" (p. 58). In the same way that Yank's stokehole is made to assume the nature of a cell by the use of shadows approximating bars, Claire's tower--like her frost-encrusted laboratory--takes on a non-realistic form. It becomes a

²⁰Susan Glaspell, *The Verge* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1922), p. 2. Subsequent page references will be included parenthetically in the text.

visual externalization of the darkness through which Claire must travel, toward a light she can only faintly perceive. "The world of the three dimensions is only a mine, a quarry, raw material for building in the fourth dimension," Glaspell would later write (*Road*, p. 160). In *The Verge*, she is able to produce a work that moves away from the confines and limits of realistic theatre, into a world rarely depicted on the stage before her experimental attempt.

O'Neill probably did not see the production of *The Verge* because he was busy, during the period it ran, with two openings of his own--*Anna Christie* and *The Straw*, on November 2 and 10--after which he returned immediately to Provincetown to begin work on his next play, *The Hairy Ape*, which he finished in two and a half weeks and read to the Cooks at the end of December 1921. Denying the influence of European expressionism, he acknowledged only one source: *The Emperor Jones*. But *The Verge*--which O'Neill had read by the end of August 1921--deserves acknowledgement too. If not a direct source, it was at least an influence on the structuring of the play, creating a climate by its very existence and groundbreaking experimentation that allowed O'Neill to proceed rapidly down the same path. Despite the similarities in several aspects of the work--small, confining areas; shadows producing distorted shapes; piercing sounds; intimations of unseen areas; characters struggling to maintain their hold on personal territories--no critics have cited *The Verge* as a possible influence on *The Hairy Ape*. Louis Sheaffer, for example, searches for parallels in a film, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, and Kaiser's expressionist play *From Morn to Midnight*. The latter work does have a similar plot, involving a woman who dislodges a young man from his familiar routine and life; but it lacks the staging devices that O'Neill employed. In structure, *The Verge* offers a closer parallel, and it is a work with which O'Neill was certainly more familiar.

For her part, Glaspell never did get to see *The Hairy Ape*, for she and Cook left for Greece on March 1, 1922, nine days before it opened. From Greece, she wrote to Edna Kenton about the play: "Anyway it's nice that *Ape* went over with a bang, paying the bills and gleaning the glory."²¹

On her return from Greece in 1924, after the untimely death of her husband, Glaspell did not reestablish relations with O'Neill, in part because of the animosity that attended the transfer of authority from the Provincetown Players to the newly formed Experimental Theater that followed its demise. O'Neill did write to Glaspell on May 26, 1924, indicating his feelings at the death of Cook:

As for Jig--when I heard of his death, Susan, I felt suddenly that I had lost one of the best friends I had ever had or ever would have--unselfish, rare and truly noble! And then when I thought of all the things I hadn't done, the letters I hadn't written, the things I hadn't said, the others I had said and wished unsaid, I felt like a swine, Susan. Whenever I think of him it is with the most self-condemning remorse. It made me afraid to face you in New York.²²

After O'Neill's marriage to Carlotta, the two became even further estranged, as did most of O'Neill's Provincetown friends because of the obstacles his new wife created for his earlier associates. However, in certain plays O'Neill wrote later in his career, traces remain of the influence of Glaspell's work: the use of an absent person depicted as a palpable presence hovering over the action, and the stultifying effect of a house and the "trifles" in it as embodiments of the dead person (*Desire Under the Elms*); and the anguished attempt of a highly volatile, sensitive woman to escape the past and to manipulate the men who revolve as satellites around her (*Strange Interlude*).

²¹Letter to Edna Kenton, May 1, 1922, Barrett Library, Univ. of Virginia.

²²Letter to Susan Glaspell, May 26, 1924, Eugene O'Neill Collection, Barrett Library, Univ. of Virginia.

Aside from her mention of him in *The Road to the Temple*, Glaspell published nothing recalling her relationship with O'Neill. However, in her papers, two items appear. In a notebook, she has this brief entry, under the heading "Misfits": "Terry's philosophy on Gene: 'Every soul is alone. No one in the world understands my slightest impulse.' 'Then you don't understand the slightest impulse of anyone else.'"²³ And in notes on the Federal Theatre Project, which she served as Midwest representative from 1935 to 1938, Glaspell has an outline for a talk she planned to give on O'Neill. She writes, "Hands himself everything--sea--fate--God--murder--suicide--incest--insanity. Always the search for new forms. Because necessary to what he would express."²⁴ It was Susan Glaspell who accompanied him at least part way in this search.

--Linda Ben-Zvi

²³ Susan Glaspell notebook, Barrett Library, Univ. of Virginia.

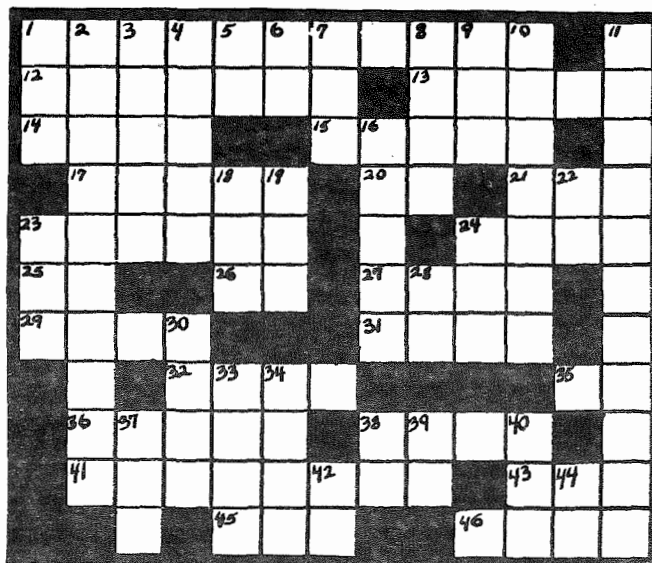
²⁴ Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

Crossword No.1

By Stephanie Greene and Marshall Brooks

ACROSS

1. Hirsute imitation?
12. View from the Crow's Nest
13. A Cold Shape
14. Rose essence
15. _____ Rudraighe O'Neill
17. Isaac's son's
20. Suffix
21. Compagnie, abbr.
23. Maculate friend
24. Vous _____
25. Aut
26. News machine, abbr.
27. Either poet or king
29. Kemp or Crane
31. "It's a goil."
32. Lifeboat gear
35. Brooklyn ext.
36. Fortunate Venetian
38. "I would have been much more successful as a sea-gull or as a _____. As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home. Edmund, Long Day's Journey.
41. Hezekiah's haunt
43. Red dye, not #2
45. Mrs., in Madrid
46. "Nuts, the Brooklyn _____ are talking again. I guess I'm more stewed than I thought--in the center of the old bean, at least." Jamie, Moon for the Misbegotten.



DOWN

1. Thee (dialect)
2. Born in one, died in one, E.G.O. could not escape them
3. "Polissez le et le repolissez; a juter quelque-fois et souvent effacez."
4. _____ Walker, distillery
5. From _____ to _____
6. Zeus' bovine date
7. A bevy of nurses, abbr.
8. What to use for a jam
9. writer's tool
10. Matutinal heroine?
11. A resting place
16. Telephone response
18. Preposition--out of
19. Robert Edmond Jones could give you a nice one
22. That is
23. Miles and Dizzie purveyed it
24. Bring forth
28. Early, prefix
30. Roman bull, more than one
33. L.D.J.I.N. in four
34. Johannesburg piece
37. Fitting expression
38. After mi
39. Primordial ego
40. Chinese weight
42. Digraph
44. Nautical acknowledgement

Solution will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.

[This is the third and final installment of a monograph originally published in Budapest: in the Modern Philology section of *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae*, XI (1980), 82-107. Part One appeared in the Winter 1981 issue of the Newsletter (pp. 5-10), Part Two in the Spring 1982 issue (pp. 16-24), concluding with a comparative study of Joseph Conrad's short story, "Tomorrow" (1903), and his one-act dramatization of the story two years later, under the title "One Day More" (1905). These are the works referred to in the first sentence below. --Ed.]

VIII

There are good reasons to suppose that O'Neill knew both Conrad's short story and play. He had been an avid reader of Conrad's works since his high school days and retained his admiration for Conrad throughout his life.¹⁸ "Tomorrow" appeared in 1903, and "One Day More" was published in *The Smart Set* in February, 1914. Travis Bogard finds it probable that O'Neill was acquainted with the short story,¹⁹ and Kristin Morrison points out that "Certainly by 1917 O'Neill was familiar with *The Smart Set* since he sent three plays there that year ["The Long Voyage Home" was printed in the October 1917 issue, "Ile" and "The Moon of the Caribbees" in the May 1918 issue]; and it is likely that in 1914 as an aspiring author engaged in an intense program of literary activity, both reading and writing, he would have seen copies of this important magazine. Himself a beginning dramatist, he would not have passed over a first play by one of his favorite authors."²⁰ Various motifs, appearing in "Tomorrow" and "One Day More" respectively, crop up in several of O'Neill's plays--among them "Ile" (1916-17), "The Long Voyage Home" (1916-17), "The Moon of the Caribbees" (1916-17), *Beyond the Horizon* (1918), "The Rope" (1918), "Where the Cross Is Made" (1918), *Gold* (1920), *Chris Christopherson* (1920), *Anna Christie* (1921) and *The Hairy Ape* (1921).²¹

¹⁸Cf. Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* (New York, 1962), pp. 79-80, 112, 351; Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (Boston, 1973), pp. 28, 604.

¹⁹Travis Bogard, *Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York, 1972), p. 93. Cf. William R. Brashear, "'To-morrow' and 'Tomorrow': Conrad and O'Neill," *Renascence*, XX (Autumn 1967), 18-21.

²⁰Kristin Morrison, "Conrad and O'Neill as Playwrights of the Sea," *The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter* (May 1978), p. 3.

²¹Bogard, pp. 106, 154, 161; Morrison, pp. 3-5. Besides the "established" correspondences, one may also think of some other parallels. (1) In both "Tomorrow" and "One Day More," Harry Hagberd abhors the idea of dying in a rabbit-hutch of a paternal house, and would prefer facing the end "In the bush somewhere; in the sea; on a blamed mountain top for choice" ("Tomorrow," p. 272; "One Day More," p. 154). A variety of Harry's pantheistically somber program is accomplished by Robert Mayo at the end of O'Neill's *Beyond the Horizon*. (2) In Conrad's "Tomorrow," explaining to Harry why she did not, as a rule, contradict Captain Hagberd when he was talking about his great hope, Bessie says: "It was easier to half believe it myself" (p. 265). Even the malicious barber admits that the delusion was catching. Sometimes, when a stranger came to his shop, he himself could not help supposing that the visitor might be old Hagberd's son. There was a time when the whole town shared the illusion (p. 248). The infectious nature of a mad expectation is dramatized by O'Neill in the figure of Nat, the son of the mad captain in "Where the Cross Is Made." (3) The shovel old Hagberd throws at his son in anger and anxiety is paralleled by the shovel Yank throws at Mildred in *The Hairy Ape*. Taken one by one, parallels of this kind should not, of course, be exaggerated. They may be merely fortuitous, or may derive from the similarity of themes, the authors' attitudes, and their life experiences. But taken together, they are too numerous to be easily dismissed as irrelevant to the Conrad-O'Neill relationship.

The most direct line of descent from Conrad's story and play, however, would seem to lead to an early short story and a late play by O'Neill: "Tomorrow" (1916-17) and *The Iceman Cometh* (1939). Rather than inviting scrupulously minute comparisons of details, or flashing easily recognizable Conradian profiles, incidents and motifs, these works by O'Neill passionately and bitterly explore the central concern of Conrad's "Tomorrow" and "One Day More": the nature of illusions in a given social and psychological context, and the consequence of their confrontation with reality. The question, of course, constituted a personal puzzle for O'Neill, was a general preoccupation of the period (both in life, literature and art), and has been one of the recurring problems of mankind, posed in different forms and with varying contents whenever ideals have shown a tendency to become illusions.

O'Neill's short story with the same title as Conrad's exposes and explores the dichotomy of illusion and reality in an independent narrative. Its central figure, Jimmy Anderson, a newspaper correspondent in the Boer War, had caught his wife Alice making love with a staff officer. His self-esteem crushed, he started drinking, lost himself, became a loafer, and developed the illusion of starting a new life--"tomorrow." His chance seemed to have come when he was offered a reporting job at one of the big morning papers in New York City. He gave up drinking, preached temperance to his friend and roommate Art, the narrator of the story, "with the obstinacy of the reformed turned reformer,"²² and spent a few days at work--only to realize that he was unable to live up to the requirements and his own expectations. So after getting drunk and inadvertently knocking his favorite pot of geraniums from the window sill, he jumped out of the window and smashed himself to death in the yard of Tommy the Priest's saloon. He could not abide and did not survive the confrontation of his illusion (of starting a new, creative life) with reality (his failure to write and regenerate his personality).

It is not only the title which links O'Neill's short story and Conrad's. Like Captain Hagberd, Jimmy Anderson lived entirely in the immediate future: he was going to have his delapidated typewriter fixed "tomorrow"; he hoped his dyspeptic geranium would finally blossom "tomorrow." Though life never failed to deal him the expected kick, Jimmy firmly believed that "the longed-for caress would come ... if not today, then tomorrow" (153). His "career as a sober, industrious citizen" (158), as Art ironically puts it, was to begin "tomorrow"; in fact, he "lived in a dream of tomorrows" (148). If Captain Hagberd in Conrad's "Tomorrow" had his trust in "an everlasting tomorrow,"²³ Jimmy Anderson in O'Neill's "Tomorrow" had eyes "bright with the dream of a new hope, or rather, the old hope eternally redreamed" (155-156).²⁴

Despite these parallels, there are also marked differences between Conrad's and O'Neill's short stories. The most striking deviation can be observed in the degree of dramatic quality in the two narratives. Conrad's "Tomorrow" certainly does not lack in this quality, but O'Neill's "Tomorrow" far surpasses even Conrad's *play* in dramatic charge, concept and organization.

²²Eugene O'Neill, "Tomorrow," *The Seven Arts*, II (June, 1917), 152. Subsequent page citations refer to this edition and are included in the essay in parentheses.

²³Joseph Conrad, "Tomorrow," in *Typhoon and Other Stories* (Leipzig, 1928), p. 279. Subsequent page citations refer to this edition and are included in the essay in parentheses.

²⁴This is not to prove that Conrad need have been O'Neill's sole model. He may have been a literary source and an eye-opener, but O'Neill's short story is autobiographically founded: Art bears many of O'Neill's traits, and the figure of Jimmy Anderson can be traced back to James Byth, a press agent of O'Neill's father, who was O'Neill's neighbor at the saloon called Jimmy the Priest's (the original of Tommy the Priest's) in New York. He even committed suicide the way in which O'Neill describes Jimmy's death. Cf. Bogard, p. 93.

Already in Conrad's story the illusion of the main protagonist is in paradoxically sharp conflict with reality: Captain Hagberd rejects his son in the name of his son; he drives Harry away because he expects Harry to come "tomorrow"; "tomorrow" defeats "today." The Captain, in fact, behaves in the way that Art supposes *Jimmy* would behave should his self-deception meet with truth: looking searchingly at Jimmy's "squat nose, wistful eyes, fleshy cheeks, weak mouth, thick lips, the whole of his characterless, unfinished face," Art wondered "what Jimmy would do if he ever saw that face in the clear, cruel mirror of Truth. Straggle on in the same lost way, no doubt, and cease to have faith in mirrors" (O'Neill, "Tomorrow," p. 153).

This was, however, the final reaction not of Jimmy, but of Captain Hagberd. Harry's grin, reminding the captain of the townfolks' scorn over his attitude; Harry's suggestion that there was something wrong about old Hagberd's news; the very idea of something wrong: these can be taken as short and forced glimpses at the "mirror of Truth." And no sooner had the captain looked into the mirror than he ceased to have faith--not in his delusion, but in the mirror. His story ends with his affirmation of an everlasting tomorrow. His partly effected, partly dodged encounter with reality leads to his perseverance in his delusion. Illusion laughs the mad laughter of victory. (Tragic defeat becomes the fate of another character--Bessie Carvil--as if it were the punishment of a sinless victim.) Save for Bessie's single, timid attempt, the idea of enlightening old Hagberd about the truth is abandoned. He is spared being made miserable through a thorough and final confrontation with reality which might have ruined the defense-system of his personality.

Conrad's "One Day More" is more dramatic than his "Tomorrow" proved to be, not simply and not mainly because the descriptive passages in the story were made into stage directions, the speeches were freed from their quoting sentences, and, in general, representation was replaced by presentation. These formal alterations were only the consequence of modifications in the very concept of the conflict. The final clash between Captain Hagberd and Bessie Carvil casts a thick and entangling veil of doubt on the tenability of the captain's illusion. When Bessie, who remains the chief victim of events even in the play, shouts her final bitter and sacrilegious conclusion--"There is no tomorrow!" (Conrad, "Tomorrow," p. 165)--into the face of Captain Hagberd, she shocks and shakes the old man; her disillusionment starts old Hagberd on the way to becoming disillusioned himself. How far such an impulse proved fatal for the captain, or how far it meant but a temporary loss of mental balance, is a question left open in the one-act play.

The fundamental reason why O'Neill's short story is more dramatic than Conrad's drama lies in the fact that O'Neill radically pursued the course started by Conrad to its very end. What is only a diffident attempt in Conrad's "Tomorrow" and an undecided issue in "One Day More" becomes a tragic truth in O'Neill's "Tomorrow": the central protagonist experiences a headlong confrontation of his illusion with reality, lives to see the total disintegration of his illusion, and dies of his realization. His identification with his self-delusion is so complete that the disruption of one means for him the destruction of the other; the death of his illusion is tantamount to the total collapse of his personality. His final verdict on himself is painfully relentless:

What I wrote was rot. I couldn't get any news. No initiative--no imagination--no character--no courage! All gone. Nothing left--not even cleverness. No memory even! ... These last days I've guessed the truth. I've been going crazy. .. I'm done--burnt out--wasted! ... No, Art, it isn't the job that's lost. I'm lost! ... But it's hell, Art, to realize all at once--you're dead! (O'Neill, "Tomorrow," pp. 165-166)

Unlike the captain in Conrad's story, ultimately it was not the mirror that Jimmy Anderson ceased to have faith in; it was himself. "Life had jammed the clear, cruel mirror in front of his eyes and he had recognized himself--in that pitiful thing he

saw" (166). He was unable to survive the experience. O'Neill ends his story with two dramatically terse and appropriately short sentences: "The sky was pale with the light of dawn. Tomorrow had come" (170). For Jimmy Anderson this is the tragic fulfillment of Bessie Carvil's surly prophecy at the end of "One Day More": "There is no tomorrow!" But while Bessie survives her realization, Jimmy perishes with it. The outer contradiction between Captain Hagberd and Bessie Carvil has been dramatically contracted and sharpened into the inner contradiction within Jimmy Anderson. Rather than merely making someone else suffer, the main protagonist dies of his own disillusionment.

The construction of O'Neill's story also betrays a dramatic interest. It has an extended exposition which lays a heavy stress on Jimmy's attempts to lead Art back to a sober and industrious life. The emphasis on his efforts to bring back a lost sheep to the fold renders sharper the reversal of his proving a lost sheep himself. His late confession to Art about his failure and inner collapse, his long withheld revelation of the trauma his wife's unfaithfulness had caused in his self-appreciation and ambition, and finally his suicide: these draw the descending curve of his peripety with a steep fall. The belated disclosure of his secret motive increases tension. In the bulk of the story a compositional counterpoint can be felt between Jimmy's solemn, somber and pathetically clumsy formality and Art's condescendingly ironical attitude undercutting many of his roommate's assumed poses. It sometimes reaches the level of what might be termed facical awareness expressed with a wink at the reader. This happens, for example, when Jimmy asks Art why he has repeated the word tomorrow a dozen times--a question the reader is also inclined to put. When, however, Art reassures Jimmy that he only keeps repeating the word because tomorrow is the day when Jimmy's new life begins, Jimmy sighs with relief--and at the very moment becomes comic. Clearly, Art acts a role, as if winking again at an imaginary audience. However, when Jimmy is fired and relapses to drinking, Art's ironical attitude completely vanishes, and his earlier mockery turns into a compassion that is shared by the drinking pals in the bar: "they stared at [Jimmy] with genuine regret that he should have fallen. Their faces grew sad. They had done the same thing themselves so many times. They understood" (165). The contrast between good-humored scorn and sincere understanding accompanies the movement of the action from comic to tragic.

Thus O'Neill's "Tomorrow" is much more dramatic than Conrad's. This, however, does not automatically make it a better story. Despite obvious signs of his talent in characterizing his figures, building up his conflict and constructing his plot, O'Neill makes too many direct statements, is over-meticulous in explaining his symbols (e.g., p. 165), and occasionally even pats his own back. "Here was real tragedy. Real tragedy!" Art exclaims (168), commenting on Jimmy's story of his wife's infidelity. Conrad's short story as a work of art is, in fact, a much more successful, balanced and experienced creation.

But O'Neill was, after all, a beginner when he wrote "Tomorrow." It took him more than twenty years to restate his early vision of illusion and reality in accomplished dramatic terms. The result was staggering, the achievement enormous.

IX

Based on O'Neill's early story of 1917, written in the dark shadow of World War II,²⁵ and first produced and published in 1946, *The Iceman Cometh* is a late play of ripe wisdom and rare excellence. It is a drama composed in a mosaic pattern and enlarged into epic, indeed novelistic dimensions.

Its epic aspect is evident in its very conception. The play owes to the short story

²⁵Cf. the Gelbs, p. 830, and Sheaffer, p. 489.

not only its locale and time (1912) but also one of its characters.²⁶ Jimmy Anderson, who commits suicide at the end of "Tomorrow," is raised from the dead in the figure of James Cameron (nicknamed Jimmy Tomorrow) in *The Iceman Cometh*. It is impossible not to recognize him at first glance: if Jimmy Anderson had "wispy, grey hair combed over his bald spot" (151), Jimmy Tomorrow has "mouse-colored thinning hair";²⁷ if the hero of the short story had "wistful eyes," a "squat nose" and "fleshy cheeks hanging down like dewlaps on either side of his weak mouth" (153), the figure in the play possesses "big brown friendly guileless eyes," "a little bulbous nose" and "a face ... with folds of flesh hanging from each side of his mouth" (575). Whereas Jimmy in the story could look at his friend "with the appealing look of a lost dog" (149), Jimmy in the play looks like "an old, well-bred, gentle bloodhound" (575). While Jimmy Anderson would sit "prim ... in his black suit" in a room at Tommy the Priest's with his clean collar and fresh shirt and looking, when sober, "a respectable nuisance" (151), Jimmy Tomorrow, one of the denizens of Harry Hope's saloon, "wears threadbare black, and everything about him is clean.... There is a quality about him of a prim, Victorian old maid, and at the same time of a likeable, affectionate boy who has never grown up" (575).

Like Jimmy in the story, Jimmy in the play also used to be a Boer War correspondent who found his wife in the hay with a staff officer, was shaken by her unfaithfulness, and blames the failure of his career and his taking to drink on this shattering experience. "We've all heard that story," Hickey says (657). And indeed we have--in O'Neill's short story!

Jimmy Anderson's illusion, of regaining his old job "tomorrow," is, naturally, also shared by Jimmy Tomorrow; and when this illusion is put to the test of truth, the drama reaches its disillusioning turning point just as the short story did: in the description of Jimmy's fate, the structure of the play integrates the strategy of the short story.

Moreover, it does so more than once. After failing the test of reality, Jimmy Tomorrow confesses to himself, in a moment of bitter and cold clairvoyance, that he had been indulging in an unreal pipe dream: it was not his wife's unfaithfulness which made him a drunkard, but his being a drunkard which made his wife unfaithful; he did not resign his position but was fired for drunkenness and--unlike Jimmy Anderson--he did not even dare trying to undertake the job again. In the short story we are supposed to take Jimmy's blaming of his wife seriously; in the play even this gesture proves to be a self-defensive illusion. The degree of clear-sightedness is greater in the Jimmy of the play; his self-exposing insight is keener and more relentless.

All the same, though he is reported to have contemplated it, he simply cannot bring himself to the point of committing suicide. His self-analysis may be more radical than that of his short story counterpart, but he is certainly less consequent in his actions. He rather flinches, and eagerly accepts the idea that Hickey's criticism can only be

²⁶For the autobiographical facts of cheap hotels that Harry Hope's dive and its clientele were based on (Jimmy the Priest's, the Hell Hole and the Garden Hotel), and for the identity of a number of its characters, see the Gelbs, pp. 170-171, 186, 285-286, 296-298, 368, 457, 459, 831; Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Playwright* (Boston, 1968), pp. 171, 192, 319-320, 130-131, 203, 214, 329, 333, 335, 338, 386, 425; Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist*, pp. 62, 428; John Henry Raleigh (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Iceman Cometh"* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968), pp. 4-6, 63-71. As the entry for June 7, 1939 in his Work Diary (1924-1943) shows, O'Neill first gave *The Iceman Cometh* the tentative title "Tomorrow."

²⁷Eugene O'Neill, *The Iceman Cometh. The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York, 1954), III, 575. (Subsequent page citations refer to this edition and will be included in the essay in parentheses.)

attributed to his insanity. Either Hickey is insane, or Jimmy is a coward, a weakling and a liar plunged in self-deception. So Hickey must be insane, and Jimmy had only been kidding when he pretended he would reapply for his old job. With this sudden and sharp change of attitude, Jimmy swings back from the pole of total and barren disillusionment to the pole of a total and comfortable pipe dream. In terms of form, another short story-like turn had found its way into the dramatic structure. The mosaic design becomes perceptible.

The design is made clearer and more complete by the fact that the fortunes of a great number of other characters are also presented in the same way--are also shown in a similar pattern with a double turn: Harry Hope, the proprietor; Ed Mosher, one-time circus man; Pat McGloin, one-time police lieutenant; Willie Oban, a Harvard Law School alumnus; Joe Mott, one-time proprietor of a Negro gambling house; Piet Wetjoen, one-time leader of a Boer commando; Cecil Lewis, one-time Captain of British infantry; Hugo Kalmar, the Hungarian anarchist and one-time editor of periodicals; Rocky Pioggi, night bartender; Chuck Morello, day bartender; and the three street walkers, Pearl, Margie and Cora. Each has his or her particular pipe dream, disillusioning test, and re-illusioning quest. Jimmy Tomorrow is, as Larry Slade describes him with sardonic relish, "the leader of our Tomorrow Movement" (593). But he is one of many, as is clear when the mosaic flags become multiplied.

Jimmy Tomorrow, however, is not the only person to revive the figure of Jimmy Anderson. Anderson is also reincarnated and partly developed further in the character of Hickey himself. Anderson's preaching temperance to his friend Art, and the inner uncertainty of the reformer: these give a foretaste of the predicament of the hardware drummer whose inner collapse constitutes another short story-anticipated mosaic flag.²⁸

If Jimmy Tomorrow is unable to take the grim and mortal consequence of facing the truth, and cannot follow Jimmy Anderson to death, there are other characters in the play who draw the inevitable conclusion with a fateful necessity and commit suicide like the protagonist of the short story. One is Parritt, who manages to make a confession to Larry, elicits his condemnation and throws himself out of the window just as Jimmy Anderson had done. The play's "*sound of something hurtling down, followed by a muffled, crunching thud*" (726) repeats the story's "swish, a thickish thud as of a heavy rock dropping into thick mud" (169). The other person is Hickey, who, by summoning the police, also punishes himself and faces what he had brought to Evelyn--death. The changes of Larry's, Parritt's and Hickey's attitudes add further mosaic flags to the overall dramatic design.²⁹

²⁸The fatefully fortuitous and sudden realization of his hidden hatred for Evelyn is comparable to a similarly accidental and fatally unexpected insight of Lavinia's--about her secret love for Adam--in *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Both Lavinia and Hickey accept responsibility by punishing themselves: Lavinia by rejecting Peter and shutting herself up in the Mannon house, and Hickey by phoning the police.

²⁹The mosaic method is also thrown into relief by the chopping up of the dramatic plot into minor incidents, stories, anecdotes, even jokes. Examples abound:

- a. Hickey's joke about his wife and the iceman (p. 580; cf. pp. 610, 616, 617, 662, 694). Later the joke becomes a grim symbol of death.
- b. Hugo Kalmar accuses Parritt, then recognizes him, asks for and gets a drink. The semblance of a tense, pugnacious dramatic scene is built up, but with a short story-like turn it deteriorates, is resolved and relieved into a jovial drinking partnership (592).
- c. Willy Oban's story (595).
- d. The anecdote of how Ed Mosher short-changed his sister, Bessie (608-609).

At the same time, Parritt's suicide and Hickey's self-punishment not only repeat but restate the meaning and significance of Jimmy Anderson's death: whereas Anderson's suicide was essentially the collapse of a weak person, Parritt's and Hickey's acts also possess the cathartic quality of a moral deed, the redeeming gesture of ethical reparation. The drama not only embodies and multiplies the short story; it also transcends and transforms it.

Showing significant parallels with--and no less important divergences from--works by Ibsen, Gorky, Synge, Chekhov and Conrad in the treatment of illusion and reality; adopting the mosaic design so characteristic of Chekhov's late plays; evolving from dramatic short stories by Conrad and O'Neill and multiplying their pattern in a novelistic structure, *The Iceman Cometh* represents an original drama corresponding to O'Neill's specific vision of the world. It is a truth-seeking play of grotesque dissonance and tragic beauty.

--Peter Egri

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- e. The story about how Cora showed a drunk and shy guy the nearest way to the Museum of Natural History, frisking him for his roll and picking twelve bucks off him (616-617).
 - f. Ed Mosher's anecdote about a physician who claimed he could cure heart failure with rattlesnake oil in three days (626-628). The doctor was of the opinion that staying sober and doing work cut people off in their prime. But the doctor did not follow his own advice. He died of overwork at eighty. When he felt his end coming, he told Ed, sobbing: "I'd hoped I'd live to see the day when, thanks to my miraculous cure, there wouldn't be a single vacant cemetery lot left in this glorious country" (627-628). The physician's words, as quoted by Ed, evoke a roar of laughter, but they also foreshadow the dark predicament of Hickey, whose cure also remained inefficient and brought death. Act I appropriately ends with Hickey's drowsy words spoken in encouragement, causing discouragement, and arguing unwittingly, as it were, against his own cure: "don't let me be a wet blanket--all I want is to see you happy--" (628). The example also shows how O'Neill made even his relatively independent narrative units organic parts of the dramatic plot.
 - g. The nervous oscillation between tension and relief, hate and friendship, irritated affront and precarious reconciliation in the first phase of Act II, describing how the inmates, after Hickey's reform activity, welcome the unadorned truth--about their companions (628-638).
 - h. Harry's crucial walk and Hickey's self-exposing speech (686-691, 708-717) also imply a dramatized short story-oriented mosaic unit, but they are important enough to call for separate treatment. See Peter Egri, "Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*: An Epic Tragicomedy of Illusion and Reality," *Hungarian Studies in English*, XI (1977), 96-102, in which I have analyzed *The Iceman Cometh* in greater detail than in the present study.



QUIZZICAL QUICKIE: In a performance of what O'Neill play did John Gielgud share a London stage with, among others, Angela Lansbury's mother? (Frederick Wilkins offers the answer in lieu of bio at the end of this issue. No peeking, though!)

ON THE SHELF: NEW BOOKS BY AND ABOUT O'NEILL, (PART ONE)

In what would have been his 94th year, Eugene O'Neill has been the author and subject of an unprecedented number of publications, bringing him to well over a "five-foot shelf" in any substantial collection, suggesting that the centennial wheels are beginning to turn, and--above all--adding immeasurably to our appreciation and understanding of the man, his times, and his oeuvre. Three book-length studies; all of the extant letters to his most important theatrical colleague; a delineation of his place in the still-flowing mainstream of American transcendentalism; an analytical history of the Provincetown Players, in whose life (and death) the dramatist played so major a role; and a "development" into play form of the scenario for an unfinished "cycle" play--not to mention the reissue, in paperback, of his finest one-act, and a novel in which he and his family make cameo appearances! A reader of and about O'Neill is faced, this year, with an embarrassment of riches to which no necessarily brief review-article can do justice, even when divided into two parts, in this issue and the next. What follows, therefore, is more an announcement than an assessment: a prolegomenon to the fuller and deeper studies of individual works that will doubtless follow in future issues, as readers and subscribers make their own responses to the books hastily introduced now and in the winter issue. My comments are more personal than critical--what struck me most at first and second "read"--and the order of presentation is in no way intended as an order of ascending or descending merit. Though I have tried to be candid in my observations, I prefer to leave the winnowing process to other hands--and to posterity!

I. *"The Theatre We Worked For": The Letters of Eugene O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan*, ed. Jackson Bryer, with introductory essays by Travis Bogard. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982. xiii+274 pp., \$25.00. ISBN: 0-300-02583-1.

No O'Neill collection should be without this long-awaited and splendidly produced book. (So much for my pre-announced fence-sitting objectivity!) While most of the letters' revelatory "nuggets" have already been quoted abundantly elsewhere, to have them in their original settings, and in the chronological context provided by the 43 pages of Professor Bogard's four graceful and comprehensive interstices, is a joy. Of the 164 letters and telegrams that are included, 106 are by O'Neill--the 104 of them addressed to Macgowan comprising all that remains of the playwright's correspondence with his longest, most loyal and closest professional mentor and friend. (If only the O'Neills had been as careful in saving letters as the Macgowans were, many of the questions to which O'Neill's side of the correspondence gives rise would have been answered! But Bogard's introduction, Bryer's abundant, detailed and helpful footnotes, and additional letters--by the second and third Mmes. O'Neill and others--fill in as many gaps as is possible, especially in the final years, when Carlotta did the corresponding that illness prevented O'Neill from doing himself. No, this will do. Only the most well-heeled pedant would yearn for a book twice as long--and doubtless twice as expensive!)

Few of the letters are gems of epistolary art, but that is all to the good. What one wants, and gets, is not public pronouncement but unvarnished, unmasked, private utterance; and as a result the collection brings us closer to the man himself than any book except the major biographies (Sheaffer's and the Gelbs'), Bogard's own study, *Contour in Time*, and the book by Michael Manheim that is reviewed later in this article. And even they are sometimes superseded when the playwright speaks for himself.

Eileen Sondak, reviewing the collection in the *San Diego Union* (March 21, 1982, p. 2), noted that the letters "can be savored for many reasons." True. One reason, as in many such collections, is the illicit pleasure of peeping at material not intended for any but the original recipient's eye--as when we "overhear" O'Neill repeatedly arranging for Macgowan to provide flowers for Carlotta before the two escaped to Europe; or when we eavesdrop on his acerbic wit in rejecting Macgowan's suggestion of Provincetown veteran Margot Kelly for a replacement role as Ella in *All God's Chillun*:

she is the Dumb-dumb Dora of our Western Hemisphere. She is so thick in spots, it hurts you. Not that I wish an intelligence test for actorines. (None of them would get a job then.) Or that I don't like the lady. I do ... but ... I found her work in "The Long Voyage Home" pretty crude. (p. 59)

Of course the eavesdropper's pleasure is muted when the subject turns to O'Neill's penury, a frequent problem both during and after the time that his parents' estate was tied up in probate (pp. 58, 105, 155, etc.), to overcome which he had repeatedly to beg for advances and overdue royalties. And there's no denying that the troubled reflections of the '30's and '40's are more harrowing than titillating.

A far more important reason for savoring the letters is the behind-the-scenes picture they provide of the development of both men, and each's beneficial influence on the other. As Professor Bogard says (and his introductions are especially helpful in filling in the backgrounds of both men), "Working in association toward a common goal [the Experimental Theatre and the ideal that motivated it] helped them both to achieve clearer self-definition, and mutual interests made each more certain of the direction he would take along the bewildering paths of the young century" (p. 3).

One learns, firsthand, a great deal about the demise of the Provincetown Players--a victim, it seems here (p. 38), of galloping democracy--and even more about the rise and fall of their successor, the Experimental Theatre (1923-26), led by the triumvirate of O'Neill, Macgowan and Robert Edmond Jones (who remains a shadowy and curiously elusive figure in most of the correspondence). It's all here, from the start (September, 1923), when O'Neill advised Macgowan on how to announce the new venture to the public,

Just give them a promise that something mysterious, new, daring, beautiful and amusing is going to be done by actors, authors, designers--that the purpose of this theatre is to give imagination and talent a new chance for such developement [sic] (p. 45);

through the dissatisfaction he felt (by August, 1926) when the ET seemed less a "progress toward the sort of theatre we want" than a "reversion to show-shop Type" (p. 121), as (in Bogard's words, p. 74) "the necessities of commerce increasingly dictated the policies of art":

There's something terribly deadening in the way time and troubles ... can eat into patience and courage and people that have worked together with so much in common as Bobby and you and I (p. 131),

to later, nostalgic flickerings (in November, 1936) of the fire that had ignited the trio at the start: if only they could "get together again, and start again in New York on our own with a resurgence of the old spirit to prompt us" (p. 222); all ultimately darkening into a pessimism spawned of illness, the war (p. 251), the state of the nation (p. 246) and--something that had troubled him since at least 1926 (p. 132)--the ubiquitous "show-shop" of commercial theatre (November, 1940):

The idea of an Art Theatre is more remote now, I think, than it was way back in the first decade of this century.... To have an ideal now, except as a slogan in which neither you nor anyone else believes but which you use out of old habit to conceal a sordid aim, is to confess oneself a fool who cannot face the High Destiny of Man! (p. 254)

The letters contain so much that no summary can do them justice. Revealing, for instance, are O'Neill's rejection of well-made formulae for play construction,

I start out with the idea that there are no rules or precedent in the game except what the play chooses to make for itself.... I usually feel instinctively a sort of rhythm of acts or scenes and obey it hit or miss (p. 23);

his rejection of all requests for comments, reviews or essays, whether political or literary;

it is my firm conviction--and a part of my religion--that, things being as they be, here is one playwright who will best serve the interests of all by preserving a dense silence outside his work (p. 30);

and his ultimate return (announced in 1929, when *Dynamo* was nearing completion), after much theatrical experimentation, to the realistic drama founded firmly on script--essentially a playwright's theatre--for which he was best fitted:

No more sets or theatrical devices as anything but unimportant background.... Hereafter I write plays primarily as literature to be read--and the more simply they read, the better they will act, no matter what technique is used. ... Greater classical simplicity, austerity combined with the utmost freedom and flexibility, that's the stuff! (pp. 190-191)

One does wish that he'd had more to say about his plays, that his "religion" might have permitted him to let up a little on the "dense silence" in that area at least. All too often they are offered, or commented on, very briefly: *The Hairy Ape's* defiance of "any of the current 'isms'" (p. 31); the gentle intent of the satire in *Marco Millions* ("I actually grow to love my American pillars of society, Polo Brothers & Son," [p. 51]); and the periodic enthusiasm about the latest work, such as *The Great God Brown* (p. 91), which he considers "grand stuff, much deeper and more poetical in a way than anything I've done before," and *Lazarus Laughed* (p. 112), which he thinks "certainly ... contains the highest writing I have done." *Between* the depths and heights, all is "dense silence," except for some valuable pages about *The Iceman Cometh*, "one of the best things I've ever done, I think" (p. 255), whose length and repetitiveness he defends against Macgowan's recommendation of a "drastic condensation of the first part" (p. 256):

It's hard to explain exactly my intuitions about this play. Perhaps I can put it best by saying *The Iceman Cometh* is something I want to make life reveal about itself, fully and deeply and roundly--that it takes place for me in life and not in a theatre ... and so it would be a loss to me to sacrifice anything of the complete life for the sake of stage and audience. (p. 257)

Surely any successful production vindicates his intuitions.

One of the values of the book is its positive portrait of Carlotta--whom O'Neill eulogizes, in various epistles, as mother, wife, mistress, friend, collaborator, pal, and brick--and whom Macgowan praises for her dedicated efforts "to straighten out [O'Neill's] personal and domestic life and make it beautiful and creative" (p. 226). Surely Professor Bogard is correct that the couple's letters to Macgowan from Europe before and during the divorce proceedings with Agnes Boulton--alternating between idyllic celebrations of their love ("We belong to each other! We fulfill each other!" [p. 171]) and violent denunciations of "the fair Aggie" ("It is funny how soon an aching heart turns into a greedy gut!" [p. 176])--reveal them "at their worst" (p. 165). But we want the portrait warts and all, and that, except for a few delicate deletions, is precisely what we get.

O'Neill noted his feeling, as early as March 18, 1921 (in the collection's second letter), that Macgowan and he must have been "fated for a real friendship" (p. 20), which it obviously was, considering its survival through geographical and eventually professional distance, not to mention the barbed wire that Carlotta erected between her husband and most of his erstwhile cronies and pals. "I don't think of you as a critic," O'Neill wrote on March 29 of the same year, "but as a fellow-worker for the best that we can fight for in the theatre in all directions. Both members of that same club, that's what I mean" (p. 21). That the fight was not *wholly* victorious is obvious in the show-shops that abound today while idealistic fringe groups falter and fall on all sides. (*We must fight too.*) But the battle was an important one, and O'Neill's letters to Macgowan record it vividly. The book ends with a sad farewell--Macgowan to O'Neill--that remains as apt in 1982 as it did in 1951: "Be of as good cheer as you can these days. A hell of a world." (p. 267) A hell of a book!

II. Robert K. Sarló's, *Jig Cook and the Provincetown Players: Theatre in Ferment*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1982. 265 pp., \$25.00. ISBN: 0-87023-349-1.

For the second time in as many issues, the University of Massachusetts Press has earned the gratitude of students and lovers of drama. Hot on the heels of Normand Berlin's *The Secret Cause: A Discussion of Tragedy* (see review in the Spring 1982 issue, pp. 38-40) comes Professor Sarló's splendid study of the Provincetown Players (1915-1922), in which, utilizing such important earlier works as Henry R. May's *The End of American Innocence* (1959) and Deutsch and Hanau's *The Provincetown, A Story of the Theatre* (1931), he traces the Players' genesis to two forces, one general and the other individual. The first was the "refreshing wind of intellectual and artistic renaissance" (p. 2) that swept the country in this century's second decade--a "last bloom of American innocence" that provided an atmosphere "in which dissent and experiment became respectable" (p. 3). The second force, individual though avowedly anti-individualistic, was the Players' inspired leader (more accurately, their leading inspiration), George Cram ("Jig") Cook, who saw theatre as an anarchic, communal endeavor, a "healing process" whose participants would constitute a "beloved community of life givers," and all of whom would "be by turns playwrights, actors, designers, stagehands, playreaders and business managers" (p. 5).

A part of the then-burgeoning art theatre movement that questioned the "premises upon which American show business rested" (p. 1), especially its "rampant commercialism," which dedicated radicals like Cook countered with calls for intimacy, economy, imaginative-ness and an alliance of artists and audience, the Provincetowners had as their special goal and distinction the production of American plays on American subjects (97 plays by 47 American writers in their eight seasons), which made theirs "the most daring, and the most characteristically American undertaking in United States theatrical history" (p. 56). A highlight of the book is Professor Sarló's meticulously documented season-by-season chronicle of the group's activities, anxieties, and especially the plays they produced, each of which is succinctly described in terms of content, style, casting, set and direction. There is no fuller record of the Players' achievement, and it seems unlikely that the questions the author admits he has *not* answered will ever *be* answered.

Of course the Provincetown Players' story is one of defeat as well as achievement, and the book provides an engrossing narrative of the slow erosion of Cook's initial ideal--his "dedication to spontaneous group creativity" (p. 6)--as individualism overcame collectivism, product overshadowed process, and professionalism (along with the desire for public approbation) swallowed up the anarchic amateurism, the "inspired and innocent spontaneity" (p. 75), of Cook's Platonic dream.

O'Neill's role in the Players' history is unquestionably paradoxical. The man who put them on the map--with the success of his first production, *Bound East for Cardiff* (1916)--was ultimately the man who wiped them *off* the map, since it was through the success, and subsequent move uptown, of *The Emperor Jones* (1920-21) that the group "ceased to be a collective"; and it was his decision, in 1922, to put *The Hairy Ape* into more professional hands that motivated the Provincetown's final dissolution and Cook's one-way trip to Greece. Accordingly, a historian might limn O'Neill as the villain of the piece; but Professor Sarló is wise and fair enough to eschew melodrama. O'Neill's 1922 decision, he concludes, while it was "ruthless" and a grave "emotional wound" to Cook, was nevertheless, "for purposes of the playwright's genius, fully justifiable" (p. 141).

The portrait of Cook himself is a thorough and ultimately a sad one. A devotee of Dionysian ecstasy who was always a better guru than administrator, and who periodically subverted his own collectivist philosophy, he resisted to the last the forces that increasingly undermined his ideals. (The section on the battle between collectivism and individualism in art and society [pp. 37-44] is brilliant.) But, though defeated in the end, he is shown to have spearheaded a company that turned American drama from a craft into an art, pioneered the use of contemporary and controversial subject matter, encouraged eclecticism, and--not least important--emphasized the "joy" of the theatrical endeavor.

And, from a broader perspective, he was *not* defeated since his role as "spiritual begetter of modern theatre collectives" (p. 59) bore later fruit in the Group Theatre, the Federal Theatre Project, the Living Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troupe, and Joseph Chaikin's Open Theatre.

The book includes three valuable appendices: a chronology of all of the Players' productions; an "annotated who was who," providing biographical sketches of the "personalities who participated in the history of the Provincetown Players"--108 of them, literally from A (Berenice Abbott) to Z (William Zorach); and a study of four "physical structures"--the Wharf in Provincetown, the two Macdougall Street playhouses in New York City, and Cook's "dome," the controversial structure designed to achieve his vision of a "theatre of pure space." (As he weaves through masses of contradictory evidence about such matters as stage sizes, Professor Sarló offers an example of scholarly sleuthery at its exciting best.) Concluding with an exhaustive bibliography, and glancing frequently at theatrical and philosophical issues that extend well beyond the specific subject, this is without doubt the best book ever on the dramatic group that provided a start, not only for our greatest playwright, but for the finest in American theatre.

III. Michael Manheim, *Eugene O'Neill's New Language of Kinship*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982. xii+240 pp. \$22.00 cloth (ISBN: 0-8156-2262-7), \$12.95 paper (ISBN: 0-8156-2277-5).

In both his life and his work, Eugene O'Neill was above all a man with a past. The main influences on his thought and art were not the theories of Nietzsche, Freud & Co., whose various views he embraced if and when they jibed with, assuaged or abetted his emotional set of the moment; nor were they the dramatic methods and subjects of his favorite dramatists, Ibsen and Strindberg; nor those of their opposite, the melodramatic theatre milieu of his father. The *main* influences on his work were the events of his life, particularly his younger life (to 1923), and more specifically the members of his family--father, mother, elder brother and self--both as we know them in the autobiographical masterwork, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, and later, when the deaths of the other three (especially mother and brother in 1922 and 1923 respectively), and his reactions thereto, wrought a near-suicidal, guilt-edged despair that turned him, in the middle period of his career, from a hopeful young playwright with thinly-veiled personal experience to record (as in the S. S. Glencairn one-acts and *Anna Christie*) to the deeply troubled author of the increasingly hopeless and tortured plays of his middle period, especially from *The Great God Brown* to *Mourning Becomes Electra*.

The tremendous extent to which all this was so, and the causes and results of his incremental liberation, not from despair about the human condition, but from the subterfuge, camouflage, and alternating poles of nihilism and escapism of the middle-period plays: these constitute one of the two subjects stunningly covered in Professor Manheim's marvelous book, which is--let me say it right away--a *must* for any serious student of Eugene O'Neill.

Responding to Travis Bogard's contention, in *Contour in Time*, that *Long Day's Journey* "was the play [O'Neill] had been trying to write from the outset of his career,"¹ Manheim demonstrates that "O'Neill *had* been writing versions of *Long Day's Journey* throughout his entire career" (p. 4, emphasis added), and that the plays arousing the greatest fascination in readers and playgoers are those in which he "deals with the motifs associated with his parental home" (pp. 6-7)--a "plethora of autobiographical motifs ... which grow out of the memories which haunted O'Neill throughout his adult life ... memories of his mother, of course, focusing first on her addiction and second on her death; but no less memories of his father, his brother, and his pre-adolescent and adolescent self" (p. 4).

¹Travis Bogard, *Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 422.

Professor Manheim first delineates these motifs in *Long Day's Journey* (pp. 5-6, and later helpfully listed in an appendix on pp. 211-216), and then traces them throughout the entire canon, showing the many characters who reflect one or another of the four family members, in one or another of their characteristic stances, proving that Bogard's claim, that "over half" of O'Neill's extant plays "contain discernible autobiographical elements" (Bogard, p. xii), is, while correct, something of an understatement. The autobiographical elements are ubiquitous and are here treated with a thoroughness of detail that defies summarization. Particularly brilliant is the demonstration that, "increasingly in his drama, O'Neill's thoughts and feelings about his past flow from character to character" (p. 77), and that a character's sex does not limit his or her relation to one or more of the O'Neills (p. 78). Nina Leeds, for instance, during her nine-acts in *Strange Interlude*, is at times suggestive of Mary Tyrone (i.e., of O'Neill's mother) and at other times of Carlotta Monterey, while she simultaneously "represents O'Neill himself in the overall design of the play as a life story" (p. 67), a representation that she briefly shares both with Ned Darrell and with Charlie Marsden (p. 64)! Scott's lines about the "tangled web" that deceivers weave seem particularly apt in relation to O'Neill's middle period--his (to quote Father Baird's description of John Loving's novel in *Days Without End*) "middle hide-and-go-seek period"!

While Professor Manheim rightly notes that periodic reference to the O'Neill biography is "inevitable," he is generally true to his stated purpose--"to write a study of O'Neill's plays and not his life" (p. 42)--though he consistently shows the mutual illuminativeness of both. My only reservation (a miniscule one), aside from some uncertainty about the accuracy of a few interpretive puns (e.g., *could* O'Neill have had the French word for *mother* in mind when he chose a *mare* for Con Melody to shoot?),² concerns the possible confusion between autobiographical candor and dramatic success. Someone who prefers the plays to the life might question the author's implicit contention that *Days Without End* is superior to *Ah, Wilderness!* because the latter, "distinctly a yielding to illusion," "keeps falling back into its never-never land atmosphere" and is devoid of "true human beings" (pp. 101, 105, 104); whereas the former, despite its escapist ending, confronts more directly "O'Neill's vortex of despairing emotion since his mother's death" (p. 96). I've never seen *Days* performed, and so my assumption of its theatrical inferiority may be faulty. And I can't deny that Richard Miller's roadhouse escapade is "a trivializing of O'Neill's late adolescent adventures" (p. 104, emphasis added). But it isn't trivial to Richard Miller--to whom, by the way, "adolescent sentimentality" is quite appropriate. One play, I believe, is not necessarily better than another because it is closer to the "truth" of its author's life. But I totally agree with Professor Manheim that the last plays, in which autobiographical candor *is* aligned with theatrical brilliance, are, if not O'Neill's best, at least his best since 1924. And the long, winding road *to* those plays, the road that "begins in greatly disguised autobiography and ends in high tragedy" (p. 11), has seldom been as effectively traced--and in terms of autobiographical revelation, has never been as detailedly traced--as it is here, especially in relation to O'Neill's "murderous resentment" at the alienation caused by his mother's addiction and his suicidal guilt feelings at his own *lack* of feeling at the time of her and his brother's deaths.

Professor Manheim's second subject, intimately related to the first, is the "language of kinship" of the book's title--a phrase O'Neill used in 1924 to describe the arrestingly acerbic dialogue in Strindberg's *Dance of Death* (pp. vii, 8, 209)--the "rhythm of alternating hostility and affection, both sincere and both temporary" (p. 8) that is so true of human relations, so evident in the Glencairn one-acts and *Anna Christie*, so absent from the plays of early 1920's and after, when characters, reflecting the playwright's own inner despair, reject and withdraw from kinship, from "the extreme counter-forces rhythmically varying with one another in close human relationships" (p. 23)--

²Actually, the assumption is persuasively defended on p. 107.

The middle plays all articulate man's incapacity to reach others and render all attempts to do so as either grotesquely self-serving or so severely warped by each person's emotional deformities that they must fail utterly" (p. 53)--

and so brilliantly reemergent in the late plays (from *Iceman* on), when O'Neill was able, by solving his own inner dilemmas, to achieve artistic detachment, triumph over and transcend his past, and become once again "an affirming playwright" (p. 128), whose message, early and late, is this:

Withdrawal is the great enemy of kinship and therefore of life.... Where there is contact, no matter how painful (and it is usually terribly painful), there is life--and where there is withdrawal there is death.... Kinship ... is made up of all-out affection alternating with all-out hostility. Neither can exist without the other, and until man can realize this he must despair. Only when both affection and hostility exist in twain, and are vigorously acknowledged, can true kinship be said to exist and hence hope be available to man." (pp. 10-11)

And because the transition from pessimism to affirmation is closely related to O'Neill's own inner development both as artist and as man, (e.g., p. 57), the book's two subjects are shown to be essentially one.

Here is another work too rich and detailed to be captured in a few paragraphs. Not only are fresh insights offered on every play, but all previous O'Neill scholarship is assessed and assimilated--frequently in the endnotes, which the reader should consult regularly. Professor Manheim's is scholarship of the highest order, and his book deserves the same praise he offers those of one of his predecessors (p. 2). Like Louis Sheaffer's two-volume biography, this is "a work of deep human understanding."

IV. Roger Asselineau, *The Transcendentalist Constant in American Literature*. New York: New York University Press (Gotham Library), 1981. xii+189 pp. \$18.50 cloth (ISBN: 0-8147-0572-3), \$9.50 paper (ISBN: 0-8147-0573-1). Distributed by Columbia University Press.

Professor Asselineau's recent book is not a new creation but a gathering up of twelve essays written independently "over a number of years" (the number being at least eighteen, as the seven previously published in periodicals and books span the years 1961-1978), and I'm afraid that my initial hope was not realized. While every essay is insightful and thought-provoking, the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts. First of all, a less than three-page preface can't hold together six chapters on aspects of Walt Whitman and one each on six of his "spiritual heirs"--Dreiser, O'Neill, Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway, Tennessee Williams, and Walter Lowenfels (1897-1976), this century's "most neglected American poet" and "closest approximation to Walt Whitman" (p. 163). And besides, in order to prove that transcendentalism, "far from being a dead and irrelevant philosophy confined to the first half of the nineteenth century, is a fertilizing undercurrent, a constant in American literature from Emerson down to our own time" (p. 5), Asselineau must so water down his implicit definition of transcendentalism, which he admits he has "reduced to its lowest common denominator" (p. v), that the result is no definition at all. What he reveals is what was already known: that there is a strand of "ingrained idealism" and "fundamental romanticism" in American literature, past and present (p. v). And students of Whitman will find little in the six chapters on the poet to equal the author's masterful two-volume study, *The Evolution of Walt Whitman* (Harvard University Press, 1961 and 1962).

These reservations aside, it is useful to be reminded that American literary naturalism was never as rigorous as its European models; and that our writers, whatever each's ism, tend (a) to treat beauty as, "not plastic beauty, but the mysterious presence behind appearances of something wonderful which escapes [the] senses" (p. 104), and (b) to

concentrate on love as "less the satisfaction of a physical need than the fulfilment of a mysterious spiritual hunger" (p. 128). Of Dreiser, for instance, we are told, "His books are not mere naturalistic studies of social conditions; we are never allowed to forget the presence of an infinite and mysterious universe in the background" (p. 111). And of Hemingway, "Love is an oasis in his heroes' lives, where they can rest and forget the nada which surrounds them by transcending the limitations of time and escaping into eternity, for lust is on the level of the body, but love belongs to the realm of the spirit" (p. 149). Such passages, recalling sections in the earlier essays on Whitman, do hold the chapters together in at least a tenuous unity.

Readers interested only in O'Neill need not buy the book since the essay on him, "Eugene O'Neill's Transcendental Phase" (pp. 115-123), is available in the volume where it originally appeared--*Festschrift Rudolf Stamm*, ed. Eduard Kolb and Jörg Hasler (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1969), pp. 277-283--and it has since been anthologized in other collections of essays. (Its former title: "*Desire Under the Elms*: A Phase of E. O'Neill's Philosophy.") In it, Asselineau describes O'Neill as a "passionate pilgrim in quest of a shrine in which to worship" (p. 116) who used the drama as a "passionate answer" to a "number of problems which obsessed him" (p. 115) and expressed in *Desire Under the Elms* "his poignant nostalgia for a joy of life [in Abbie and Eben at play's end] he was unable to experience" (p. 122). He shows how the main characters prove superior to lesser animals, and escape the grips of hereditary and environmental determinism, only by means of their "embryonic sense of beauty" (p. 117; the repeated "purty" is indicative of that quality) and their capacity for experiencing "the purity and transfiguring power of love"--the "Desire" of the title--"an irresistible life-force" which "flows through the elms and drips from them and pervades everything under them" (p. 120). And that life-force, though decidedly non-Christian, is God--"a dynamic, impersonal, pantheistic, or panpsychistic deity present in all things, whether animate or inanimate, breaking down barriers between individuals ... and making them feel one" (p. 120)--a "Dionysian deity," the exact opposite of the hard, stony god of Old Cabot's Puritanism.

The play ends on an apotheosis of love. The two lovers stand "looking up raptly in attitudes strangely aloof and devout" at the "purty" rising sun, which contrasts with the pallid setting sun that lit up the opening of the play, at a time when everything took place on the plane of coarse material things and lust.

Man can thus be redeemed by a great passion and save his soul and attain grandeur. (p. 119)

One play, plus smaller references to *The Web*, *Lazarus Laughed* and *The Great God Brown*, is rather little as evidence of a transcendental tendency. I had hoped, while reading the fine chapter on Whitman's pervasive oceanic imagery and the metaphysical and maternal associations it regularly drew from the poet ("The Quiddity and Liquidity of *Leaves of Grass*," pp. 31-49), that parallels in O'Neill would later be cited, such as (to name the most obvious) Paddy's idyllic reverie in *The Hairy Ape*, and especially Edmund's "transcendental" recollections, in *Long Day's Journey*, of an evening on the bowsprit:

I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost myself--actually lost my life. I was set free! I dissolved in the sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to Life itself! To God, if you want to put it that way.³

³Eugene O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 153.

Surely, if there is a supreme moment evidencing O'Neill's kinship with Emerson's "transparent eyeball," Whitman's "Kosmos," and America's "transcendentalist constant," this is it. But such connections remain undrawn, leaving O'Neill's part in the volume less than it could have been.

But it is a critical no-no to scorn a book for being itself, rather than what the critic may have hoped for, and the present volume has much to recommend it, though more for generalists in American studies than for students of any individual writer. And if even the former are troubled by the vagueness in the discussions of "mystery," "cosmic context," etc., they may find abundant aid in the book that will open the second half of this review-article--James A. Robinson's *Eugene O'Neill and Oriental Thought* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982)--where the content of Eastern religions, and their contributions to O'Neill's philosophy and art, are exhaustively studied, and whose description of O'Neill's "divided vision" can stand as a paradigm for the vision of all of America's literary heirs of Emerson.⁴

--Frederick Wilkins

REPORTS AND REVIEWS OF O'NEILL PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

1. *Servitude's* American Premiere (?): A Report by the Director.

On Saturday evening, November 14, 1981, at 8:00 p.m., the Drama Department of the University of Wisconsin Center-Richland presented what was, according to our research, the American premiere of Eugene O'Neill's second full-length play, *Servitude*. The production ran for four performances through November 16 and was witnessed by 600 to 800 people during three evening performances and one Sunday matinee. The production was directed by myself with scenery by Marilyn Loft Houck and costumes by Marvis Voelker.

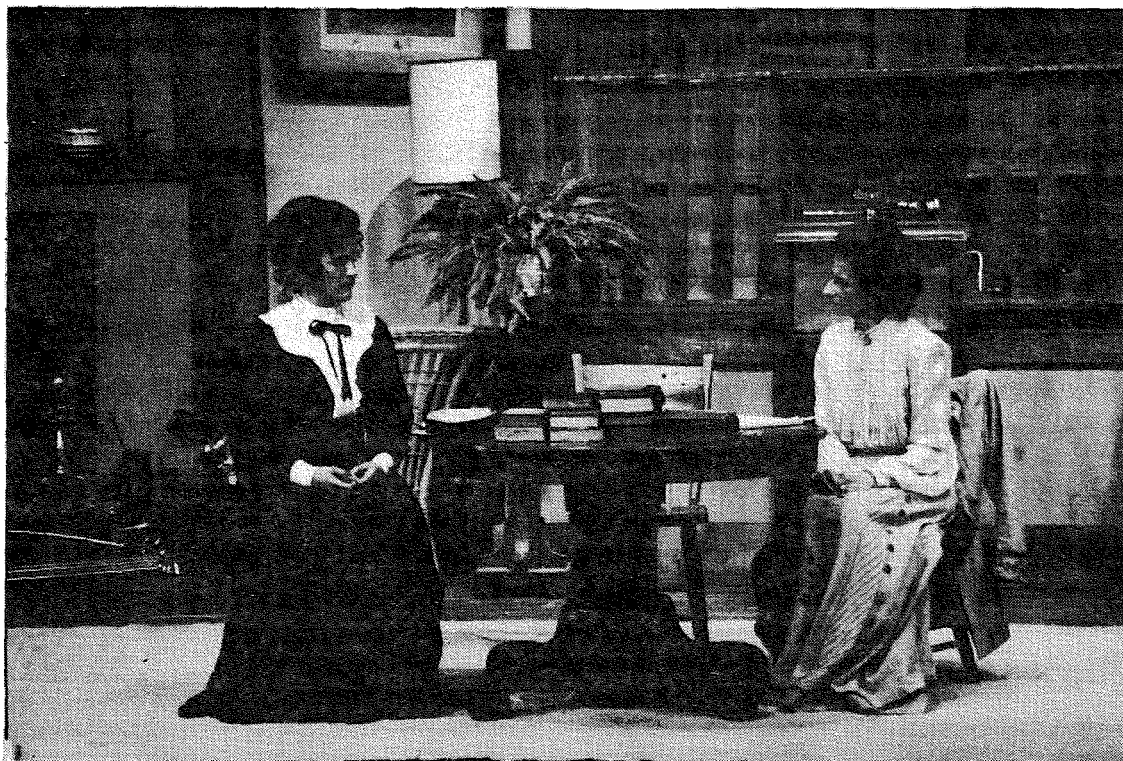
This production was undertaken with full knowledge of--and largely because of--the low repute in which it is generally held by the critics. Our assumption was that the play is much better than believed, and that it could hold up in performance if given the chance. We further believed that the play's major theme--the role of women in marriage--had a timeliness which would improve the appeal of the play as well as provoke thoughtful consideration of the issues involved. At the same time, we assumed that the apparently conservative resolution of those issues might appeal to many in our audience, drawn from a small city with a strong agricultural orientation. In other words, here, if anywhere, might be found an audience to appreciate and enjoy O'Neill's efforts.

Happily, our assumptions proved to be well grounded. Audience response, both during and after the performances, was good. This was especially true on opening night, as evidenced not only by the frequent laughter and warm applause, but also by the extremely provocative discussion of the play and its issues which followed the performance.

Since we were able to locate no American production of record (we seem to have lost out on the claim to a world premiere by a matter of months to a theatre group in Spain), I decided that the play deserved to be taken on its own terms. The *revival* of a play considered a failure may require or justify a radical restructuring of the text in order to "make it work." But the assumption here was that the play ought to have, for its initial production, the benefit of the doubt, and that O'Neill's indisputable greatness as a playwright and his remarkable theatrical sense ought to be trusted.

⁴Among the other books included in the next issue's segment are *Eugene O'Neill's Tragic Vision* by C. P. Sinha (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1981), and *The Calms of Capricorn*, "Developed from O'Neill's Scenario by Donald Gallup, With a Transcription of the Scenario" (New Haven: Ticknor & Fields, 1982).

Consequently, the production was very much "by the book." The text was virtually uncut, except for two words, and the play was performed on a proscenium stage in a semi-presentational style characteristic of the acting of the period. The setting and costumes were designed and executed in the manner of realism with "period" decor and apparel. While O'Neill's floor plan was the basis for the design, two variations were introduced. First, a balcony was added upstage in order to break the single level O'Neill calls for. (The library and rear door were on the higher level; the fireplace on the lower level, upstage right.) Second, the windows on the right, which O'Neill suggests are conventional sash windows, were changed to French doors in order to permit the gardener, Wesen, to play his Act II scene with the butler on stage rather than through the window. In addition, the door on the left was converted to an arch for smoother entrances and exits.



Mrs. Frazer (Rowena Symon, at left) and Mrs. Roylston (Dorothy Thompson) in Act II. Photo by Ted Wilson

A further departure from the script involved the thunderstorm and rain in Act I. O'Neill calls for rain and emphasizes it in the dialogue, but gives no stage directions for sound effects. So four thunderclaps were added, including one at the curtain's rise and another shortly after as the butler waits for Roylston to notice him. The other two were timed to build up to and then coincide with Mrs. Frazer's line, "It's pouring!" Consistent with the thunder was the sound of rain, both early and late in the act.

One costume was also added to the basic one-character, one-costume plot called for by O'Neill. In Act III, Mrs. Roylston appeared in a different outfit, one more indicative of her altered condition. Further, a smoking jacket was added for Roylston in Act I.

The play was performed with two full intermissions as suggested by the three-act structure, and each act was found to run just under forty minutes. Thus, with the intermissions, a full evening of theatre was provided. A videotape recording of the final dress rehearsal was made for archival purposes and is now available for inspection by all interested researchers. Needless to say, such a tape is only an inadequate substitute for the performance. [There is information in the News, Notes and Queries section

of this issue on how to obtain a copy of the tape. --Ed.]

At this point, a number of observations, some perhaps obvious, others less so, may be in order in the hope that they may prove helpful to some future director willing to take the risk of producing *Servitude*. To begin with, three strong actors are required, since each act is primarily a "duo-logue." Acts I and III are carried by Mrs. Frazer and Mr. Royston, Act II by Mrs. Frazer and Mrs. Royston, and the latter delivers what is for all practical purposes an extended monologue. So all three of the leads must be strong, and Mrs. Frazer exceptionally so: she is on stage for almost the entire play and, in a very real sense, the casting of this part will either make or break a production.

If actors with the necessary strength can be found, they can be assured that they will find their efforts rewarded. All three leads have marvelous opportunities to take the stage and give bravura performances. Moreover, the "method" actor will find the basis for exploring and creating a perhaps surprisingly deep subtext. In addition, the roles of the butler and the gardener offer good opportunities to character actors, while the children's roles are not so great as to require the director to find highly exceptional tots for the job.

Perhaps the most interesting and problematical portion of the play is Act II. It is interesting because it seems to contain in miniature the movement from farce to tragedy characteristic of so much of O'Neill's later work. It is problematical because the motivation for Mrs. Royston's confession is hard to pin down, as is the motivation for some of the transitions within her speeches. At the same time, Mrs. Frazer has very little dialogue to work with in dramatizing her conversion. The scene places a great strain on the ingenuity of the director and both actresses. A similar problem is presented by Royston's initial surrender in Act III. It seems motivated more by the script than by the character. We found that it played better as a conscious deception on Royston's part, to be distinguished from his later, more genuine conversion following Mrs. Frazer's pointed reminder of his first years of marriage to Mrs. Royston.

Mrs. Frazer's hat is worthy of a final note. Prior to rehearsal there was some concern as to the workability of the forgotten hat; we felt it might require a special staging solution. In fact, it did not. The blocking just naturally evolved in such a manner that leaving the hat behind without Royston noticing it was no problem whatsoever. The difficulties don't arise until Act II. Once Mrs. Frazer retrieves her hat there, she must contend with it until her exit in Act III. That is a problem which was alleviated somewhat by means of a "practical" mirror on stage. Nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that a rehearsal hat be employed from the very beginning so the nuisance value can be reduced as early as possible.

The American premiere of *Servitude* demonstrated that the play as written is capable of entertaining and provoking thought in an average audience. Well acted, the play will hold the attention of such an audience, despite its "disquisitory" nature. Moreover, the play provides solid opportunities for a strong cast. Unfortunately, no reviewers attended, so the definitive word on the playability of *Servitude* will have to await a more visible production. It is to be hoped that the foregoing may encourage just that.

--Paul D. Voelker

2. *The Hairy Ape*, dir. Rob Mulholland, designed by Mulholland and producer Harold Easton. Studio Theatre Productions, New York University, June 16-26, 1982.

The Hairy Ape has been popping up with increasing frequency in Freshman English readers and American literature anthologies of late. And, while the one work alone must give students a very distorted picture of O'Neill's overall artistry, its ubiquitousness is not hard to explain--and the reason isn't simply its convenient brevity. Despite the

datedness of its technique, *The Hairy Ape* is dateless in its message. As producer and designer Harold Easton has written, "this play about a man pitted against a hostile world addresses issues and emotions as relevant in the society of the 1980's as they were in the 1920's.... The alienation of the individual from his or her society is more true today than ever before." Besides, the combination in its hero of sensitive, nascent poet and incredible (but not, alas, indelible) hulk is irresistible, as are, for a different reason, the caricatures of Mildred Douglas, her aunt and Senator Queen--villains of various hues whom one loves to hate. If only the play were easy to mount and perform, it would be a sure-fire hit every time. Unfortunately it is a very tricky vehicle, and the production last June at New York University's Studio Theatre, while generally creditable and graced with a physically impressive Yank (Anthony Matteo) and a lusty crew of young and dedicated performers, did not master all the tricks or solve all the script's inherent problems.

Take the language---please! While the actors were carefully schooled in every syllable (I've never heard a more meticulously faithful reading of the text), the results often veered very far from believable human speech. Long's cockney dialect, for instance: neither Eliza Doolittle nor her professor could voice lines like "what're we goin' ter do, I arks yer?" with any aura of verisimilitude. While the fault is really O'Neill's, and not John Dougherty's or his director's, it suggested to me that, if the play is to be seriously accepted, its dialect must be adjusted to the actors who've been engaged, rather than *they* to *it*. Another vocal problem, less blamable on the playwright, was a general disregard of vocal architecture in the long speeches that stud the text. The delivery must build slowly to an emotional climax; whereas here, all too often and especially in Yank's case, it began at such a level of intensity that there was nowhere to build *to*. And Mr. Matteo frequently paused at disconcertingly wrong moments. One small example: in Scene III, when recoiling at Paddy's insistent self-pity, he paused lengthily in the middle of "Lie down and croak, why don't yuh?" Surely his reaction, whatever its cause, should come out in one fiery burst. (I hasten to add, after these picayune notes, that Mr. Matteo was generally very effective indeed--in tracing the changing associations, from whimsy to desperation, in Yank's use of the word "tink"; in proving his leadership by getting the other men to join in his derisive laughter at Paddy; and in the touching delivery of his quieter moments, especially his recitation of youthful memories in Scene V.)

A second problem is the staging. A short play with seven different settings in its eight scenes would tax even a wealthy producing organization, and Harold Easton's wise choice was to use a few key props, projections, and strategically altered lighting to *suggest* the various locales. (Sometimes, as in Paddy's nostalgic speeches in Scene I, the subtle changes in lighting aided the atmosphere tremendously.) But to leave the IWW operatives on stage, in tableau, during Yank's post-ejection soliloquy at the end of Scene VII was disconcerting, as was the decision to have a prisoner deliver Senator Queen's speech (in Scene VI) as though he *were* Senator Queen. How would a prisoner have access to a top hat, lectern, and script of the speech? (He didn't read from a newspaper!) Perhaps I had just insufficiently suspended my disbelief--though I had no trouble in the last scene, when all the characters from previous scenes slowly returned to the stage, and when we were required to *imagine* a gorilla. (The characters' presence at Yank's demise was a thematically effective interpolation; and the invisible gorilla was probably a wise decision, since monkey suits seldom leave audiences chuckle-free.) When Yank succeeded in removing the bars, he entered the cage, there was a blackout--a scream--and a faint light in which we saw the dying man hanging out of the cage. Perhaps an unemphatic ending, but true to O'Neill's instructions. (If only the playwright's last sentence could be shared with the audience!)

Despite my cavils, I found the production thought-provoking and the use of the multi-platformed open stage effective. Maybe *The Hairy Ape* is less destructible than its protagonist. Messrs. Easton and Mulholland are to be commended for bringing three

O'Neill plays to the New York stage (*Caribbees* and *Hughie* had been performed six months before) in a season that saw few if any others there.

--Frederick Wilkins

3. *Mourning Becomes Electra* in San Francisco: A Pictorial Record.

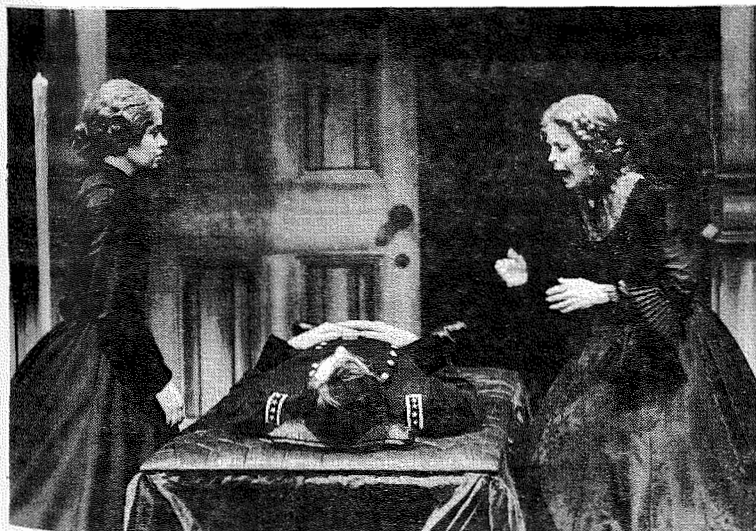
Photos by Larry Merkle of the American Conservatory Theatre production (March 2 - May 27, 1982), dir. Allen Fletcher.



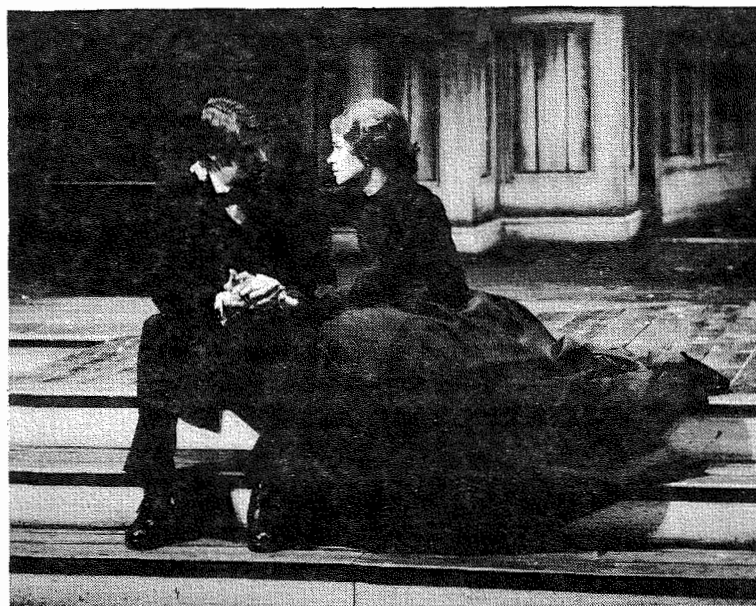
Orin (Thomas Oglesby) and Lavinia (Julia Fletcher)



Ezra (Dakin Matthews) and Christine (Anne Lauder)



Lavinia, Ezra and Christine



Peter Niles (Nicholas Kaledin) and Lavinia

THE EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY SECTION: EOS AT MLA '82

All members of the Society, and all windowshoppers *considering* membership, are urged to attend the Society's 1982 Annual Meeting in Los Angeles just after Christmas. While the time and place have not yet been announced, the meeting will presumably follow the special session on "EUGENE O'NEILL AND FILM" that Eugene K. Hanson, a member of the Society's board of directors, will lead as a part of the 1982 MLA Convention. That session, event #254 in the MLA program, will take place from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. on Tuesday, December 28, in San Pedro, Bonaventure, and will feature four panelists:

Linda Ben-Zvi of Colorado State University,
Vera Jiji of Brooklyn College, CUNY,
William L. Sipple of Waynesburg College, and
Harold Kress, Oscar-winning film editor of *The Iceman Cometh*.

Do make every effort to attend. Exciting days are ahead for the Society, and they start in L. A.!

NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. NEWS FROM MONTE CRISTO. Two festive receptions were highlights of the first half of 1982 at the Monte Cristo Cottage in New London. On Sunday, February 7, Geraldine Fitzgerald was present for the debut of "The Monte Cristo Cottage," a combination film and slide presentation about O'Neill's boyhood summer home, which she narrated. (The film is shown to visitors during the Cottage's open hours—1-4 p.m., Monday through Thursday.) And on Thursday, May 20, the Friends of Monte Cristo Cottage hosted a celebration of the publication of *"The Theatre We Worked For": The Letters of Eugene O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan* (reviewed in this issue), at which its editor, Jackson R. Bryer, autographed copies of the book. The Cottage, by the way, now boasts a small but handsome brochure that includes photos of O'Neill as boy and man, a drawing of the house, and a map showing how to get there. For a copy, write to the MCC, 325 Pequot Avenue, New London, CT 06320.

Also noteworthy is the receipt by the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center of a grant of \$1,000 from the Friars Foundation to aid in the Cottage's renovation and upkeep. Having been wowed, in May, by the progress of the restoration so ably guided by Sally Pavetti and Lois MacDonald, I offer a hearty second to the words of the EOTC's Carol Graves: "If you haven't visited the Monte Cristo Cottage—do, for you have a treat in store for you." —Ed.

2. The August issue of *Yankee* has a piece by Steve Kemper on "The Playwright of Monte Cristo" (p. 15)—an ultra-brief note on the restoration of the Cottage; O'Neill's youthful reporting for the *New London Telegraph*, whose editor could wield a brickbat at "literary" reporters with pinpoint accuracy; and the still-cool relations between the town and its loftiest luminary. As Sally Pavetti puts it in Kemper's one-pager, "There is a two-generation hangover of antagonism against him here." A nich photo of the Cottage's front helps to fill the lean page, but it is cropped at both sides.
3. P'TOWN REMEMBERED. Joel O'Brien, Provincetown resident and son of writers Joe O'Brien and Mary Heaton Vorse, recounted the "Birth of the Provincetown Players," of which his parents were among the founding members, in the August 13-19, 1982 issue of *Provincetown Magazine* (p. 7). The beach picnic fireside chat at which the idea was first considered; Lewis Wharf (a recent acquisition of the O'Briens) and its abandoned fish shed that became the theater; and the second-season premiere of

Bound East for Cardiff, which, thanks in part to cooperative fog and foghorns, "would never again be so magically produced": it's all there, particularly enlivened by two paragraphs from Mary Vorse's book, *Time and the Town*.

4. O'NEILL SLEPT HERE? Thanks to Michael Hinden for pointing out this ad on p. 73 of the July 1982 issue of *Harper's*. If a period has not been inadvertently (?) omitted after the bold-face opening, the site is historic indeed. Otherwise—what a difference a dot makes!

Eugene O'Neill's Provincetown waterfront rooms, with breathtaking views of Cape Cod Bay, available by day, week, or season in historic Provincetown inn. Gourmet restaurant on premises. Write or call O'Neill's at Provincetown, 603 Commercial Street, Provincetown, Mass. 02657, (617) 487-9000.

5. THE ROCKY ROAD TO TAO HOUSE. Wrangling continues between (in this corner) neighbors of Tao House, who claim that widening the road thereto would cut into their property and that a flood of sightseers would increase the threat of fire, crime and death in the neighborhood; and (in the opposite corner) the combined forces of the National Park Service and the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, who are attempting to turn the 1976-designated national historic site into a living reality—a creative tribute to the man who had it built in 1937. The hope of the latter groups, who also plan to restore the house to its original appearance, inner and outer, by removing later accretions and distortive partitions, is to use it for three sorts of events: interpretive tours for individuals and groups; "creative and educational activities" (such as seminars for scholars and theatre practitioners, and fellowships for artists-in-residence); and theatre performances—the vision being the staging of twelve performances of O'Neill plays there per year. The latest skirmish in the ongoing saga (reported in the *New York Times* on May 29, 1982, p. 10, under the title, "Dispute Stalls Opening of O'Neill Home") was a May 27 public hearing on the NPS's draft General Management Plan for Tao House, that had incensed neighbors vowing to gain a 20-year reprieve by hiring a legal hotshot, and led EOFTH vice president Travis Bogard to point out what mad fantasies had possessed the natives: "The residents think of villainous, half-naked hippies wandering around their hills," he said, whereas, in actuality, the planners for Tao House's future "would like to use it in the spirit that O'Neill used it, as a kind of retreat." The NPS plan is available from Howard Chapman, its Western Regional Director, at 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063, San Francisco, CA 94102. The next episode will be dutifully reported herein.
6. REMEMBERING INGRID BERGMAN: THE O'NEILL CONNECTION. Fans around the world mourned the passing, at 67, of stage and screen star Ingrid Bergman on August 29 in London. Her association with O'Neill was touched on in Murray Schumach's article, "by way of obit," in the August 31 *New York Times* (pp. A1, B5):

Maturity strengthened her determination to be more selective in roles. This was one of the main reasons she returned to Broadway in 1967, after a 21-year absence, in the role of a mother disliked by her son in ... *More Stately Mansions*. She had met the playwright in her Hollywood years, when, during a vacation from films, she played the prostitute in his *Anna Christie* in theaters in New Jersey and on the West Coast.

Thanks to Virginia Floyd's collection, *Eugene O'Neill: A World View* (New York: Ungar, 1979), we have a description, in Miss Bergman's own words, of that hastily mentioned meeting (pp. 293-296). Those of us who heard her speak those words, at the 1978 MLA Convention in New York City, will never forget that very special moment. Ingrid Bergman will be missed.

7. DEWHURST ON ACTING O'NEILL. "Fortunate the day I started with O'Neill," Colleen Dewhurst said in an interview with John Corry in the *New York Times* ("A New Test for Colleen Dewhurst," Sept. 26, 1982, Sec. II, pp. 1, 4). "In the beginning, I tried to act him just like any other playwright. Thank God that José Quintero

came along and directed me. Look at O'Neill's stage directions: You're supposed to laugh, cry, I don't know what—all in three seconds. You look at that and you say, that's impossible. And O'Neill is impossible, and he can look ridiculous unless everyone on stage really comes across."

8. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS.

Ah, Wilderness!, dir. Dale Kaufman. Trinity Theatre Ltd., Trinity Lutheran Church, New York City. In repertory, October 7-31, 1982.

Ah, Wilderness! GeVa Theatre, Rochester, NY, March 26 - April 17, 1983.

Desire Under the Elms, dir. Vinnette Carroll, with songs by Micki Grant. Urban Arts Theatre, New York City, April 30 - May 23, 1982.

Desire Under the Elms, dir. Gregory Hurst. Pennsylvania Stage Co., Allentown, PA, Feb. 16 - March 13, 1983.

Desire Under the Elms, dir. Tom Haas. Indianapolis Repertory Theatre (140 W. Washington St., Indianapolis, IN 46204; tel. 317-635-9415), March 18 - April 10, 1983.
To be reviewed in a future issue.

The Emperor Jones. Fusion Project, 28th St. Theater, New York City, October 4-16, 1982.

Hughie, dir. Rob Mulholland. The NYU Studio Theatre production, presented in New York last season and reviewed in these pages, was a part of this summer's Edinburgh Fringe Festival (August 24 - Sept. 4) with the same cast of Joseph Dobish and Hal Easton as Erie and the Night Clerk respectively. R.D.S. Jack, reviewing the production in *The Scotsman*, "Scotland's National Newspaper" (August 30), praised both performers and noted how, "in this sensitive production ... the poignancy of the situation is slowly revealed." (The production is now available for dates at American colleges. For information, write to Harold Easton, Box 519, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10003.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night. Pittsburgh Public Theater, PA, March 24 - May 8, 1983.

A Moon for the Misbegotten, dir. Gregory Boyd. Playmakers Repertory Company, Chapel Hill, NC, Oct. 27 - Nov. 14, 1982.

A Moon for the Misbegotten. Lyric Stage (54 Charles St., Boston, MA), Feb. 9 - March 13, 1983. To be reviewed in the Spring 1983 issue.

Strange Interlude. Long Wharf Theatre (222 Sargent Dr., New Haven, CT 06511), Feb. 17 - March 27, 1983. This "first major production of this award winning drama in over 20 years" will be reviewed in the Spring 1983 issue of the Newsletter.

A Touch of the Poet, dir. Arnold Mittelman. The Whole Theatre Company, Montclair, NJ, Oct. 12 - Nov. 7, 1982.

A Touch of the Poet, dir. Kevin Coleman. The American Stage Co., St. Petersburg, FL, Feb. 24 - March 27, 1983.

A Touch of the Poet. Yale Repertory Theatre (222 York St., New Haven, CT 06520), May 3-21, 1983. To be reviewed in the Summer-Fall 1983 issue.

9. SWEDEN BRINGS O'NEILL TO BLEEKER STREET. O'Neill's part in the current fifteen-month U.S. salute to "Scandinavia Today" will be brief but exciting. Artists of the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Sweden will present a "Strindberg-O'Neill Celebration" at the Circle in the Square, 159 Bleeker Street, at 8 p.m. on Thursday, November 11. An appropriate pairing of the two theatres that did more than any others in fostering the still-growing revival of interest in a once-near-forgotten American dramatist.

10. *HERE BEFORE YOU...EUGENE O'NEILL*, the monodrama by David Wheeler that was featured in the last issue of the Newsletter (pp. 3-15), was performed by its author at the Helen Shlien Gallery in Boston on October 2nd, and at the Jamestown Playhouse in Rhode Island on October 16th. The next performance will be at 8:30 p.m. at the Washington Project for the Arts Gallery in D.C. on Monday, November 8th.
11. O'NEILL RETURNS TO CABLE. Following last season's successful cable television production of *Hughie*, starring Jason Robards, the ABC ARTS cable network will present a production of *Long Day's Journey* this fall, with Ruby Dee and Earle Hyman heading the cast.
12. *SERVITUDE ON TAPE*. As Paul Voelker mentioned in this issue, in his report on what was probably the American premiere of *Servitude*, a videotape of the production is available for anyone interested in acquiring it. If you wish one, specify which of the following formats you need—

VHS (SP or EP) - - - - \$53.00

BETA (I, II or III)- - \$53.00

3/4" Umatic- - - - - \$85.00

and send a check for the appropriate amount (made out to IMDC) to Professor Voelker, RFD 4, Box 258, Richland Center, WI 53581. (The initials refer to the University of Wisconsin's Instructional Media Distribution Center in Madison, and the price covers dubbing, videocassettes, and postage and handling.)

13. RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON O'NEILL.

Adler, Thomas P. "The Mirror as Stage Prop in Modern Drama," *Comparative Drama*, 14 (1980), 355-373. (Includes *A Touch of the Poet*.)

Ditsky, John. "O'Neill's Evangel of Peace: *The Iceman Cometh*," in Ditsky's *The Onstage Christ: Studies in the Persistence of a Theme* (London: Vision, 1980), pp. 93-110.

Fink, Ernest O. "Audience Aids for Non-Literary Allusions? Observations on the Transposition of Essential Technicalities in the Sea Plays of Eugene O'Neill," in Ortrun Zuber, ed., *The Languages of Theatre: Problems in the Translation and Transposition of Drama* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1980), pp. 69-81. (Incidentally, Fink and Zuber are co-winners of the Newsletter editor's PACTA [pithy and catchy title award] for 1982.)

Moin-Ul-Islam. "O'Neill and the Expressionistic Techniques of Drama," *Journal of Research: Humanities* (U. of the Punjab), 14 (1979), 59-69.

Ooi, Vicki C. H. "Transcending Culture: A Cantonese Translation and Production of O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*," in Zuber [see Fink citation above], pp. 51-68.

Prasad, Hari M. "Symbols of Fog and Home in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill," *Rajasthan Journal of English Studies*, 10 (1979), 1-9.

Schvey, Henry I. "'The Past Is the Present, Isn't It?': Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*," *Dutch Quarterly Review*, 10 (1980), 84-99.

14. RECENT BOOKS WITH CHAPTERS ON O'NEILL. A. D. Choudhuri's *The Face of Illusion in American Drama* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979) contains a chapter on "*The Iceman Cometh*: Necessity of Illusion" (pp. 74-93). And John Orr's *Tragic Drama and Modern Society* (Barnes & Noble, 1981)—a sociological study which describes as "tragedy of bourgeois alienation" the modern theatre's replacement for the discarded models of Greek and Renaissance drama—cites *Long Day's Journey Into Night* as the best of the lot:

O'Neill among all modern writers has produced the most prophetic vision of human extinction on a scale made possible by nuclear war. The personal

darkness is also the darkness of the universe as a whole.... The night of O'Neill's play is the darkness of the twentieth century fully brought to light. Concentrated in the life of one family, it explodes outwards to embrace the whole of modern civilization.

Given the explosiveness and illuminated darkness, one can agree with Brian Rotman (*Times Literary Supplement*, June 11, 1982, p. 644) that "Orr's eulogy is overblown," but it merits the attention of O'Neillians. (The British publisher is Macmillan.)

15. SHEAFFER WINS GRANT FOR NEW O'NEILL BOOK. Louis Sheaffer, Pulitzer Prize biographer of O'Neill, has been awarded a grant-in-aid by the American Council of Learned Societies in connection with his next book, a survey of the major writings on the playwright. This is the third time he has been so honored, as he received two grants from the ACLS while he worked on his two-volume life of O'Neill. Our congratulations to Mr. Sheaffer. We look forward to the book.
16. CALL FOR PAPERS. James J. Martine (Dept. of English, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778) is editing a collection of O'Neill criticism to be published in G. K. Hall's Critical Essays on American Literature series. Inquiries and previously unpublished essays are welcome; essays should be sent directly to Martine.
17. ILLUSTRATED *ICEMAN*. The Limited Editions Club (551 Fifth Ave., New York 10017) has published an edition of *The Iceman Cometh* with illustrations by Leonard Baskin.
18. O'NEILL IN RUSSIAN. As Theodore Shabad reported in the August 31 *New York Times* ("American Writers Seen Through a Soviet Glass," p. C9), the Soviet Government has published the first eight volumes of a 45-volume "Library of the Literature of the United States," an anthology that will include 60 prose writers and 80 poets. One volume contains the plays of O'Neill and Tennessee Williams. One hopes that our own "Library of American Literature" will follow suit.
19. DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS IN PROGRESS.
 Kemper, Susan C. "The Pragmatic Realism of George Cram Cooke and the Provincetown Players, 1915-1922," dir. Lester E. Barber. English, Bowling Green, 1982.
 Miller, Ronald R. "Eugene O'Neill's Vision of American History: A Study of the Cycle Plays," dir. Esther M. Jackson. Theatre and Drama, U. of Wisconsin, 1983.
 Mooney, Michael J. "William Thompson Price and George Pierce Baker: Playwriting Teachers," dir. Larry D. Clark. Speech and Dramatic Art, Missouri (Columbia), 1982.
 Smith, Madeline C. "A Study of Sacramental Ritual in Eugene O'Neill's Plays," dir. Richard Eaton. English, West Virginia, 1982.
20. O'NEILL AT '82 ATA CONVENTION. One of the sessions sponsored by the Religion and Theatre Program at the 1982 Convention of the American Theatre Association last August was a discussion of "Religious Archetypes in Eugene O'Neill: Greek, Hebrew, Christian," an amplification of a paper delivered at last year's convention and reported on in this journal. This year's discussants were Norman J. Fedder (Kansas State University), Daniel Larner (Western Washington University), Shelly Regenbaum (Kansas State University) and Judith Royer (Loyola Marymount University). Lacking a report of the event (which I'd still welcome for printing hereafter), I offer the advance announcement of the session by Robert A. Nelson (*Theatre News*, Summer 1982, p. 14), who said that it "will examine O'Neill's search for form and vision in the light of his interest 'not ... in man's relationship with man, but man's relationship with God.' Panelists will explore three major influences on O'Neill: drama and mythology of the Greek golden age, the Hebrew tradition of the Old Testament, and the New Testament and Catholicism."

Another feature of the August convention was a paper by Robert K. Sarló, "Nina Moise Directs Eugene O'Neill's *The Rope*," a revised version of which will appear in a future issue of the Newsletter.

21. CHAPLIN-O'NEILL THEATER SEEKS FUNDS. (The following is excerpted from the "Briefs on the Arts" section of the *New York Times*, July 12, 1982, p. C11.) "The new Chaplin-O'Neill Theater in Los Angeles has begun a \$150,000 fund-raising drive, with Oona O'Neill Chaplin as its first donor.... José Quintero is artistic director of the Chaplin-O'Neill [and] Neal Du Bock, founder and former executive producer of the Studio Arena Theater in Buffalo, is producing director." The Chaplin-O'Neill will "use different theaters to develop projects in workshops," some of which, according to Mr. Quintero, "may work their way out to full production, even beyond Los Angeles, ... although Broadway is not part of our thinking."

A SPRING 1984 O'NEILL CONFERENCE IN BOSTON: CALL FOR PAPERS, PROPOSALS AND PARTICIPANTS!

To bring Eugene O'Neill out from under the ponderous shadow of the MLA and ATA and give him the central prominence he unquestionably deserves, Suffolk University, on Boston's Beacon Hill, will host a major international O'Neill conference in the Spring of 1984. The conference, whose general subject is EUGENE O'NEILL: THE EARLY YEARS, is planned for the period from Thursday to Sunday afternoon during the university's spring vacation (probably in late March), a time when theatre and classroom facilities will be available for panels, papers, performances and films, and local hostelries will not yet be too tourist-glutted to house the conference's visitors from around the world. ('Tis more than a bit presumptuous, I know, to announce an *international* conference until international participants announce their intention to *attend*! But I must stifle any doubts and boldly give service to what is not, I pray, a hopeless hope! Do, dear overseas readers, prove that my faith was justified!)

While all is mistily tentative at present, and nothing specific can be promised until readers of this announcement reveal their interests and suggestions, I can offer the following series of likely possibilities for what should be an exciting and informative 3½-day immersion in the life, times and works of Eugene O'Neill from 1888 to 1925.

Certainly the centerpiece of the conference will be the Saturday series of small, individual sessions—on the era, life, plays and groups of plays of America's greatest dramatist. Anyone interested in presenting a paper (20-minute limit for delivery) should inform me of that interest—including a copy or a summary of its intended contents—as soon as possible, and no later than Monday, March 28, 1983. Anyone interested in chairing or participating in a panel discussion, or in serving as recorder of such a session, should inform me, also as soon as possible, of *that* interest, suggesting a likely topic: the sea plays, autobiography on stage, O'Neill as critic of the 1920's, overlooked masterworks—whatever. (I'd be particularly pleased to hear from nearby O'Neillians willing to join me in the arduous pre-convention planning that will fill the fall and winter prior to the event.) As many of the papers as possible, and the reports of discussion-session recorders, will subsequently be published in the Newsletter—and, if funding materializes, in a book thereafter. (I need not repeat that I am eager to hear from as many of you as possible!)

Also featured—on Thursday, Friday and possibly Saturday—will be screenings of film versions and videotaped performances of O'Neill plays. (I hope we'll be able to view the tape of *Servitude*, for instance, and discuss it with its director, Paul Voelker.) With such gems to choose from as *The Long Voyage Home*, *Anna Christie* (either the Blanche Sweet or the Garbo version or both), the Robeson *Emperor Jones*, and the William Bendix-Susan Hayward *Hairy Ape* (if anyone can *find* it!), we can't lack for worthy and discussable screenings. In addition (Attention, local and distant theatre groups!), two or three stage performances will highlight the evenings—both of O'Neill plays and of David Wheeler's Provincetown monodrama, *Here Before You... Eugene O'Neill*, which Mr. Wheeler has expressed an interest in performing for us.

Nor will we be limited to classrooms and auditoria. A chartered bus will take us, on Friday morning, to New London for a tour of the Monte Cristo Cottage and a viewing of the new film about the phenomena (and noumena) in its history. Also near Beacon Hill are O'Neill's grave, in Forest Hills Cemetary (abutting the grave of e. e. cummings), and Eugene and Carlotta's home in Marblehead. And there's a slight but glowing possibility of a chartered air trip to Provincetown, where it all began.

If my advance suppositions prove sound, the following is a likely schedule:

Thursday, early afternoon: registration, a film and discussion.

Thursday, late afternoon and evening: late registration, cocktail reception,

dinner with welcoming speeches and keynote address, and stage performance #1.

Friday, early a.m.: late, late registration and bus trip to Monte Cristo Cottage in New London; returning in time for

Friday evening: stage performance #2.

Saturday, early morning through afternoon: paper presentations and panel discussions (8:30-10:00, 10:30-12:00, 2:00-4:00, and 4:30-6:00).

Saturday evening: stage performance #3 (or film).

Sunday morning: charter plane trip to Provincetown (tentative), OR additional paper and discussion sessions (depending on the number of proposals that are received), OR—at the very *least*—a bye-bye brunch!

A token advance-registration fee of \$10 (\$15 at the conference itself) will assist in the advance preparations and conference expenses; but all participants, whether on the program or not, must provide their own transportation, rooms (I will prepare a list of nearby hotels well in advance, and if I can talk them into offering reduced rates I'll hasten to let you know!) and meals—except the Thursday dinner and possible Sunday brunch, which, like all the conference events except the bus and plane trips, will be complimentary.

I should also mention that I will be preparing an extensive display of O'Neill books, programs, posters, production shots and other memorabilia to complement the activities of the conference, and I welcome any submissions for inclusion therein. Naturally, I will also prepare, and send out at the earliest possible date, a detailed program guide to the entire conference. This will permit participants to decide in advance what events they wish to attend, since, if your response is sizable, films and discussion sessions may well occur simultaneously or overlap.

Enough for the present, I think. And more than enough to fill a long spring weekend with memorable activities. I've said my piece; let not the rest be silence! I await your responses, and look forward to welcoming you to what I hope will be the first of *many* conferences devoted solely to the life and work of Eugene O'Neill.

--Frederick Wilkins

AN APOLOGETIC AFTERWORD

Spatial restrictions prevent the inclusion of a "Persons Represented" section for this issue. The editor apologizes to the scholars whose wisdom fills the foregoing pages and promises that the "Persons Represented" section in the *next* issue (Winter 1982) will include the authors in *this* issue as well.

One item *must* be included, however: the answer to the quizzical quickie on p. 36. The play in question was *The Great God Brown*, privately performed for the Stage Society in London during the 1928-29 theatre season. Miss Lansbury's mother, Moyna Macgill, shared the stage with Mary Claire and Sir John, who reported in his book, *Early Stages* (New York: Taplinger, 1976, p. 87), that he thought the use of masks "rather a pretentious and unsatisfactory convention."