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Sheila Ferrini (Josie) and Ron Ritchell (Jim) in Boston's Lyric Stage production of A Moon for the Misbegotten. Photo (c) 1983 by Ann McQueen. See review on p. 22.
EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Eugene O'Neill may have been "born in a trunk" on Broadway, but he was a poet and author of short stories before he turned with any sustained interest to the writing of plays. Even after he had rejected the two earlier genres--especially poetry, which in his hands arouses (in one mind, at least) mingled feelings of incredulity and embarrassment--he clung tenaciously to the prerogatives of prose fiction--the examination of major philosophical issues and the use of a central, guiding narrative voice. His plays abound in "big ideas," and he grew increasingly novelistic in fleshing out, with detailed italicized comments, the published texts of his plays. Indeed, he frequently provided, as early as the last words of The Hairy Ape (with their hint of ultimate beautitude for the play's protagonist), many moments that would defy even the most expressive of actors in any medium.

But he wrote, above all, for the stage--and, though with understandably increasing reluctance, for what his father called "the flickers." However great the influence of Freud, Jung, Nietzsche, Strindberg & Co. on the themes and ideas he plumbed in his writing, the plays are first and foremost plays--shows. And they must ultimately be tested--be given the chance to succeed or fail--in the realm for which they were intended, that of performance. Many essays in previous issues have anatomized the ideas and influences discernible in O'Neill's mind and art; but if a play doesn't "work" as a dramatic vehicle, if it doesn't entertain and arouse its audience's emotions as well as their intellects, no amount of philosophical underpinning can save it.

And so it is particularly gratifying to offer an issue that, while its two main articles remain as scholarly as their predecessors, concentrates on film and stage treatments of O'Neill's plays: two essays on movie adaptations (both written for the special session on "O'Neill and Film" directed by Eugene Hanson at last December's MLA convention in Los Angeles), and five reviews of recent productions of four major plays. (Professor Ben-Zvi's essay is particularly interesting in its coverage of unproduced film versions that have never before been discussed--coverage that is a Newsletter "first" because the author was prevented by a snowstorm from getting to MLA to present it!)

Special thanks to Michael Hinden for persuading Alvin Gordon to share with the Newsletter's readers the memories of his long-ago meeting with O'Neill at Tao House. His vignette is touching and vivid--especially in its evocation of O'Neill's exceptional eyes--and I hope that others who met or knew the playwright will follow Mr. Gordon's illuminating lead.

COMING ATTRACTIONS!

The next issue of the Newsletter will include--

Peter Egri's "Beneath The Calms of Capricorn"  
(the play's European sources)

Brenda Murphy's "O'Neill's Realism: A Structural Approach"  
(realistic form in The Iceman Cometh)

"Lawson & Cole Revisited"  
(the celebrated 1954 debate in Masses and Mainstream)

"On the Shelf (Part Three)"  
(reviews of new books including Normand Berlin's Eugene O'Neill and John Orlandello's O'Neill on Film)

and abstracts of recent articles published elsewhere.
EUGENE O'NEILL AND FILM

Eugene O'Neill's association with film has a long history. It probably goes back as far as 1912—the epochal year in O'Neill's life—when his father made a silent film of his perennial play The Count of Monte Cristo for the Famous Players Film Company. The intention of the two young film producers, Adolph Zukor and Daniel Frohman, was to make a five-reel adaptation of the Dumas classic; and they had great hopes that their work would be a critical and financial success. Unfortunately, this first foray into what the senior O'Neill called "the flickers" was marked with disagreement and disappointment—two things that would plague O'Neill's own experiences with the medium. Prior to the release of the film, another version of the same work was distributed, taking some of the attention away from O'Neill's rendition. The younger O'Neill must have been aware of these events because during 1912 he was living with his family in New London, having returned with them from a nationwide tour with Monte Cristo.

However unpleasant the experience with the silent film might have been for his father, it apparently did not dampen O'Neill's own interest in the form—at least in the monetary rewards it seemed to offer. A familiar advertisement appearing in New London newspapers in 1912 promised that "We are selling photoplays written by people who never before wrote a line for publication." Although O'Neill, in a letter, called such writing "prostitution of the Art of Playwriting by Photo-play composition," between 1912 and 1914 he made several unsuccessful attempts to sell scripts.

After 1914 O'Neill's interests and energies were directed elsewhere. From 1916, when Bound East for Cardiff was presented on the Wharf Theatre in Provincetown, to 1920, when Beyond the Horizon and The Emperor Jones brought him his first Pulitzer Prize and critical attention as the leading voice in American theatre, the Provincetown Players mounted eleven O'Neill plays. His emergence as a dramatist made him a likely source of scripts for the budding film industry, eager to capitalize on O'Neill's growing reputation. Although tentatively at first, Hollywood began to court a still receptive O'Neill.

If anything, O'Neill's enthusiasm for the film medium had grown since his early attempts at screen writing. In 1921 he saw Wiene's expressionistic film The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. "Wonderful possibilities I had never dreamed of before," he announced after the viewing. He was equally enthusiastic when, eight years later in Paris, he saw and heard his first "talkie," Broadway Melody. In a letter to George Jean Nathan, he wrote that the new form "could set me free in so many ways." Yet O'Neill struck a sombre note when he added, "Not that the 'Talky' folks are ever liable to let me realize any of my dreams."

These words were written in 1929, after O'Neill had already fought skirmishes over what some critics considered shocking material in The Great God Brown, Desire Under the Elms, and Strange Interlude. However, his interest in seeing his works reach the screen is indicated by his own attempts to alter what might be considered offensive sections of his plays in order to create acceptable adaptations. Two years earlier he had written screen treatments of The Hairy Ape and Desire Under the Elms, clearly attempting in both to delete any material that could be objectionable to a film audience. In the

2 Sheaffer, p. 311.
3 Sheaffer, p. 312.
latter, for instance, he altered the original to make Abbie Putnam not the stepmother but the housekeeper in the Cabot home, removing both the seduction of Eben and the birth and subsequent murder of the child of this coupling. However, neither of the vitiated scripts was bought by filmmakers.6

He had already sold one play, Anna Christie, to Hollywood and had found the silent 1923 film, produced by Thomas H. Ince and starring Blanche Sweet, a "delightful surprise...remarkably well acted and directed, and in spirit an absolutely faithful transcript."7 In all, twelve films would be made of ten O'Neill plays—Anna Christie and Ah, Wilderness! receiving two treatments each—yet O'Neill would not find such satisfaction again in film versions of his works.8 By 1943, when he finally sold The Hairy Ape for the screen—without his own adaptation—he complained, "I didn't want to sell because I knew no one in Hollywood had the guts to film my play, do it as symbolic expressionist as it should be done, and not censor it into imbecility, or make it a common realistic stoker story."9 In the same letter he said, "I've never liked having distorted pictures made of my plays."10

For the most part, the history of O'Neill on film has been just that: a history of distortion, with Hollywood focusing on the conventional, mundane elements in the stories, deleting much of the visual and verbal power in the name of expediency and clarity, and either censoring or laundering the most symbolic and expressionistic elements so that they would fit into a realistic mode.

Two examples of the tendency to rework O'Neill plays are found in the Eugene O'Neill papers at the Barrett Library of the University of Virginia: the film treatments of O'Neill's dramatic monologues Before Breakfast and The Emperor Jones, both adapted by film director Dudley Murphy.11 They indicate the liberties taken with the original plays and, in the case of The Emperor Jones, the effects such alterations had on the resulting film.

In April 1929, Murphy, then a director with such credits as Confessions of a Co-ed and The Sport Parade, wrote the following interdepartmental memo to the heads of RCA Photophone:

8 The following O'Neill plays were made into films, the dates indicating the year of film release: Anna Christie (1923) Anna Christie (March 1930), Strange Interlude (September 1932), The Emperor Jones (November 1933), Ah, Wilderness! (December 1935), The Long Voyage Home (a combination of Bound East for Cardiff, The Moon of the Caribbees, In the Zone, and The Long Voyage Home) (October 1940), Mourning Becomes Electra (November 1947), Summer Holiday, a musical version of Ah, Wilderness! (June 1948), Desire Under the Elms (March 1958), Long Day's Journey Into Night (October 1962), and The Iceman Cometh (October 1973).
11 To my knowledge no critic, including Sheaffer, has mentioned these documents.
In selecting Eugene O'Neill's "Before Breakfast" as material for a sound picture, I was intrigued by the possibilities for showing off-stage noises to note the action which is taking place.

I think it offers a very interesting chance to show the magnificent qualities of our device, and in making the picture I want to lay particular stress on the perfection of these offstage sounds. Properly done they will convey what is taking place outside the range of the camera. This coupled with the exploitive possibilities of Eugene O'Neill's name ... will make this a worthy experiment. It will be novel and powerful, possibly more of a prestige picture than a definite box-office undertaking.

In 1928 Strange Interlude had opened on Broadway and become a hit, eventually running sixteen months. It brought O'Neill's name to the attention of the general public more than his earlier successes had, and made him a potential financial draw for the fledgling talking pictures. The degree of fame—or perhaps notoriety—was indicated in 1929 when Groucho Marx, in Animal Crackers, referred to having "a strange interlude," assuming that his audience would understand the implied reference to O'Neill. This reputation explains Murphy's desire to produce a film with the O'Neill name—even if spelled incorrectly. As his letter indicates, however, he was less interested in the words of the now-famous author than in the peripheral noises that would test the new aural powers of talking pictures. Such an attitude underlines his film treatment of Before Breakfast—one that totally inverts O'Neill's characters, relationships, and intentions in the play. In the two scenes Murphy adds, he succeeds in writing a script diametrically opposed to the tone of the original.

Before Breakfast is not O'Neill at his best. It is an early work that was first performed by the Provincetown Players on their third bill of the 1916-17 season. It starred Mary Pyne as the shrewish wife and—in what has become one of its most notable features—Eugene O'Neill as the husband. All that is seen of the suffering man is his shaking hand that appears momentarily through a crack in the door. Since the husband says nothing in this two character drama, the work is classified as a dramatic monologue, spoken by the wife, who is alone on stage waiting for her husband to emerge from the bedroom before breakfast. O'Neill, in the stage directions, describes her as "slovenly" and "characterless" with a "weak and spiteful mouth." She sets up a vitriolic plaint about their financial troubles brought on, she says, by her husband's preoccupation with poetry. O'Neill makes her self-serving and whining, as she berates her husband for his work and goads him about his mistress, who is about to have a child. "And you can't get a divorce from me and you know it," she gloats as she creates a grotesque picture of their past marital life. There is no attempt on O'Neill's part to be evenhanded; his sympathies are totally with the disembodied male. Even the description of his hand is positive: "It is a sensitive hand with slender fingers." There is also no attempt at dramatic motivation or development, no depth to the depictions. The play is a tour de force, with the droning voice of the woman literally driving her husband to suicide.

In Murphy's adaptation, the play is skewed not toward the husband as O'Neill intended but toward the wife. Rather than a harridan, she is a pathetic, suffering creature, unable to understand her husband's poetry and outside his group of "Village types."

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12 For a discussion of Before Breakfast, see Sheaffer, O'Neill: Son and Playwright, pp. 351-352.
14 O'Neill, p. 11.
15 O'Neill, p. 7.
In his emphasis on the bohemian setting, Murphy is trading on more than the O'Neill name; he is also pandering to public curiosity about life in Greenwich Village and the supposed eccentricities of O'Neill, the Provincetown Players, and others who were the subjects of articles in popular journals of the time.

Murphy adds two scenes at the beginning of the film to establish the sympathetic portrayal of the wife and the Village lifestyle that thwarts her. In O'Neill's play the action, as the title indicates, takes place "before breakfast." In the proposed screen treatment, it starts in the late afternoon of the preceding day. The scene is the same in both works: a cheap Greenwich Village flat. However, as he indicated in his letter, Murphy alters the atmosphere by including various sounds not present in the original. First, he introduces a sentimental song, playing on a cheap phonograph, which is to run throughout the picture. In counterpoint, in the first scene, he offers the monotonous hum of a sewing machine, upon which the wife is working when the action begins. The husband is first seen, seated at the cluttered kitchen table, writing "possibly a poem of E. E. Cummings from 'Is 5,'" Murphy suggests. Distracted by the noise, he is unable to concentrate and lashes out at his wife as he leaves the apartment. Instead of showing her insensitivity—as O'Neill clearly intended—Murphy portrays her as a victim, a sad figure who "stands helplessly with a little pathetic gesture of her hands" as he leaves the room.

The mood is intensified in the second added scene, set in a familiar Greenwich Village club, Romany Marie's. The scene relies on conventional, familiar, stock images of bohemian life. Murphy has a "greasy, long-haired guitar player," a table with "a candle which has been burning for years," the husband reading his poetry to "the sympathetic ears of two Village types," and all—but the poor wife—engaged in "aesthetic conversation." When the guitarist stops playing, the wife delivers the following line, a paraphrase of which will be immortalized by another woman in another bar several years later: "Put a record on, Otto." As she lures her unwilling husband to the dance floor, "we can see her almost radiant happiness and contentment as she has him in her arms."

The two scenes provide a prologue to O'Neill's play. Murphy states that from this point on the film will follow the original script. To explain the discrepancy between the words the wife will subsequently speak and the characters that have been established in the added scenes, he indicates that she is to say her lines almost against her will, as if they are being wrenched from her. It is probably fortunate that the project was never completed. It is hard to imagine how the play as O'Neill wrote it, and the film as Murphy conceived it, could have been synchronized. Wrenching can go only so far.

One can guess why Murphy felt constrained to shift the sympathies from the husband to the wife. In 1929, the film audience and the critics would hardly have sided with a profligate husband and a pregnant mistress against a young wife, herself ensnared in a similar manner by a "Village type"—a son of a millionaire to boot—who did nothing but write poetry, especially the poetry of E. E. Cummings. The changes are examples of the filmmaker's need to alter questionable material, even to the point of resulting incongruity with the original, in order to make the final film conform to general societal standards. This is exactly the "imbecility" O'Neill decried.

Even as O'Neill wrote it, Before Breakfast is a weak play, a preliminary exercise for the great dramatic monologue he was to write in 1920, The Emperor Jones. While

16Although Murphy ends his film treatment with the statement that rehearsals have already begun, with the actress Zita Johann playing the wife, there is no record that the film was ever made.

17For a discussion of Before Breakfast as a dramatic monologue, an experiment leading to the writing of The Emperor Jones, see Travis Bogard, Contour in Time (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1972), p. 137.
Hollywood did not indicate interest in Jones when it was first mounted by the Province-town in 1933, in the flush of O'Neill's growing reputation after Strange Interlude and Mourning Becomes Electra, John Krimsky and Gifford Cochran bought it for the screen. It starred Paul Robeson in the role of Brutus Jones, featured Dudley Digges as Smithers, and was adapted by DuBose Heyward and directed by Dudley Murphy.

In the Virginia archives, along with the Before Breakfast scenario, there is an undated script of The Emperor Jones which says on the title page, "Treatment by Dudley Murphy, registered." It is not clear if this version of the film preceded the Heyward adaptation or if it could be an early Heyward working script, perhaps the one O'Neill first saw and approved when Heyward visited him in Sea Island, Georgia, prior to the filming of the work. In either case, the Murphy-credited work is appreciably different both from O'Neill's original play and from the film version that eventually reached the screen. It, like the film, reduces the "symbolic expressionism"—as O'Neill called the technique in reference to The Hairy Ape—to a flat, realistic rendering of the material, the fate O'Neill anticipated for his "stoker tale."

Murphy's treatment is shorter, less detailed, and less divergent than the later script, perhaps indicating the process that this film—and other O'Neill films—may have followed: from small shifts to more detailed alterations, moving further away from the original with each revision. Whereas in the completed picture Brutus Jones is given a very detailed biography, complete with family, friends, lovers, and sufficient motivation for each action, Murphy concentrates on universalizing the hero, making him not a specific individual but part of a general cultural ferment. Before the action begins, the camera is placed "low on a railroad track" running across a flat plain "such as exists between South Bend and Elkhart." From this vantage point, it captures the rapidly approaching image of the great train—the Twentieth Century Ltd.—roaring into focus. With a crescendo of sound, it roars over the camera, and there is an immediate lap dissolve to the interior of the train car where we find Brutus Jones, porter, who "with imperial bearing" listens attentively as he is schooled in the ways of modern success: double dealing corruption, and questionable activities. He is a good student of able teachers. By focusing initially on the milieu of deceit that spawned Jones, Murphy presents his hero as product of an era, the twentieth century, rather than as an example of a unique aberration of power. From this opening, Murphy moves the script to the interior of the Baptist church in Harlem, where Jones leads the singing with such power that he is given a contract to sing at Small's Paradise, the setting of Scene 3. It is in the back room of the famous Harlem nightclub that Jones gambles and engages in a fight that leaves a man dead. The following scene shows him, condemned to life imprisonment, working on a chain gang, the rhythmic bass of the nightclub drum replaced by the hammers that "beat a monotonous tempo on stone and steel." Jones refuses to follow orders and is about to attack a guard when there is another lap dissolve. Murphy indicates that the rest of the film will exactly follow O'Neill's original play.

This version is shorter than the one credited to Heyward, whose script provides a detailed—far too detailed—scenario of Jones's life after his escape from prison, leaving no possible lapses in the narrative unexplained: how Jones gets his leg chains removed, how he travels to the island sanctuary, how he meets Smithers, rises to power, ....

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19 Sheaffer reports that while O'Neill seemed pleased with the original film script that was shown to him by Heyward, he was dissatisfied with the final screen version. "However I wail not ... I got my money," O'Neill commented (S&A, p. 414).
cajoles the natives, eventually becomes installed as their king, and sows the seeds of his fall in his brutal handling of his subjects and in his self-created mythology of his invulnerability. John Orlandello, in his discussion of the film in O'Neill On Film, estimates that of the 72 minutes of playing time in the film, 45 minutes are given over to material O'Neill never wrote.\textsuperscript{20}

The film begins with the sound of drums and the view of a native dance over the credits. Jones's primitive, superstitious nature and the locale of his kingdom are thus established. When he is first seen, juxtaposed to the congregants in the Baptist church, he is shown with a woman, a sign for the sexual motif that develops in the first part of the film. Heyward provides three women as love objects, two of whom engage in a fight over the attentions of Jones. Heyward also personalizes Jones's relation to Jeff, the man he kills in the gambling scene, the murder becoming less an impersonal act of anger than a personal vindication of a jealous squabble. Another change that Heyward makes in the script is in the prison scene, where Jones is given a motivation for attacking the guard: he has been asked to hit another prisoner and chooses, instead, to hit the guard. Heyward may have been conscious of the need in the 1930s to offer something other than simple oppression as motivation for a black to vent his anger on a white and the institution he represents.\textsuperscript{21}

Although the unfilmed Murphy version takes fewer liberties with the original since it stops short of filling in all the holes in the realistic structure, it does share the final version's adherence to explanation, particularly to visual rendering of the expository suggestions made by Jones in the first scene of the play. By doing so, both screen treatments undercut O'Neill's work by loading it with concrete images, thus making the central visions of the forest flight mere flashbacks. Having actually shown the scenes Jones only alludes to in the play version, the film condemns the mental images—the heart of O'Neill's drama—to irrelevancies. In his notes to the script, Murphy speaks about the revolutionary new way he will show the visions of Jones's mind. Yet in the final version of the film, they are the weakest part of the work.\textsuperscript{22} Coming as they do so late in a film which has been uncompromisingly realistic in its detailed treatment of events, they seem almost ludicrous, bearing none of the terror and symbolism intended by the original. Robeson's fine acting would have made his mental disintegration believable if the director and script writer had chosen to let the play, as O'Neill intended, focus on the inner skullscape of the hero, instead of on the societal forces and personal biographical details that brought him to his dark night of the soul.

Just as O'Neill predicted when he commented on the similar fate that awaited his expressionistic The Hairy Ape, the experimental core was sacrificed in the name of cinematic realism. And as O'Neill also understood, such a dilution of his work bore a central irony. It was through the medium of film that he believed his greatest possibilities might be realized, since it provided a vehicle that could technically free him from the confines of the stage. Even with the almost magical qualities achieved by the addition of the dome to the miniscule stage of the Provincetown Playhouse, where The Emperor Jones was first mounted, the stage was hampered in depicting the nuances of Jones's states of consciousness, something O'Neill wished emphasized in production. In fact, the very stage directions of The Emperor Jones seem to have been written with the screen in mind. Edward Murray, in his book The Cinematic Imagination, points to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20}Orlandello, p. 53.
\item \textsuperscript{21}For a discussion of the black reaction to the film, see Peter Noble, The Negro in Films (New York: Arno Press, 1970) and Jim Pines, Blacks in Films (London: Studio Vista, 1975). Noble says of The Emperor Jones, "To have a black man playing the star part in a film in which the white actors were of lesser importance was indeed something of filmic history. Indeed it was enough of a social revolution to make the film a financial failure" (p. 57).
\item \textsuperscript{22}Orlandello quotes several critical reactions to the film, most mentioning the weakness of the last part, particularly the handling of the visions (p. 59).
\end{itemize}
such filmic techniques as quick dissolves, close ups and panning shots of terrain to indicate the cinematic eye of the playwright in the composition of the work.\textsuperscript{23} Often O'Neill mentions details—"eyes have an obsessed glare"—that a theatre audience would not be able to see.

With such built-in cinematic elements in the original, one would think that the transition from stage to film would be simple and swift. Ironically, Murray concludes that the very cinematic nature of \textit{The Emperor Jones} precludes a successful transposition between media: "the play as a whole proved too theatrically stylized for successful picturization."\textsuperscript{24} He uses as proof the difficulties in the film version, particularly in the imbalance between the long realistic opening and the short expressionistic handling of the original play, tacked on at the end of the film. Rather than citing the distortions in form that occurred in the screen treatment of the original, Murray faults O'Neill for writing a play too "stylized" to allow for adaptation to film.

The O'Neill plays that can be best rewritten as film scripts, says Murray, are those that are solely of one mode, preferably realistic. He cites the example of \textit{Long Day's Journey Into Night}, which he calls the most successful film of an O'Neill play. Since it is totally realistic—or at least so Murray assumes—it poses none of the problems \textit{Jones} offered. A "mixed form," such as \textit{The Iceman Cometh} would not make a good film, he says, precisely because of the need to blend realism with what he calls "philosophical abstractions." Murray wrote his book in 1973 and therefore did not have the opportunity of seeing the film version of \textit{Iceman}, a version equally as successful as \textit{Long Day's Journey Into Night}. The strength of that film does not lie in its adherence to realism over what Murray sees as allegory, but rather in its ability to capture the duality of the two spheres, as O'Neill intended.\textsuperscript{25}

It is in a balance of styles that the tensions and power of an O'Neill play reside. José Quintero, the theatrical director who has often staged O'Neill's works on the American stage, recognized the centrality of the dual mood that must be captured in the direction of an O'Neill work:

Every time I have done any of his plays I have had a sense of existing in two entirely separate kinds of realities: the commonplace, photographic reality and the interior reality of fantasy. I think the struggle of these two realities—where the impossible can happen among the commonplace, where the figures become regal, monumental, and totally equipped for tragedy—gives that unbelievable tension to his works.\textsuperscript{26}

Unfortunately, film versions of O'Neill's plays have usually not sought the middle ground between reality and—to use Quintero's word—"fantasy." They have preferred the familiarity of the recognizable and the clearly explicable, thus undercutting the power in the original drama. When directors have dared to allow the tension to remain, successful pictures have been produced—as in the case of \textit{Long Day's Journey Into Night} and \textit{The Iceman Cometh}. When neutralized, the works have been a confusing hodgepodge of ideas and tones, as in the case of the film version of \textit{The Emperor Jones}—and of \textit{Strange Interlude}, made in 1932.

In all fairness to film directors, it must be mentioned that the nebulous balance of tones is not always something that one can will to happen; even with the best of intentions toward the original play, a director may find the balancing difficult. In the case of the film version of \textit{Mourning Becomes Electra}, the direction and script were

\textsuperscript{23}Murray, pp. 17-18.
\textsuperscript{24}Murray, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{25}For a discussion of both film versions, see Orlandello, pp. 131-161.
\textsuperscript{26}Quoted by Orlandello, p. 49.
done by O'Neill's close friend, Dudley Nichols, who consulted with the playwright on
the many revisions required to bring the six hour play to the screen in a three hour
film. The results were mixed; the film does attempt to retain the brooding formal
structure associated with its Greek motifs while placing the action in the realistic
cornerstones of Confederate America. Yet the assembled actors with varied backgrounds—Katina Paxinou, of the Greek theatre; Rosalind Russell, an American film star; and
Michael Redgrave, an English stage figure—presented no consistent tone. Rather than
pitching their performance to admit a balance between realism and an underlying
formalism, each actor seems to be working in a different register. This disharmony,
coupled with the abrupt shifts from the highly symbolic Mannon house to the realistic
shots of the Boston wharf and environs, creates confusing effects and disjunctions,
not the positive, tension-provoking ambiguity Quintero mentions, one that could create
a "regal, monumental" quality.

When a film version of an O'Neill play goes awry, there is the tendency to do what
Murray does, find fault in the elements of the original rather than in the nature of
the depiction. An example of this failure to deal with the Hollywood product is seen
in the reaction of Ray Bradbury to the screen version of Mourning Becomes Electra.
He reports that when he was about to try his hand at a film script of Melville's Moby
Dick he thought about the O'Neill film:

I had learned a good lesson which I remembered, because about two or
three years earlier O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra had been made
into a film at RKO.... Very interesting cast. A lot of different
qualities. But it didn't work because they put the whole goddam thing
on the screen. And O'Neill never works when you do all of him on the
screen because it's too close to you; it's too intimate. You back off
just like someone breathing in your face who’s had too much onions or
garlic the night before. They say, Boy is that real! That's too real.

In a curious way Bradbury is right. What often comes to the screen in treatments of
O'Neill's plays is too much reality. However, it is not the reality that O'Neill
presented in his original works, but some watered down, patented variety, drained of
its power and "fantasy," palatable for the mass audience. And if, as Bradbury suggests,
it reeks, the smell may be one of violation, not of garlic.

—Linda Ben-Zvi

FROM STAGE TO SCREEN: THE LONG VOYAGE HOME AND LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO
NIGHT

John Ford's The Long Voyage Home (1940), adapted from four of O'Neill's one-act sea
plays (The Moon of the Caribbees, Bound East for Cardiff, In the Zone and The Long
Voyage Home), and Sidney Lumet's Long Day's Journey Into Night (1962) effectively
transfer O'Neill's stage dramas to the screen. Both are reasonably successful films,
but they are interestingly different in their methods of adaptation. While Ford "opens
up" and expands the stage plays in ways typical for film, Lumet maintains a sense of
the closed structure of the theatre and the stage. The difference is analogous to the
contrast that Susan Sontag draws, in her essay "Film and Theatre," between the two
genres: "theatre is confined to a logical or continuous use of space. Cinema

27 For a discussion of Mourning Becomes Electra as a film, see Orlandello, pp. 103-115.

28 Quoted in The Classic American Novel and the Movies, ed. Gerald Peary and Roger
(through editing, that is, through the change of shot—which is the basic unit of film construction) has access to an alogical or discontinuous use of space."\(^1\)

Naturally, neither the theatrical nor the cinematic method of adaptation assures a successful film. It is what the filmmaker does with the space, in terms of visual and aural images, that determines effectiveness. Consequently, and rightly, there has never been unanimity among film theorists about the best way to transfer a work from stage to screen. In his essay "Theater and Cinema," Andre Bazin states simply that "a good adaptation should result in a restoration of the essence and spirit" of the original play.\(^2\) And in terms of that criterion, both Ford and Lumet, despite the differences in their methods, achieve success.

In The Long Voyage Home, Ford and screenwriter Dudley Nichols combine O'Neill's four one-acts into a coherent, unified drama that emphasizes the men of the Glencairn, especially Driscoll and Smitty. The time period is clearly updated to World War II (1940), and plot changes cause Smitty to have more of a past and to die a hero's death, Ole to return to his farm in Sweden, and Driscoll to be shanghaied onto the Amindra. Ford's personal views are evident in the less-than-subtle war-effort propaganda of the Captain's speech while the munitions are being loaded, and the superimposition of the Union Jack on Smitty's death after he saves the Glencairn in the German air raid (with strains of "Rule, Britannia" on the sound-track).

Ford's Irish sentiments also permeate The Long Voyage Home. The son of Irish immigrant parents, Ford maintained throughout his life a paradoxical fascination with Ireland, the lush, fertile isle, full of promise, despite the fact that Ireland was the famine-stricken place from which his family escaped. This almost mystical reverence for Ireland comes through in Driscoll's reverie when the ship nears England as he, Axel, and Ole lie on deck. Driscoll, in a meditative mood, says, "Ole ... you not smell the land? ... the sweet smell of Ireland ... the fields, the forests, the green hills." Axel answers, "No, that be England that way." Driscoll responds angrily, "Did I ask you!" While the scene reveals Ford's own affection for "the sweet smell of Ireland," he balances this sentimentality with a self-mocking good humor about the Irish, as in the men's drunken rendition of "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" in the bar scene near the end of the film.

Ultimately, Ford uses all elements of The Long Voyage Home to convey, in Bazin's terms, the essence and spirit of the original plays. The film hits on target O'Neill's familiar themes of alienation, unfulfilled ideals, spiritual desolation, man's quest for forgiveness and his endurance in a world that is largely beyond his control. In fact, O'Neill praised the film as "an exceptional picture, with no obvious Hollywood hokum or sentimental love bilge in it."\(^3\) He also called it "the best picture ever made from my stuff," and noted that "it was the talkless part ... that impressed me the most."\(^4\)

The visual language of The Long Voyage Home reflects Ford's years of achievement, reaching back to his experience with silent films. With cinematographer Gregg Toland (Wuthering Heights, The Grapes of Wrath, Citizen Kane), Ford builds a series of scenes that depict the mood of the men of the Glencairn. This is evident in the opening sequence, during which Ford introduces the characters without the use of dialogue. The Glencairn is at anchor in the West Indies and the men yearn for the women and rum on land. Shots of the men idling on deck, looking toward the half-moonlit island, alternate


\(^4\) Sheaffer, p. 546.
with shots of the women on shore. All we hear is the persistent native music until Cocky, eavesdropping at the Captain's door, hears a radio broadcast about the war. Ford thus culminates a series of sensuous images with a harsher reality, war. As the sequence continues we see Driscoll steal back to the ship, having arranged for the women to bring rum in their baskets. Ford singles him out as a leader, showing us his importance, just as he does with Smitty, who signs on. The dialogue begins here and Ford pulls out for a long shot of Smitty, perhaps suggesting something of his uniqueness. The total effect of these opening images (visuals and sound) recalls O'Neill's stage direction at the end of The Moon of the Caribbees: "There is silence for a second or so, broken only by the haunted, saddened voice of that brooding music, faint and far-off, like the mood of the moonlight made audible."  

Indeed, this emphasis on mood runs throughout the film. Cinematographer Gregg Toland explained in an interview that "Long Voyage Home was a mood picture. Storywise ... it was a series of compositions of the mood of the men aboard the ship. It was a story of what men felt rather than what they did." 6 Indeed, the film can be stopped at almost any frame and studied for the careful composition of its scenes. Andrew Sarris considers it "suitably moody, shadowy and romantically fatalistic for the occasion." 7 The "occasion" he refers to is partly revealed by Ford's dedication of the film to sailing men. At the beginning of The Long Voyage Home we read on the screen: "Men who live on the sea never change—for they live in a lonely world apart, as they drift from one rusty tramp steamer to the next, forging the life-lines of Nations." As sentimental as this may seem when we read it on the screen, the point of view strikes close to that of O'Neill. Consistently throughout the film, we see the men as noble and dignified human beings. All the major transitions are cuts to the ship, sometimes accompanied by the Harbor Lights music, and gradually we realize the irony of the film's title: life for these men (and possibly for all men) is the long voyage in search of home; so long that personal quests, for the most part, are left unfulfilled.

Ford also uses visual images to reveal his characters. His treatment of Smitty's attempt to jump ship is a good example. In the escape sequence we come to realize that Smitty is a tormented man, even though the reasons are not revealed until later. As the ship prepares to sail with its cargo of munitions, we see the shore patrol pass and shine a light onto each man's face. Then, from a long, low shot we see Smitty jump to the pier with his mysterious black box. The camera sits low on the dock to catch the starkness of his running into a blinding white light—the silhouette of a frightened man. Smitty drops the box, the patrol chases him, and Ford cuts to an overhead shot to show Smitty being pursued into the shadowy maze of cargo piled on the dock. It is the image of a desperate man being hunted, trapped and caught. Smitty is returned to the Glencairn and the ship moves out to sea. Through the use of light and dark, shadows, careful composition, camera angles and editing, Ford has developed Smitty's character and has captured the mood of O'Neill's drama.

Driscoll, like Smitty, is a focal character in The Long Voyage Home. At Yank's death, for example, he serves as companion, confidant, and father confessor. Ford shoots this scene in close-ups to give us a sense of the men's helplessness in saving Yank or themselves. At Yank's burial Ford shows the men massed on deck, dark figures against the sky and sea, as the ship pitches and the noise of wind and water drowns out the Captain's prayer. The camera holds steady as we see that the natural violence of the sea, like the man-made violence of war, cannot be controlled. The sequence ends with a low-shot of Driscoll alone on deck, mute against the forces that he does not fully comprehend. Driscoll's importance to the men throughout the film makes his later-

6 The Screen Writer (December, 1947), p. 29.
revealed death all the more tragic. Ford's "Irish blarney" and barroom comedy serve to heighten this effect since these scenes immediately precede the somber conclusion of the film.

At the end of *The Long Voyage Home*, the men rescue Ole from the *Amindra* and hustle him off. Driscoll pauses on the gangplank for one more chorus of "Blow the Man Down." A low shot suggests his moment of triumph; but with the speed and accuracy of the thrown wrench that knocks him out on the *Amindra*'s deck, Ford reminds us of O'Neill's perspective. The film becomes serious again. We cut to the final sequence—the men returning to the *Glencairn*. Ford photographs the harshly-lit dock with a steady long-shot, giving us an image of desolation. OLD papers blow around the pier, and few words are spoken. Axel tells the Donkey Man that Ole has gone home and Driscoll "sailed on that damned ship *Amindra*." Ford underscores the irony of Axel's words by tracking the Donkey Man's newspaper as it drops to the water. As the paper sinks, we read the headline, "*Amindra* Torpedoed." The *Glencairn* will sail on with those who remain. The impact of this final scene is tempered by neither humor nor sentimentality. Ford's images are clearly those of Eugene O'Neill.

Sidney Lumet's award-winning film of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* conveys the essence and spirit of O'Neill's stage drama in ways different from those used by Ford. Carlotta Monterey O'Neill entrusted Lumet and producer Ely Landau with the rights to the play because of their distinguished work in television drama. Lumet rehearsed his cast for three weeks before filming the play, in sequence, so he could capitalize on the actors' natural emotional peaks. Despite the damning reviews of some critics, who dismissed the film as "merely a photographed stage play," Lumet transformed *Long Day's Journey Into Night* into a film that emphasizes O'Neill's intense characters and strong text. In an interview, Lumet pointed out that "the advantage of the film medium over the stage is not limited to presenting 'wide, open spaces,' but in bringing the audience into the film and its action, so as to experience each nuance of gesture, facial expression and motion, all of which are lost to the majority of the theatre audience." 8

Lumet's treatment of Mary Tyrone, as acted by Katharine Hepburn, is illustrative. Hepburn portrays Mary Tyrone as a tortured woman, slowly losing control of her life, who disintegrates in painful detail before us. Mary's morphine-induced world is conveyed as much by the camera's attention to Hepburn's flashing eyes, tragic smile, and expressive hands, as by O'Neill's dialogue. At one point in the film, the camera stands immobile and close-up as Mary, caught in the delirium of the drug, slides out of a chair and onto the floor. Due to the closeness of the camera, we feel embarrassed, as though we are intruding into a very private part of this woman's psyche. As the scene continues, Lumet cuts to a high shot of Mary attempting to pray. The back light creates a faint halo-effect. Mary cannot remember the "Hail Mary" prayer and we see that she is indeed a lost soul. Lumet's treatment of this scene is characteristic of his sensitive insight into the autobiographical confrontation with his dead, his family, that O'Neill described in the dedication of the play.

In like manner Lumet shows the subtleties of James Tyrone, modeled on O'Neill's father, whom Ralph Richardson plays with an Irish tenacity that is at once self-centered and sympathetic. The combination of long shots and close ups reveals the conflicts in James's character, allowing us to see Tyrone fume and posture in a kind of "shabby elegance" appropriate for the famous actor-turned-hack, as well as the genuine tenderness and concern that are clear from Richardson's facial gestures. Like O'Neill, we cannot condemn him outright.

Lumet's film also points up the contrasts between Jamie and Edmund. Jason Robards, Jr., plays the worldly-wise, boozing elder son with authority; and Dean Stockwell's sensitive looks and slight appearance seem to fit the role of the aspiring, consumptive

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8 Center for Film Study Release, 1962.
poet. Stockwell reinforces O'Neill's romantic conception of his younger self. Throughout the film Lumet surrounds him with an aura of softness or mistiness, especially when Edmund is striving to understand and love his family. This also mirrors O'Neill's less precise character development of Edmund. We see this when, as Jamie warns Edmund of his intentions to corrupt him, the camera pulls back so that we can study a kind of sympathy in Stockwell's expression that reveals his attempt to accept his brother.

Throughout Long Day's Journey, Lumet uses camera angles and camera movement to reinforce the dramatic action. In general, during scenes of harmony the shots are relatively level, while they become more angular as tension rises between family members. During conflicts the camera alternates between positions close to the floor and high above the characters, suggesting the precarious quality of the recriminations and revelations being made. At other times, the camera tracks the characters to keep our attention focused on a particular point of view. For example, early in the film when Edmund follows Mary into the house and makes a reference to her addiction, the camera shots become more angular as Mary defends herself. Her inner tension grows and Lumet moves in for a close-up. As she loses control and whirls around the room, the camera follows for a 360 degree pan, picking up the rhythm of her dialogue. As she calms herself, the camera levels out so we see her embrace Edmund, ending the sequence as it began.

In conclusion, John Ford and Sidney Lumet show clearly that film can restore the essence and spirit of original stage drama. When considered together, their films illustrate that no set model for or set approach to adaptation exists. Only skillful use of filmmaking techniques and sensitivity for the original drama, as well as for the playwright, are the bases for good film adaptations. George Bernard Shaw once remarked that films created from theatre "are an extension of the literary art of the stage, with some limitations removed." In the best sense of "literary art," the films of The Long Voyage Home and Long Day's Journey Into Night are valuable counterparts to O'Neill's stage dramas; and, in a more general sense, Ford and Lumet show us a great deal about how stage drama can be successfully adapted to the screen.

--William L. Sipple

MEETING EUGENE O'NEILL*

"Thought you wouldn't mind visiting with the O'Neills after dinner. They live in Danville. That's not far, is it?"

I had picked up Kenneth Macgowan at the San Francisco Airport and driven him inland to our home in Lafayette. He had hardly placed his sparse luggage in the guest room when he stepped back into the living room with this statement.

I reviewed his words, hardly believing them. Visiting with O'Neill! It had to be Eugene O'Neill. I had heard that he spent some time in Danville. I knew that Macgowan had been close to him since the Provincetown theatre. And I knew that Macgowan held on to friends and contacts, for here he was—a celebrity in his own right—my house guest.

Some months before, I had completed the production of a documentary film, Mexico Builds a Democracy. At the suggestion of a mutual acquaintance, I had gone East to screen it for Macgowan, who had recently taken a leave of absence from producing at 20th Century Fox to head up the film division of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, a part of the over-all war effort.

Macgowan was a modest, easy man to know with a gracious manner that inspired one to

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relax and at the same time give his best. We soon discovered a multitude of common interests. The film was screened, purchased, and late on a Friday I was seated alongside Macgowan on the commuter train to upstate New York (Brewster, I believe it was), where he and his family had lived for many years. Here I met and enjoyed a weekend in the genuine warmth and sparkle of the Macgowan clan.

Now in Lafayette it was my turn to try to reciprocate, and here he was, offering me Eugene O'Neill (for years something of a God to me), alive and close by. I made no attempt to hide my excitement at this prospect and shortly after dinner we were on our way.

While the drive to Danville took only some twenty minutes, to locate the secluded house took a bit of doing. I became as nervous wondering if we would ever find O'Neill, as I was anticipating the meeting with him.

It was a clear, bright night and finally we came upon what looked like a high and long, white, adobe wall. An antique door was open to a courtyard, and framed by it, magnificently illuminated from within, stood O'Neill's wife, the statuesque beauty Carlotta Monterey. She greeted Macgowan and me. Her voice was at once as melodious and graceful as her movements as she led us through the quiet, formal courtyard and into the entry of a Spanish-American style house.

Then we were ushered into a living room whose focal point was a huge pair of blue, blue eyes, in an emaciated face, still emitting vital magnetic power from within a fragile frame. This was Eugene O'Neill.

As he saw and greeted Macgowan, a warm smile tightened his loose skin. As his shaking hand shook mine, he seemed to grow in stature, and the powerful eyes penetrated into the depths of me.

I remember literally nothing of the conversation, little of my surroundings. Enough that I was in the company of an immortal. Enough that I was permitted to be a tiny part of the relationship between old friends of great talent. Enough that one of my life-long dreams had come true. I had met the great Eugene O'Neill.

Somehow, as sparse as are the details of that meeting in my memory, just the mention of his name brings the blue eyes back into brilliant focus, and he becomes, once again, alive and close by.

—Alvin J. Gordon

REVIEWS OF O'NEILL PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE


When Desire Under the Elms premiered at the Greenwich Village Theatre on November 11, 1924, most reviewers were shocked. "A tale of almost unrelieved sordidness," the Post declared, and Time concurred, calling it "the kind of thing the spectator will object to on the score that existence cannot possibly be so brutal" (Nov. 12, 1924). Burns Mantle was not as quick to write off O'Neill's new play, although he felt obliged to caution that "none should see it unadvisedly—without knowing that it is a story in which lust and murder, incest between son and stepmother, and infanticide, ugliness, sin and appalling freedom of speech are frankly illustrated" (New York News, Nov. 14, 1924).

Though a few critics were enthusiastic—Stark Young praised its "terrible beauty" (New York Times, Nov. 12, 1924) and Joseph Wood Krutch declared it a play of "extraordinary intensity" (Nation, Nov. 26, 1924)—the reception of Desire disappointed and angered its author, who maintained that the critics failed to perceive either
the "epic tinge" or the poetry in his tale of New England life. While the critics bemoaned the drama's unseemly passions, however, the public filled the theatre, and the play ran until October 1925, moving from Greenwich Village to Broadway.

Subsequent critical opinion, of course, has been much kinder. Writing in the *New York Times* (March 9, 1980), Harold Clurman tried to set the record straight: "O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* made us look to our national past with new eyes. Certain city officials dubbed it 'obscene' and tried to ban it. Others made too much of its Freudian insights. But at its very core were the contrast and conflict of a pre-Civil War generation that had grown tough in the building of the country and the generations that followed, bent on amassing ever greater profit and power from their inheritance only to discover—too late—the blessing of love. Thus the possessors became dispossessed. This was a theme which O'Neill was to develop much more fully in his later works." A rather random selection of later O'Neill critics reveals similar appreciation of *Desire*. Travis Bogard, for example, declared that "it fulfills the promise of [O'Neill's] early career and is the first important tragedy to be written in America" (*Contour in Time*, 1972, p. 200). Edwin Engel eloquently proclaimed that *Desire* "celebrates the divinity of nature, the triumph of pagan naturalism over indurated religion, the victory of mother and son over the father" (*Haunted Heroes*, 1953, p. 126), while Louis Sheaffer believed that the play attains "the exhilarating level of tragedy" (*Son and Artist*, 1973, p. 130).

The production of *Desire Under the Elms* that was recently directed by Tom Haas at the Indiana Repertory Theatre in Indianapolis may not have reached the exhilarating level of tragedy, but it surely deserves recognition for its set, the work of designer Ming Cho Lee of Yale University. For the original production, Robert Edmond Jones had created an extremely realistic set—just what O'Neill specified—but with a house so complex that scene changes took twenty minutes or more to complete. For the IRT production, Lee retained the realism but obviated the interminable waits between scenes. His impressive set featured a real dirt floor, stones that really were stones (though they didn't make a wall, alas), and a two-story house with mechanically-controlled walls that moved to reveal the rooms behind. The "sickly grayish" outer wall slid down quickly and quietly out of sight to reveal the kitchen, stairs, two upper bedrooms, and the darkened, obviously unused front parlor, the room where Eben's mother had been laid out after her death and where her ghost is most alive. The set itself made this production well worth seeing, even though the stage was not large enough to convey the contrast O'Neill wanted between the out-of-doors freedom of nature and the cramped, claustrophobic interior of the Cabot home.

The only disappointment with regard to the set concerned the "two enormous elms ... on each side of the house" that, in the playwright's description, "bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing jealous absorption. They have developed from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house an appalling humaneness. They brood oppressively over the house. They are like exhausted women resting their sagging breasts and hands and hair on its roof, and when it rains their tears trickle down monotonously and rot on the shingles." In a letter to Kenneth Macgowan, O'Neill had reiterated the importance of the elms, noting that they were "characters almost" (*The Theatre We Worked For*, ed. Jackson Bryer, 1982, p. 132), and complaining that no production had ever gotten them right. The IRT's was no exception. Though there were two trees, one on each side of the house—with plastic leaves, I believe—they
Ming Cho Lee's set for the Indiana Repertory Theatre's production of *Desire Under the Elms*. The front apron is contoured, poured concrete, adorned with real moss and two tons of limestone. By tracking the front wall into the basement, Lee conquered the original production's problem of long pauses between scenes.
were clearly not of central importance, though the program included a note to that effect, informing theatre-goers of their sinister maternity. They were, however, simply two rather tall, sparse trees—next to the house but certainly not hanging over it in Poesque fashion like exhausted women with sagging breasts. Apparently the elms are a perennial problem with 

Desire. When the Guthrie Theatre, for example, performed the play in repertory (August 23-November 22, 1980), there were no trees at all but merely a few disembodied branches aloft. I have always felt O'Neill's description of the trees to be novelistic rhetoric quite untranslatable to the stage, and the present production did nothing to make me re-think such an opinion.

With one exception, the characters were competent and faithful to the original. As the uncouth, oafish brothers, Craig Fuller as Simeon and Terry Moore as Peter played the beginning scenes in a humorous vein—the flat New England "Ayeh," followed by a long pause and a vacant expression, tickled this Hoosier audience—but they also successfully conveyed simultaneous admiration, dislike, and fear of their father.

Scott Wentworth as Eben was a touch-
of-the-poet figure, intense, brooding, given to pensive silences, a good deal of fog stammering, and little sexuality, emerging or otherwise. Here we begin to approach the play's major difficulty. According to O'Neill, Eben's love for Abbie transforms him into a man. In this production, however, the audience was convinced neither of their early lust nor of their later love.

In her role as Abbie, Tana Hicken simply was not physically appropriate; slight and rather tired looking, this Abbie was no Earth Mother, no barnyard Phaedra, no forerunner of Cybele. She certainly was not vital enough to displace both of Eben's parents and satisfy his biological and spiritual needs. Because Abbie is female sexuality personified, I found myself thinking, to my surprise, that Sophia Loren—in the two-star, rather dreadful movie of the play—at least conveyed the combination of frank animal nature and maternal warmth that O'Neill intended. Though Hicken's and Wentworth's acting was acceptable, the attraction between the two never gave off sparks, especially in the crucial parlor scene when Abbie declares...
to Eben that she will be his mother—and more, much more. As she wrapped her arms around him and he capitulated on the unvirtuous couch, my husband turned to me and whispered, "Willing suspension of disbelief."

Belief did not have to be suspended, however, with Marco St. John's Ephraim, who combined flinty determination with an old man's vulnerability. His monologue in the second scene of Act Two, in which he sketches the hardships of his life for an oblivious Abbie, really opens up and tells her how he feels, was beautifully and poignantly done. Abbie gazed longingly at the common wall separating their bedroom from Eben, who sat moodily on his bed, now and again reaching out toward the wall. Halting abruptly in his biblical declaration of desire, Ephraim asks his wife angrily, "Air ye any the wiser fur all I've told ye?" As he rushed off to the barn—"I kin talk t' the cows. They know. They know the farm an' me. They'll give me peace"—St. John was a touching combination of fierceness and wounded pride. He conveyed the same feelings of lonely dignity in the final moments of the play, when he squared his shoulders and tightened his mouth, marching past Abbie, hurting but refusing to let himself hurt, hearing her good-bye but refusing to reply.

Because we never believed in the love between Abbie and Eben, the play's conclusion was bereft of any sense of release; when the lovers went off to jail, we were unable to rejoice, as O'Neill intended, in the beautiful selflessness of their feelings for each other. We felt instead that Ephraim was well rid of them both.

What did emerge in the IRT's final scene, however, was a sense of the permanence of the land. "It's a jim-dandy farm, no denyin'. Wish I owned it!" confessed the sheriff enviously. With those words, he hit the house ruefully with his hand and the solidity of the sound echoed in the theatre, leaving no uncertainties about what endures.

—Susan H. Tuck


What better place to stage *A Touch of the Poet* than in Concord, Massachusetts, a town that bears such a close resemblance to the village Con Melody and company inhabited? That O'Neill intended the connection, in fact, would be hard to deny, if only because of the remarkable similarity between Thoreau's experiment at Walden Pond and Simon Harford's idealistic lakeside venture. But, despite the more than appropriate setting and their town's rich literary tradition, the Concord Players' production fell short.

One wonders, above all, about the direction. Where was it? The cast was capable and energetic, the set top-drawer. But dramatically, there were numerous loose ends. It was as if the actors had simply been left on their own to hack their way through the play without any directorial orchestration or insight whatsoever. Instead of being involved meaningfully with each other, they remained divided, trapped inside their respective roles.

Bob Asher's grandiloquent interpretation of Con Melody was decidedly weak in emotional depth and texture. While Mr. Asher could handily boom out his lines, he was unconvincing in conveying Con Melody's less stentorian sides. If anything, Major Melody is a bewildering array of emotions, prejudices and memories, requiring subtle and sudden changes in mood and tone to convey. Mr. Asher seemed to be inextricably hooked on the Major's pomposity, so much so that he preened, strutted and flaunted, whatever the circumstance. For the play to work, Con has to be more than an out-of-touch, grandiloquent windbag. That Mr. Asher was not asked to temper his performance for the sake of trying to get at the more complex sides of Con, was one of the major directorial faults of the production.
Nora Melody, played by Dorothy Santos, was the one major character in the play who really came off convincingly. Years of abuse from Con Melody, scrounging for a living and playing second fiddle to a horse, really showed on this Nora's haggard face. One found her weariness and subservience to Con a bit cloying towards the end of the play, but we have the playwright himself to blame in large part for that. Had O'Neill put more into the role, Miss Santos, no doubt, would have done much more with it, as she revealed a deep understanding of Nora.

Sara Melody and Deborah Harford, played by Donna Tyrrell and Susan Ellsworth respectively, emerged as unresolved characters. Here again, direction was an issue. The complexity of Sara and the muffled eccentricity of Mrs. Harford were handled gingerly and from afar, which made things like Con's untempered booming all the more obtrusive and annoying. Had Con been more recognizably human, the audience's chances of seeing a more believable Sara and a more interesting Mrs. Harford would doubtless have been increased.

Joseph Finneral seemed very much at ease in the role of Con's old comrade in arms, Jamie Cregan. And Jack Sweet, as the partying Paddy O'Dowd, was delightfully impish and beguiling. Whenever Paddy was on stage, he stole the show with his irreverent asides and wild, elfish looks.

Speaking with a brogue is an important element in A Touch, and everyone who was required to speak with one did so convincingly and effortlessly—an achievement that must have required not a little practice and preparation. The set, designed by Ron Placzek, was very sturdy looking and handsome, though Con's magic mirror should perhaps have been larger. For someone with the Major's pretensions, a glass of ordinary size is an inexplicable act of modesty.

The Concord Players' production of A Touch of the Poet bore more the stamp of the histrionic, disjointed O'Neill than of the daring, innovative and complex one we justly celebrate. There can be no denying that the play is a knotty one to put on, but that is all the more reason why informed—if not inspired—direction is a must. Otherwise, the ham-handedness of the playwright will inevitably destroy the poet's touch.

--Marshall Brooks


Hughie is a study in detritus—bottom of the barrel characters confronting the end of the road. As performed at the acronymically apt ART, it became a sharply etched mood piece whose brittleness cut away some of the text's subtlety. Bill Foeller's direction so accentuated the separation between Charlie Hughes, the night clerk, and "Erie" Smith, the "teller of tales," that by the time the clerk perked up at Erie's intimation of knowing Arnold Rothstein, it did not seem wholly plausible. There were, however, compensating factors in the production that mitigated this flaw. Prime among them were the set by Donald Soule and the "sound design" of Randolph Head.

The keynote of Soule's set was its spectral ambience, abetted by two lifesize, ghost-white figures modeled after sculptor George Segal's work—one sleeping in a chair downstage-left with a newspaper over his knee; the other standing far upstage, back to the audience, stooped and weary, with a professional bag, also all white, in his hand. While the set appeared at first to be substantial and solid—a plausible replica of a seedy mid-Manhattan hotel lobby—it was really, on closer examination, a free-floating framework of disconnected units: two worn armchairs, one a subdued but bilious green; two standing lamps, one of which repeatedly went out; a faded carpet; a round mahogany check-in desk; a tarnished cuspidor; a potted palm—stunted; and no walls. The set's
openness suggested the universality of O'Neill's material, and its amorphousness adumbrated the characterizations that followed: both Smith and the clerk are caught in illusory lives punctuated by pipe-dreams and despair—lives as stunted as the palm and as frayed as the cord of the malfunctioning lamp.

Head's taped soundtrack provided the outside noises that fill the mind and spur the perverse imagination of the clerk—the clatter of an El train, the rattle of garbage cans, the steps of a policeman on his beat, and the shrill siren of a passing fire engine. Erie froze and the lights dimmed each time the clerk, stationary and staring dead ahead but activated internally, voiced his holocaustal hopes. And at play's end, when a crap game signals the newly forged bond between the lobby's two inmates, the sound of the dice on the desk was strikingly amplified. Like the set, the sound design added immeasurably to the effectiveness of the production.

John Bottoms was lanky and leering as an Erie Smith whose grandiloquently self-conscious garrulosity could fool no one. And his costume, the work of Lynn Jeffrey, was a triumph of tackiness. Sporting a garish, one-button, mustard-toned plaid suit, a splashy "painted" tie, loud spectator shoes and a superannuated panama hat, Bottoms wore his duds with ease, as if they were an extension of himself. But that the ease was ersatz was clear from the frenetic obsessiveness of his gestures. He was constantly on the move—especially his hands, which fiddled successively with a jangling key ring, a silver dollar, a pair of dice and a pack of cards, the last of which he flipped aimlessly at his fallen hat when the thought of the empty room awaiting him upstairs forced him to drop, in a moment of temporary somnolence, into the unoccupied easy chair. While at times a trifle mannered, and giving vent periodically to an incongruously rural horse laugh, Bottoms brought home the crushing loneliness and fear that are at the core of Smith. And his periodic glances at the offstage stairway to his solitary cell infected the air with their dread.

Aside from the internal monologues and the hint of newfound vigor at the end, Richard Spore could not be said to have brought the night clerk to life. Nor should he, for, except at those moments, Charlie Hughes is an automaton—more a mannequin than a man—and Spore managed marvelously his character's premature moribundity. His speech—perfectly articulated and perfectly dead—his immobility and his refusal to respond to Erie's aggressive banter (until the Rothstein reference) showed us that the clerk is more than an empty character, he is almost a void, except for the malicious gleam in his eye when he utters his wishes for conflagration and destruction.

Neither director nor actors succeeded completely in making the transition from separateness to communion wholly believable. A certain suspension of disbelief was necessary at that point, though Spore did grow increasingly distracted, his self-absorption was almost broken enough to make us believe that the mention of a "big-shot" gambler could get him to reach out, and the camaraderie that results permits the play to end on an upbeat note. With the shadows brightened briefly by this incipient friendship, we can perhaps hope that life is not completely the "rotten froth" that James O'Neill, Sr., felt it was when he died.

—Thomas F. Connolly

As performed at the Lyric Stage, O'Neill's Moon had two distinct phases, one barren and one bountiful. The first half of the play was staged and performed in a manner that was nothing less than execrable. Sloppy blocking, missed lines, and garbled diction nearly drove this member of the audience out onto the street. Sheila Ferrini as Josie Hogan and William Barnard as her father were awkward and uncomfortable with one another. Barnard's alleged brogue was positively Cromwellian in its abuse of Gaeldom—a dis-ease that was compounded by an all too searching delivery, which gave one the impression that he was playing a Hogan with a hangover. Ronald Ritchell's Jim Tyrone was so world-weary and bleakly distant that it painted new shades of colorlessness. And one hesitates to mention at all the T. Stedman Harder of Arthur Barlas, although the lion-tamer-like get-up he was subjected to wearing would have given even Clyde Beatty pause. The comedy, among O'Neill's best, that enlivens the early part of the text, and balances the somber seriousness of the later scenes, was subdued to the point of nonexistence. Perhaps Polly Hogan, in directing, chose deliberately to downplay the humor, but why? Evidently Ms. Hogan lacks the lighter side of her dramatic namesakes, and the painfully cumbersome early scenes still rankle the memory.

Yet something drastic happened when Ritchell returned, late in the second act, for Jim and Josie's moonlit rendezvous (pictured on this issue's cover). It was as if he had somehow found himself in the role in mid-performance—and in doing so he saved the production. His drunkenness was grimly serious. He relied on no easy "business." His distance now became ruefully poignant because he was desperately trying, simultaneously, to maintain it and break away from it. When he forced the whiskey glass from Josie's hand it was literally shattering, and the look on his face after he realized that he had mistaken Josie for a tart was nearly a brush with greatness. Ferrini's Josie became intoxicated with Ritchell's Jim; the warmth she exuded was subtle and sweet, bringing them together. She also conveyed the bitter coldness of her subsequent disgust at Jim's confession about his behavior on the train ("with that blond pig,") bringing his mother's body home ("Oh, Jim, how could you!"). Her withering countenance froze and stifled the interlude of affection that her fervent acceptance of Jim had previously kindled.

The morning after was also deftly handled. Ritchell again stabbed the audience with his merciless self-hatred when he remembered the proceedings of the night before, and he and Miss Ferrini shared a farewell that was decorous yet tender. Even William Barnard could not manage to befoul the play's closing scene. His earlier bullishness was cowed. Ferrini left us full of admiration and sympathy for Josie. As for Ritchell, we must agree with Josie that his Jim deserves "forgiveness and peace."

As a concluding note, the Lyric Stage dispensed with the expository scene between Josie and her brother. It was not missed.

—Thomas F. Connolly


Of the handful of O'Neill plays that are regularly performed, A Touch of the Poet is my playgoing favorite. It may not equal in richness the interpersonal complexities of the family quartet in Long Day's Journey, nor achieve the visceral impact of Jim Tyrone's tragic confessions in Moon for the Misbegotten, nor reach the comic heights of Sid's dining room antics and the bittersweet futility of his relations with Lily in Ah, Wilderness!, nor evoke the influence of the natural environment that is so powerfully italicized in Desire Under the Elms. But each of these other plays has a
Above and below: George Grizzard as the preening, dreaming Con Melody in the Yale Rep production of *A Touch of the Poet*. Photos by William B. Carter.

Tempered by the indomitable dedication of his long-suffering wife and counterpointed by the new-found strength and ambition of his daughter.

So when the Yale Rep announced that it would conclude its 1982-83 season with *A Touch of the Poet* (the first O'Neill production in its seventeen-year history), my hopes were high. And the hopes proved to be justified, thanks to the skillful direction of the Rep's artistic director Lloyd Richards; an appropriately high-windowed and dark-wooded set by Wing Lee (an M.F.A. candidate at the Yale School of Drama); and a capable cast of students and professionals headed by George Grizzard, one of America's finest actors, who thoroughly refuted my assumption that all future Con Melodys would pale beside the triumphant performance of Jason Robards on Broadway a few years back.

Grizzard, gray-haired and stiffly formal at his first entrance, captured all the nuances of the play's tragi-comic hero. Touching in the moments when he's "far away in spirit," resplendent when preening in his scarlet uniform with its gold sash and tassels, moving in his recitation of the Byronic leitmotif, heartless in his patronizing cruelty to Nora and especially to Sara, pathetic in his confrontations with the two intruders from the Harford world; the actor revealed every stone in the Melody mosaic. And when he returned from the offstage fracas in Act Four—with blood smeared on his right cheek and the glaze of death in his eyes; his once-proud uniform now unbuttoned, liability that can undermine its theatrical impact. *Long Day's Journey*, without an ideal cast, can be a long journey indeed. *Moon* is more an act of exorcism (the playwright's as much as the male protagonist's) than a story, despite its maze of tricks within tricks, and could be anathema to any latter-day Aristotelian. *Ah, Wilderness!*, though critics have persuasively anatomized the darker interior of its text, remains a touching but oh-so-cute idyll on its performable surface. And *Elms*, for all its classical ancestry, stumbles precariously in the dialectal gaucherie of its transplantation. *Touch* may have comparable flaws, even worse ones; but I have always found it near perfect on stage, in its telling of a story (a complete one, despite its cycle connections) that descends from irresistible comedy to—if not tragedy, at least a pathos that is extremely moving, as Con Melody's sustaining illusions are relentlessly ripped away, leaving him the shell of a man, whose brokenness is
its left shoulder torn, and stripped of all but one of its tassels; his vocal brilliance
descending to incomprehensible mumblings after his first two speeches, and then rising
again to the true ring of grief as he described the death of his beloved mare—
Grizzard dampened many an eye in the silent playhouse, despite a wavering brogue in
which "surely" came out as "Shirley" and "ease" didn't come out as "aise." (The last,
however, was the fault of the playwright. If Jamie Cregan can say "you're takin' it
aisy" in the play's fifth speech, then surely—or Shirley!—the neo-Celticized Major
of Act Four wouldn't say "I intind to live at my ease," as O'Neill has him say. Here,
fidelity to text overcame fidelity to characterization!) Grizzard was splendid. The
play is ended, but his Melody lingers on!

Which is not to say that this was a vehicle or one-man show. David Thornton was an
easy, natural, likable Mickey Maloy; dependable Rex Everhart, eyes mischievously
agleam, highlighted the hypocritical, Joxer Daly side of Paddy O'Dowd; Bryan Clark
(whom many U.S. televievers will know as the recent foister of Folger's instant coffee
on unsuspecting restaurant patrons) was hissably pompous as Lawyer Gadsby; and Barbara
Caruso frequently threatened to steal the show as Con's unappreciated but indomitably
proud and loving wife. Clumping about in a way that explained, but hardly justified,
Melody's snide references to her bog-trotter past, Caruso's Nora was clearly the person
who had kept the Melody home together, playing along with any role her husband chose
to adopt, and doubtless ready to do so again, once Act Four's shattering reversals are
over. Her reaction, when she finally realized what Sara had been doing upstairs,
brought down the house; and her tender scenes with Mickey and with Sara showed her
softer side and were a model of ensemble performance.

If there was one flaw in this otherwise excellent production, it was the absence
of that last-mentioned quality in two of the performers—Katharine Houghton as Deborah
Harford, and Julie Fulton as Sara—who seemed to have happened in, respectively, from
the dissimilar and non-O'Neillian worlds of Oscar Wilde and Oscar Hammerstein.
Floating into the tavern under a giant bonnet and parasol like a pristine porcelain
shepherdess, Houghton's Deborah was sunnily charming when greeted by the Major, with
no initial suggestion of haughtiness—betraying even a hint of coquetry, to which
Melody understandably but unwisely responds. Nothing wrong there; quite in keeping,
in fact, with O'Neill's initial description of her. But her counter-response to the
Major's advances—"You are insolent and disgusting!"—drew a laugh from the audience.
And that seemed inappropriate, given the character and circumstance. O'Neill says
she speaks the line with "withering contempt," but Houghton's contempt was too aloof—
too much a matter of artifice, and not the genuine article. Granted, Deborah Harford is
a fey visitor from "another world," but it should not, perhaps, be the world of high
comedy. Nevertheless, her recital of the history of the early Harfords, which
is crisply comic in the writing, fitted the Houghton style perfectly and, delivered in a
voice somewhere between those of Billie Burke and another Katharine—Hepburn—was one
of the evening's choicest delights.

Julie Fulton's Sara began effectively, slamming doors as an evidence of her vibrant
pride, and managing successfully the alternations between American speech and a half-
willful, half-involuntary brogue. But the transformation when she returned from the
offstage kiss with her beloved Simon in Act Two—giggling, skipping, beaming, and
hugging her mother in girlish glee: that transformation was overdone, and the perfor-
mane moved temporarily from the world of O'Neill to the world of conventional musical
comedy. (One expected a rapturous song—"Simon Kissed Me," perhaps!) However, when
she chased the barflies out in Act Three, and reacted with pain and fury to the
studied cruelty of her father, she regained her believability, though she never
suggested the cooler, scheming side of Sara, which must be made clear if the
character is to be anything more than a shallow, petulant ingénue.

But these are quibbles, and neither actress's performance dimmed the sheen of a
memorable production. I look forward to future forays into the O'Neill repertory
by the Yale company. Given Lloyd Richards' clear understanding of O'Neill's art, and the proximity of the Beinecke collection, O'Neill should be a staple of every Yale Rep season.

—Frederick C. Wilkins

THE EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY SECTION: MEETINGS PAST AND FUTURE

I. BY-LAWS AMENDED AT 1982 MEETING.

The Fourth Annual Meeting of the Eugene O'Neill Society was held on December 28, 1982, during the Modern Language Association convention in Los Angeles. Because of the site, the meeting, like the convention, was sparsely attended. The major business of the attenders was the adoption of two amendments to the Society's By-Laws, which follow, and which members should insert in their copies of the by-laws. (Society Secretary Jordan Miller will be pleased to send a copy of the complete by-laws to any member requesting one.)

Section III.1: Terms of Membership

a) Membership in the Society shall be open to all interested persons upon payment of annual dues in the amount determined by the Officers and Directors.

b) The membership year shall be from January 1 through December 31. Dues are payable as of January 1.

c) Any member who does not renew membership by March 1 will be notified by the Secretary; if dues payment is not received by April 1, the Secretary will drop the member from the rolls.

d) New members joining before October 1 shall have their memberships credited as of the current year and shall receive the Newsletter as of that date.

e) New members joining on October 1 or later shall have their dues credited to the following year, when they will begin to receive the Newsletter.

Section VIII.1: Election of Officers and Directors

The Board of Directors shall serve as a Nominating Committee. Six (6) months prior to the Annual Meeting the Board shall, by whatever means it wishes, consult with the membership concerning possible nominations. The Board shall prepare a slate of those members willing to serve and present it to the membership at the Annual Meeting. Further nominations of those willing to serve may be made from the floor, and voting shall take place at that time.

II. O'NEILL SESSION AT MLA '82.

Also on December 28, at the aforementioned Modern Language Association convention, an event organized and "unofficially" sponsored by the Society was featured: a special session on "O'Neill and Film," led by Eugene K. Hanson of the College of
the Desert, Palm Desert, CA. It is fortunate, since L.A. drew far fewer attenders
than is usually the case at MLA, that two of the three papers written for that
session can now be shared with a larger "audience" in the pages of the Newsletter.
Those papers, by Linda Ben-Zvi and William L. Sipple, begin on pages 3 and 10 of
this issue, and the editor is grateful to the authors and Professor Hanson for
(respectively) permitting and arranging for their publication. (Actually, the
first paper will now have its first audience, as Professor Ben-Zvi was prevented by
a Colorado snow storm from reaching Los Angeles!)

The third paper, by Professor Vera Jiji, was not revised in time for this issue.
Her talk, entitled "O'Neill and TV," considered the problems inherent in the
"translation" of any stage work to the television medium—such problems as the
smallness of the screen, which eliminates the "larger than life" quality of
theatrical performance, and the removal of any audience choice in what to watch,
since the entire stage picture is omitted and we therefore lose, for instance, the
significant facial reactions of listeners in a given scene; the corresponding
virtues of television performance, such as its superiority over theatre in its
ability to concentrate, up close, on the human face; and the virtues and flaws in
three small-screen adaptations of work by O'Neill—The Iceman Cometh (1960), A
Touch of the Poet (1974), and Mourning Becomes Electra (1978). She found Electra
a decidedly diminished thing, not so much because of the inadequacies in Roberta
Maxwell's portrayal of Lavinia, but because the play's "transcendent level" was
entirely lost, leaving little besides (in tv parlance) "soap." But the 1960 Iceman,
as a record of Jason Robards' searing last-act confession, won her total praise:

The black and white recording uses one camera, which stays on Hickey's face
almost uninterruptedly (except when O'Neill has others speak) for a half
hour. There are no cuts, shifts of angle or other editing tricks. There
is just one man speaking—and us watching him up close. If tv did nothing
else for O'Neill but record and preserve this performance, it would be
enough to make up for all the other bits of foolishness.

Television performances of great drama, she concluded, are worthwhile, despite
inevitable drawbacks, because they can inspire new attenders of real theatre,
because they can provide the bases for comparison with other performances of the
same work, and because, as in the case of Robards' Hickey, they provide valuable
documentation for posterity of the great players of our day.

III. O'NEILL SESSION AT MLA '83.

"Reevaluating O'Neill: New Approaches, New Discoveries" is the title of a special
session on O'Neill that will be chaired by Professor Michael Hinden at the MLA
convention in New York City next December (shortly after Christmas, at a date and
hour to be announced in a future issue). Three papers will be featured:

1. "Toward a Post-Structuralist Approach to O'Neill's Later Plays," by
   Michael Manheim, University of Toledo.

2. "Current Trends in O'Neill Publication," by Frederick Wilkins, Suffolk
   University, Boston.

3. "An Agenda for O'Neill Studies," by Paul Voelker, University of Wisconsin
   Center-Richland.

For copies of the papers, write to the panelists after November 15. And plan to
attend both this session and the Society's Fifth Annual Meeting, which will probably
be held shortly before or after it. On this too, fuller information will be
provided in a future issue.
NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. PROVINCTOWNERS TO RECREATE PLAYERS' FIRST NIGHT. No reputable list of major dates in the history of American theatre and drama could fail to include the evening of July 15, 1915—the night on which, in the rented house of Hutchins Hapgood on Commercial Street, a dedicated band of writers and amateur actors performed two short plays for their friends and fellow artists. While it was later that the group officially organized and called themselves the Provincetown Players, it is certainly true that, on that July evening, the Players were effectively born. Their first bill comprised two comedies: Constancy, by Neith Boyce (Mrs. Hapgood), and Suppressed Desires, by George Cram Cook and Susan Glaspell (Mrs. Cook). Both plays eschewed the traditions of the commercial drama of the time, and both reflected the enthusiasms and experiences of the group's members—Constancy tracing, with scarcely any veil at all, the tempestuous relationship between Mabel Dodge and John Reed while making an important statement about the new role of women in American culture; and Suppressed Desires spoofing the then-fashionable fad of amateur psychoanalysis.

While the Players later repeated both plays elsewhere, the two were never again performed together. Not, that is, until this summer, when Adele Heller, Producing Director of the Provincetown Playhouse, will recreate the original double bill at the Provincetown Art Association on Friday, September 2, with a repeat performance on the following evening. The program's title, "Beginnings," is doubly appropriate, since the event will celebrate both the genesis of the Players and the imminent reemergence of the Playhouse, which has been sadly missed since it was torched by vandals in 1977.

To celebrate and document the Players' "beginnings" more broadly, and to fill out an otherwise short evening of theatre, the performances will include two additional features: a slide show, including many photos from 1915 (from the albums of the original Players' offspring) that have never before been publicly displayed; and readings and reminiscences by several descendants of founders of the group. Among them: Miriam Hapgood DeWitt, daughter of Boyce and Hapgood, who will read from her parents' letters and share anecdotes about Harry Kemp and others; Mrs. DeWitt's sister, Beatrice Faust; Heaton Vorse, whose singing was a highlight of Warren Beatty's film Reds; and Joel O'Brien, son of Joe O'Brien and Mary Heaton Vorse (the owner of Lewis Wharf in 1915), who will read from his mother's book, Time and the Town.

'Tis an event no devotee of American theatre will want to miss—not least because Constancy has had only one performance since that opening night (it returned as part of the third bill during the Players' 1916 summer season at the Wharf) and has never been published. For more information about the September performances, write to the Provincetown Playhouse, Provincetown, MA 02657, or call 617-487-0955. If you can't get to the Provincetownly tip of Cape Cod this summer, there's good news in item 2.

2. "BEGINNINGS" TO BE FEATURED AT O'NEILL CONVENTION IN MARCH. The exciting program described above will be repeated next March as part of the evening performance series during the international conference on "Eugene O'Neill—the Early Years" at Suffolk University in Boston (March 22-25). The specific date should be available for announcement in the next issue of the Newsletter. For speedier information, and for news about other convention events, write or call the editor's office (617-723-4700, ext. 272).

3. O'NEILL'S LETTERS SOUGHT FOR COLLECTION. At last, a comprehensive volume of O'Neill's letters is in the works. It will be edited by Professors Jackson R. Bryer and Travis Bogard, whose "The Theatre We Worked For": The Letters of Eugene O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan was the first major publication of epistolary O'Neilliana.
(see Summer-Fall 1982 issue, pp. 37-39). The following note by Professor Bryer appeared in the May 29 issue of the New York Times Book Review:

For an edition of Eugene O'Neill's selected letters, I would appreciate hearing from anyone who owns letters or knows of any in unlisted or uncatalogued collections. Photocopying costs will be paid, and no letters will be printed without permission.

Anyone with the desired materials or information should write to Professor Bryer at the Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20740.

4. 1984 O'NEILL CALENDAR—A CHRISTMAS MUST FOR THE PLAYWRIGHT'S FANS. The Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House has prepared a calendar for 1984 which focuses on the playwright's years at Tao House and includes black and white photographs and excerpts from Eugene and Carlotta Monterey O'Neill's diaries. This first edition of what it is hoped will be an annual event, showing the gate into the Tao House courtyard on its cover, is sure to become a valuable collectors' item, as only a limited number will be printed. So admirers of O'Neill should plan their Christmas gift lists early and send checks (to the Foundation) or inquiries to The Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, P.O. Box 402, Danville, CA 94526. The price is $10, and the calendar should be available early in July.

5. TV DOCUMENTARY ON O'NEILL IN THE WORKS. Normand Berlin, Travis Bogard, Virginia Floyd and Donald Gallup are serving as advisors for a two-hour documentary on O'Neill currently being prepared by WNET, the Public Broadcasting station in New York City. The program, written by Paul Shyre and produced and directed by Perry Miller Adato, is expected to be ready for airing in January, 1984. Since Adato has done similar programs on such artists as Sandburg, Gertrude Stein and Picasso, and the advisors are all acknowledged leaders in O'Neill scholarship, the program should be well worth watching.

6. PROVINCETOWN BEQUEST CONTINUES FAMILY TRADITION. During Eugene O'Neill's early years in Provincetown, a period when he was generally short of funds, he was one of a good many writers and artists (Harry Kemp was another) who were sheltered and aided by John A. Francis, a realtor who also had a grocery and general store. (In fact, O'Neill lived in an apartment over Francis' store when he first arrived in town.) If Mr. Francis lent someone money, it was said, he would seek out the person the next day—not for repayment, but to make certain the person was not in need again.

Now Cecilia C. Francis (known to her many friends as Celia), a retired lawyer who died last March 2 at the age of eighty, has proven herself a true daughter of her father. Her will establishes a scholarship fund of about $500,000 for students of Provincetown High School, where she had been valedictorian of the eleven-member class of 1921. The bequest, which should provide $50,000 annually for scholarships, will assure higher education for many PHS graduates who would otherwise have been denied it.

Incidentally, O'Neill's son, Shane, was born in a cottage rented from Miss Francis, who reportedly remembered the playwright well and thought he was "charming" when he wasn't drinking! (Special thanks to Louis Sheaffer for providing word on the bequest, which is more fully reported by Jeremiah V. Murphy in the April 14 edition of the Boston Globe, p. 21.)

7. IN MEMORIAM. Sophus Keith Winther, novelist, close friend of Eugene O'Neill, and professor of English at the University of Washington for 41 years, died at his Seattle home on May 10. Born in Denmark, he came to the United States at the age of two, when his family settled in Weeping Water, Nebraska, the setting for his Grimsen Trilogy (1936-38), three novels about his early life there. His book,
Eugene O'Neill (1933), was one of the important early studies of the playwright. Louis Sheaffer, Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer of O'Neill, recalled recently his debt to his fellow author: "As close friends of O'Neill and Carlotta Monterey, Professor Winther and his wife Eline were invaluable sources of information about the playwright. I am lastingly grateful to them for their friendship and trust. Their help added importantly to my biography." Professor Winther was an honorary member of the Eugene O'Neill Society.

8. CALMS OF CAPRICORN IN HUNGARIAN. The editor is informed by Peter Egri, a regular contributor to the Newsletter's pages, that O'Neill's The Calms of Capricorn has been translated into Hungarian by Ágnes Gergely and is scheduled for June 1983 publication in the periodical Nagyvilág. Professor Egri's study of the play and its diverse literary and dramatic parentage, which is scheduled for the same issue, will also appear in a future issue of the Newsletter.

9. ICEMAN COMETH NOT. February 28, 1983, was to have marked the opening of a revival of The Iceman Cometh, reuniting the star (Jason Robards) and director (José Quintero) of the historic Circle in the Square production of 1956, and opening in New York after an initial week in Wilmington, Delaware, and a month at the Kennedy Center in Washington, which had agreed to share the costs with Circle in the Square. However, a maze of problems, largely financial--salaries, royalties, and the unavailability of film and television rights--but also involving Mr. Robards' decision to accept another commitment, beset the venture and the plan was cancelled. Herbert Mitgang, who detailed the problems at length in the New York Times ("Why 'Iceman Cometh' Did Not Arrive This Year," March 7, p. C11), noted that they "illuminate the complexities and frustrations of today's theatre--nonprofit as well as commercial. The story of this production that never was is a tale without villains, except perhaps present-day American theater itself, which makes it forbiddingly difficult to stage certain modern classics."

One of the problems that particularly concerned this writer was the choice of a playhouse for the New York run. Because of union concessions to non-profit theatres, had the Circle in the Square been chosen, the expenses necessitated by "19 actors and a half-dozen standbys, plus stage-hands and the overtime costs required by the play's length" would have been considerably reduced. But, because Messrs. Quintero and Robards insisted "that 'Iceman' required a theater with a proscenium," Circle in the Square, a theatre in the round, was rejected. And the question that nags at me is, why? Why couldn't the play be just as effective in the round as behind a proscenium arch? Wouldn't the audience's greater proximity to the assembled pipe dreamers increase its sense of the atmosphere at Harry Hope's saloon? And wouldn't the more widely separated tables, scattered around the Circle's stage, each bathed in its own dim, isolating light, have increased the degree of division among the inmates that their convivial camaraderie cannot belie? Perhaps not. Perhaps the production at Circle in the Square ten years ago, starring James Earl Jones, proved that an Iceman-in-the-round is not effective. I'd like to know, and welcome responses from anyone who has seen or been involved in a production that was not traditionally staged. Of course a New York theatre was but one of the many problems that toppled the 1983 plan, but it would be sad indeed if a new generation were denied the chance to experience a Quintero-Robards Iceman because of (even if only partly because of) a premature rejection of experimentation. --FCW

10. QUINTERO, EAST & WEST. José Quintero has been named artistic director of the Spingold Theater at Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, where he will also serve as Spingold Professor of Theater Arts and head a new graduate program for
directors. He will direct Saroyan's *The Time of Your Life* next fall at the Spingold—the first of a four-play series that he calls "a celebration of American plays"—and will oversee an additional series of four plays by contemporary American playwrights at the university's smaller Laurie Theater. Being in residence at Brandeis only during the fall semester will permit him to continue the development of his new Chaplin-O'Neill Theater in Los Angeles, which was mentioned on p. 55 of the Summer-Fall 1982 issue of the Newsletter. His plan to involve some of his Waltham directing students in the Los Angeles venture will not only span the continent; it will also further his desire "to erase the barriers between educational theater and professional theater, which looms as very frightening and far away." (*New York Times*, February 18, 1983, p. C2.)

11. O'NEILL AT CONVENTIONS AND CONFERENCES. In addition to the special session on O'Neill at next December's MLA Convention in New York City (see the O'Neill Society section in this issue for details), three other recent or imminent 1983 conferences have included the playwright on their roster of events:

(1) The Northeast Modern Language Association Convention, Erie, PA, April 14: "The 'Americanism' of Eugene O'Neill's Comedy, *Ah Wilderness!*," a paper by Ward B. Lewis of the University of Georgia.

(2) The Midwest Meeting of the Conference on Christianity and Literature, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA, April 23: "Lazarus Laughed: Eugene O'Neill's Modern Passion Play," a paper by John Steven Paul of Valparaiso University, Indiana.

(3) The American Theatre Association Convention in Minneapolis, MN, August 7: "Biblical Myth in Modern Drama: Strindberg, O'Neill, Shaffer." Participants: Harry Carlson, Shelly Regenbaum and James Chapman. Chair: Alvin Keller. Location: Hyatt Regency, Minneapolis. Time: 12:00-1:30 p.m.

12. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS.


*Desire Under the Elms*. Announced as part of the six-play 1983-84 season of the Roundabout Theatre Company, 333 West 23rd Street, New York City 10011 (tel. 212-924-7160). The cast will include Philip Bosco (see first *Ah Wilderness!* listing above), and the production will be reviewed in a future issue of the Newsletter.

*The Great God Brown*, dir. David Wheeler. Laurie/Merrick Theater, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, April 11-15, 1984. To be reviewed in a subsequent issue of the Newsletter.

*The Last Harbour--Reflections of the Sea*, an original work by Tony Rizzo. St. Mary's College Theatre, Moraga, CA, April 9, 1983. Mr. Rizzo's work, which was first presented with great success at Tao House several years ago, is described as "Mr. O'Neill's interpretation of the men and women that he knew and lived with in his early years as a sailor. Scenes from such plays as *Anna Christie,*
The Hairy Ape, Bound East for Cardiff and The Long Voyage Home have been collected to give a broad view of how the sea affected its children and those left behind. To bring the entire picture together, Mr. O'Neill himself, portrayed by an actor, addresses the audience, giving his thoughts on what has transpired.

Long Day's Journey Into Night, dir. Geraldine Fitzgerald. The all-black production that originated at the Richard Allen Center in New York City (see review in the Spring 1981 issue, pp. 10-12) appeared at the Empire State Institute for the Performing Arts in Albany for two performances on November 18, 1982.


Strange Interlude. Boston Shakespeare Company, 1983-1984 season. The BSC production, a part of the company's first season under its new artistic director Peter Sellars, will be divided into two parts performed on consecutive evenings. Performance dates will be announced as soon as they are known, and a review will appear in a future issue of the Newsletter. The impatient may call the BSC at 617-267-5630.

13. STEIN TO HEAD COLUMBIA CENTER. Howard Stein has been named chairman of the Oscar Hammerstein II Center for Theater Studies at Columbia University. Dr. Stein, formerly associate dean at the Yale School of Drama, chairman of the drama department at the University of Texas at Austin, and dean of the Division of Theater Arts and Film at the State University of New York at Purchase, is working on a volume of criticism on O'Neill for Prentice-Hall.

14. DATA CENTER AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE. Of interest not just to O'Neillians but to all drama scholars and theatre professionals is the Theatre Research Data Center that will soon be initiated at the Theatre Department of Brooklyn College. Supported by a $160,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Center will (in the words of an announcement from the College) "organize the efforts of over 90 international scholars and institutions in gathering and indexing published materials concerned with theatrical performances around the world. The annotated entries will be gathered in a computerized data bank from which will be generated the American Society for Theatre Research's annual bibliography. Eventually the data bank will be set up to respond to outline inquiries of scholars and artists searching for published materials written on most aspects of theatre production and performance." The director of the project is Brooklyn College professor Benito Ortolani.

15. TO ERR IS HUMAN.... Thanks to Carol Roche, a graduate student in English at Boston College, for sharing two authorial boo-boos that the students in Kristin Morrison's graduate seminar on O'Neill discovered while reading Seven Plays of the Sea (New York: Vintage Books, 1972). The first concerns Nat Bartlett in Where the Cross Is Made. On p. 147 he "sits down, resting his elbows, his chin on his hands." Can this be the same Nat whose "right arm has been amputated at the shoulder" (p. 138)? The second concerns Luke in The Rope, who is described on p. 179 as being a "young fellow about twenty-five." And yet we learn before he arrives that he had run away from home "just when he was sixteen" (p. 171) and that at present "it's five years he's been gone" (p. 173). Addition (16 + 5) suggests that Luke must be 21, not 25. (Anent the Bartlett arm, the error does not appear in the British edition, first published by Jonathan Cape in 1923. There, Nat "sits down, resting his elbow, his chin on his hand." One must conclude that, in this instance, the error was not the playwright's. --Ed.)
16. A RESPONSE TO ROBERT BUTLER. Ms. Roche also takes genial issue with Robert Butler's comment, in the Spring 1981 issue of the Newsletter (p. 4), about the ending of The Iceman Cometh. In Butler's words, "the 'weird cacophony' of the people simultaneously singing a bewildering assortment of cheap popular songs is suggestive of the garble of sounds which brings Ionesco's The Chairs to such a terrifying close." Roche's reply: "A better comparison might be made with Ionesco's The Bald Soprano, where the Martins and the Smiths (much like the members of Harry Hope's saloon) each make their own noises at the end, with no one voice predominant, whereas, at the conclusion of The Chairs, the only speaker is the Orator, who mumbles 'Mmmm, Mmmm, Gueue, Gou, Gu. Mmmm, Mmmm, Mmmm, Mmmm,' as he glides out like a ghost."

17. THREE MORE O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS THIS SUMMER.


A Moon for the Misbegotten, dir. John Morrison. Dorset (VT) Theatre Festival, July 21-30, 1983. (included in item 12's list, but without director's name.)


IMMINENT O'NEILL CONFERENCE: AN UPDATE

Readers of the Summer-Fall issue of the Newsletter (pp. 55-56) are already well aware of the international conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Early Years" that will be held at Suffolk University in Boston next spring. And viewers of the Winter 1982 issue (p. 51) have seen the evocative poster created for the event by the Newsletter's associate editor and aesthete, Marshall Brooks. All that is needed now, in advance of the conference program that will accompany a future issue, is to add the specific dates to the then-incomplete poster--the dates of the conference are March 22-25, 1984--and to give some early, sketchy, appetite-whetting indication of the events that are scheduled for the enlightenment and regalement of the participants.

Perhaps I should precede that with an attempt to explain or clarify the conference's title, in public response to those writers who have asked what I mean by O'Neill's "early years." It's a worthy question, and one that defies an easy answer, since there are late plays by O'Neill (supreme among them, of course, being Long Day's Journey) that cover, with only the lightest of fictionalizing gauze, the playwright's early years! And I would hardly exclude mention at the conference of works such as these. But I have chosen to deny central prominence to those written and produced after 1934, the year that Days Without End (1932-33) was produced at the Guild Theatre on January 8. The subsequent plays, from A Touch of the Poet on, are regularly treated on page, stage and podium; and to feature them would defeat my initial goal in setting up the conference--to give equal time to the underrated early plays that have been denied the attention they deserve. So if you wish to present a paper--and I will still be happy to consider proposals--please concentrate on plays that predate, in their composition, 1935.

It is clear from the proposals and suggestions I have already received that the three days of the conference--from noon on Thursday the 22nd to approximately the same hour on Sunday the 25th--will be filled with exciting events. (I've
eschewed the early notion of running multiple sessions simultaneously, except perhaps the rescreenings of films and videotapes, since I decided that everyone should be able to attend and participate in everything that takes place, even if my scheduling powers buckle in the attempt!) Especially appealing for visitors from afar will be the day trip, by bus, to the Monte Cristo cottage in New London, CT, where curator Sally Pavetti and assistant curator Louis McDonald will guide us through the renovated environs that provided the setting for *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Long Day's Journey*, and where we will view the award-winning multi-media study of the cottage, the town, and O'Neill's years there, by Boston artist Todd Gipstein. (Copyright restrictions prevent its being shown at the conference itself, though a videotaped introduction to the area and the two plays set there—a tape prepared some years back by the Milwaukee Repertory Theatre—will be shown in Boston, prior to the trip.) And for the stay-at-homes there will be a festival of films of O'Neill's earlier plays—*The Emperor Jones*, *The Long Voyage Home*, *Strange Interlude*, *Ah, Wilderness!* and at least one of the screen versions of *Anna Christie* (the Blanche Sweet silent)—which will be repeated at other hours for the day-trippers. Also available throughout the conference will be (1) an exhibit of books by and about O'Neill, including some inscribed editions; (2) a display of photos of recent performances of the early plays; and (3) a media room, in which audiotapes of lectures presented elsewhere and slides of the original productions of a number of the plays will be available for listening and viewing.

Evenings will include, in addition to the Thursday banquet, a variety of live performances: David Wheeler's monodrama "Here Before You...Eugene O'Neill," performed by its author; a program of O'Neill one-acts, including 'Ile, and the recreation of the July 15, 1915 double bill in Provincetown that heralded the birth of the Provincetown Players. (See the first item in this issue's "news, notes and queries" section for the titles and the extra features that will accompany that performance.)

Of course it is the daytime roster of papers and panels that provides the conference's basic raison d'être. Excluding some that are still in the discussion stage, and providing in a few cases titles that have not been approved by the speakers, I offer some of the already scheduled guests and their topics:

*Thomas Adler, Purdue U.: "Beyond Synge: O'Neill's *Anna Christie.*"

*Frank Cunningham, U. of S. Dakota: "Romantic Elements in the Early O'Neill."

*Michael Hinden, U. of Wisconsin: "Eugene O'Neill and American History."

*Yasuko Ikeuchi, Ritsumeikan U., Kyoto, Japan: "O'Neill and American Adolescence."

Ward Lewis, U. of Georgia: "The Reception of O'Neill's Early Plays in Germany" and/or "O'Neill and Hauptmann."

*Veenu Luthria, Tiruchirapalli, India: "Emperor Jones: Adlerian Excursus on Criminality."

*Michael Manheim, U. of Toledo: "O'Neill's Early Debt to Melodrama."

*Gerald Ratliff, Montclair St. College: "O'Neill: Playwright-Philosopher, 1914-1924."

*Yvonne Shafer, Ohio State U.: "O'Neill and Expressionism."

*Edward Shaughnessy, Butler U.: "O'Neill's Early Plays in Ireland."

*Susan Tuck, Indiana U.: "Black Characterization in *All God's Chillun* and in Faulkner."


*Paul Voelker, U. of Wisconsin Center-Richland: "The Case for *Servitude,*" and "The Overlooked Merits of O'Neill's First Play" (the first a discussion following the videotaped performance of *Servitude*'s US premiere).
In addition there will be a keynote address at the banquet (speaker "to be announced"), and a series of panels, followed by general discussions, on acting, directing and teaching O'Neill. For all of them, volunteer participants are welcome, as are volunteer moderators for the various sections into which the paper presentations will be divided.

Anent the "Teaching O'Neill" discussion, which I hope will include practitioners in secondary as well as higher education, I sound herewith a specific call for volunteers. If you have had experiences, good or bad, in teaching works by O'Neill, or in constructing a course devoted solely to O'Neill, that merit sharing with colleagues; if you have reached answers to such questions as these--

*Which plays are the most teachable? and which defy pedagogic presentation?
*Which two (or three) plays, in a broader course, best represent the O'Neill oeuvre?
*Which one, for that matter, if O'Neill's time in a course must be extremely brief?
*Should an O'Neill course be organized chronologically, thematically or generically?

--then I hope you will consider joining a panel that will provide a springboard for the fuller discussion of all who attend. If you have a syllabus, course reading list or examination redolent of remembered success, bring multiple copies—or bring one and we'll make copies before the session. Naturally the panel cannot be too large, or there will be no time (or people) left for the general discussion! So write quickly, suggesting briefly what your contribution might be, if you wish your name in that part of the program.

What I request of all program participants, by December 1 at the very latest, is a brief list of biographical details, plus a paper (if you are to deliver one) or a likely outline (if you are opting for spontaneity). Since a book of the proceedings is likely, correctness/completeness are fervently urged!

The nearby Parker House hotel will offer rooms to conference participants at reduced rates—$75 per night for a single, $90 for a double—if the reservation is made via the conference application blank. (The rate, even as reduced, remains admittedly steep, and I will scout the outlying areas for comelier-priced accommodations.) I hope the application blank will be ready for mailing with this issue. If it is not, expect it, along with much more information, in the Summer-Fall issue, that will (I promise) reach you ere summer's end. In the interim I'll be working to assure us (in the words of a favorite toast of James O'Neill, Sr.’s) "sunny days and starry nights" next March—though, remembering Nettie Fowler's description of the leonine qualities of a New England March (in Carousel), I speak only metaphorically, not meteorologically! --FCW

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FOR YOUR "BOOK OF MEMORY"

Lest you overlook, forget or delay action on them, a mini-repeat of two offerings mentioned in this issue that will repay celerity of response:

*Provincetown on Labor Day weekend: a recreation of the soon-to-be Players' very first double-bill of one-acts (see item 1, page 27).

*The limited-edition 1984 Eugene O'Neill calendar from Tao House—an aid to TH's restoration and a dandy gift (see item 4, page 28).
PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

LINDA BEN-ZVI is Associate Professor of English at Colorado State University. Her essay, "Exiles, The Great God Brown, and the Specter of Nietzsche" (Modern Drama, September, 1981, pp. 251-269), was summarized in the Winter 1981 issue of the Newsletter (pp. 25-26), and her "Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill" was featured in the "O'Neill's Women" issue (Summer-Fall 1982, pp. 21-29).

MARSHALL BROOKS, editor of Nostoc, is associate editor, art director and layout honcho of the Newsletter. His poster for the 1984 O'Neill conference, with its boy-man, sea-horizon, seagull-fish and Ikala allusions, sums up much of the era to be covered, delights the editor, and will be available, in a silkscreen reproduction, as a purchasable souvenir of the conference.

THOMAS F. CONNOLLY, a 1983 graduate of Suffolk University, will begin graduate work in English at Boston University next fall while continuing his recent activities as coordinator-planner for the 1984 conference. No stranger to boards and buskin, Mr. Connolly capped his undergraduate career with back-to-back performances, this spring, as the Duke in the musical Two Gentlemen of Verona and as Pentheus in Euripides' The Bacchae.

ALVIN J. GORDON is a poet, writer, film maker and producer, and most recently founder of the Educational Goals Study Group in Sonoma, CA. The editor is grateful to Professor Michael Hinden, who suggested that Mr. Gordon set down the recollections that appear in this issue.

WILLIAM L. SIPPLE teaches at Waynesburg College. He delivered the paper in this issue at the special session on "Eugene O'Neill and Film," directed by Professor Eugene K. Hanson, at the 1983 MLA convention in Los Angeles.

SUSAN TUCK, of Indiana University, is a regular contributor to the Newsletter's pages, her last appearance being a two-part essay on "O'Neill and Frank Wedekind" in the Spring and Summer-Fall 1982 issues (pp. 29-35 and 17-21 respectively). Her Eugene O'Neill's Critics: Voices from Abroad, co-edited with Horst Frenz, will be published by the Southern Illinois University Press this fall.

FREDERICK C. WILKINS is weaving an ornate welcome mat o'er which he hopes to greet you all in Boston next March.
Eugene O'Neill—the Early Years

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