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EDITOR'S FOREWORD: THE CONFERENCE CORNUCOPIA

Having waxed presidential in the Society section and laced the news pages with conference notes and messages, I can (almost) hold my diaskeuastal tongue for once and list, in semi-random order, the titles (and deliverers) of papers so far scheduled for the May conference—an impressive roster that should fill most of my relinquished page.

"The Later O'Neill and Human Memory" (John Henry Raleigh).
"Calendar and Memory: The Function of Time in O'Neill's Final Plays" (Laurin R. Porter).
"Freedom vs. Fixity in the Plays of O'Neill" (Linda Ben-Zvi).
"O'Neill's Plans for the Cycle" (Donald Gallup).
"Two Versions of More Stately Mansions: A Comparison Study" (Martha Bower).
"O'Neill's Transcendence of Melodrama in the Last Plays" (Michael Manheim).
"The Not-So-Noble Peasant: O'Neill's Parody of 19th Century Irish-American Melodrama in Moon for the Misbegotten" (Joyce Flynn).
"O'Neill and Comedy: The Iceman Cometh" (Normand Berlin).
"Love's Labor Dispossessed: The Complexities of a Friendship" [the O'Neills and the Connines] (Travis Bogard).
"Robards as Hickey: One Role and Two Performances" [1960 & 1985-86] (Steve Vineberg).
"Taoism in O'Neill's Tao House Plays" (Haiping Liu).
"O'Neill in Mourning: A Reexamination of the Playwright's Life and Art" (Stephen A. Black).
"Waiting for the Dough: O'Neill's Hughie" (Steven F. Bloom).
"Gambling Themselves Away: The Survival Game in Hughie" (Yasuko Ikeuchi).
"In Ibsen's Back Room: Related Patterns in Iceman Cometh and The Wild Duck" (Yvonne Shafer).
"O'Neill's 'Death of a Salesman': The Archetypal Salesman in American Drama" (Richard Hornby).
"Wrestling with the Angel in the House: Mary Tyrone's Long Journey" (Bette Mandl).
"Ghost Stories: Mary Tyrone and Iceman's Absent Women" (James A. Robinson).
"Mothers and Virgins: Mary Tyrone, Josie Hogan, and Their Antecedents" (Judith E. Barlow).
"The Role of the 'Great Mother' in Long Day's Journey Into Night" (John G. Peters).
"A Crutch of the Poet" [Con Melody and his wife and daughter] (Albert Bermel).
"A Cold Wind from the Hell Hole: Casting and Rehearsing the Iceman of 1946" (Gary Vena).
"O'Neill and the Marionette: Uber and Otherwise" (Lowell S. Swartzell).
"O'Neill's Late Works on the Postwar German Stage" (Ward B. Lewis).
"The Tyriones in Dublin: Four Journeys to the Abbey" (Edward L. Shaughnessy).
"Edmund's Triptych: The Fusion of the Lyric and Dramatic in Long Day's Journey" (Peter Egri).
"Wonders in the Wings: O'Neill's Unfinished Projects" (Virginia Floyd).
"Native Eloquence': Multiple Voices in Long Day's Journey" (Jean Chothia).
"American Flowers of Evil: Long Day's Journey Into Night and Baudelaire" (Marc Maufort).
"The Melodys and the Hogans: Fathers and Daughters in the Late O'Neill" (Jean Anne Waterstradt).
"'Daddy spoke to me!': Gods Lost and Found in Long Day's Journey and Ingmar Bergman's Through a Glass Darkly" (Thomas P. Adler).
"Preparing the World Premiere of Long Day's Journey" (Tom J. A. Olsson).
And that's not all, folks! There's also the Thursday pre-conference, a blast-off toward the centennial year co-directed by Jackson R. Bryer and Paul D. Voelker, leaders (respectively) of the scholarly and theatrical contingents. And an expanded "teaching O'Neill" panel discussion chaired by Marvis Voelker; plus a new panel on "Performing O'Neill," a sharing of views by actors, directors and designers chaired by Sheila Hickey Garvey. And a lobster dinner, a Sunday brunch, and a cash bar sponsored by the O'Neill Society. Not to mention (though I will) large screen showings of Long Day's Journey, The Iceman Cometh and Bergman's Through a Glass Darkly, and a rare tape (courtesy of the N. Y. Public Library at Lincoln Center) of the 1960 "Play of the Week" tv production of Iceman with Jason Robards, directed by Sidney Lumet. And a morning memory session, "Remembering O'Neill & Co."--an hour of oral history by those who (like Paul Shyre and Charles Metten) knew O'Neill or his associates. Plus the sales room, an even more extensive media room, and, of course, three evenings to cherish: the new PBS documentary, "O'Neill - a Glory of Ghosts"; a production of Hughie; and a tribute to the playwright featuring José Quintero, Geraldine Fitzgerald, and other surprise guests (very likely a surprise to us both, dear reader!). I'm sure I've left a lot out, but I think it's safe to say that there will be something for everyone and more than enough for anyone! For fuller details on some of the above, check the news section near issue's end. See you in May--if I last till then! --FCW
Władysław Reymont's place in Polish literature is well established. What is less well known is his influence on other major writers. In this paper, we outline some striking similarities between Reymont's Nobel Prize-winning novel, The Peasants, and Eugene O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms. We present evidence that O'Neill could have been familiar with Reymont's work when writing Desire Under the Elms, and suggest that he may have been influenced by it.

I

O'Neill is known to have borrowed heavily from Classical drama, and it has been assumed that Desire Under the Elms was to some extent modelled after Euripides' Hippolytus and influenced by intermediate adaptations of the Greek tragedy, such as Racine's Phaedra (Racey). The Hippolytus myth belongs, in turn, to a large and cohesive group of stories that feature what has been called the "lustful stepmother" motif (Yohannan). The plots of all the stories in that group are essentially identical: a woman who occupies a maternal position vis-à-vis the young hero attempts to seduce him and, failing to do so (because of his unwillingness to commit quasi-incest), accuses him of raping her or of attempting to do so. Besides the Hippolytus myth itself, the best known examples of this group are the Egyptian "Tale of Two Brothers" (Erman 151f), the Biblical story of "Joseph and Potiphar's Wife" (Genesis 39.1-23), and the story of Bellerophon and Stheneboea (Apollodorus, Library II.3). A similar tale is told of Peleus, the father of Achilles (Apollodorus, Library III.13). It should be noted that Hippolytus is unusual among these stories in that the lustful stepmother, Phaedra, actually compasses the hero's death.

Despite similarities to Hippolytus and the other "lustful stepmother" stories, O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms differs from them in a number of crucial respects. Unlike the protagonists in the ancient stories, the stepmother in O'Neill's play (Abbie) and the young hero (Eben) actually do have an affair. In addition, Desire Under the Elms is set in an agrarian ambience that is not paralleled in the other versions of the story: in the ancient versions, the events unfold on the upper strata of society. The Greek versions are placed in royal households, and Potiphar is a member of the palace guard. It is true that Bata and Anubis, the Egyptian brothers, seem to live on a farm; but they are also deities and their story is enacted, as its translator remarks, in a supernatural world (Erman 150). Although it is characteristic of ancient literature to deal with kings, heroes and deities, and for modern protagonists to be relatively commonplace, it is the particular character of this humble ambience and the specific ways in which O'Neill creates it that are important here.

One of O'Neill's chief tools in evoking the rustic ambience is the archaic, rural New England dialect that his characters use. The effect of the dialect on the audience is complex. It keeps us constantly aware of the rural setting of the play and of the fact that its characters are simple farm folk. They are not so well educated or sophisticated as we, but their language does have a vigor and charm that we admire. This, in turn, seems to reflect or embody the natural beauty of the

1The phrase "lustful stepmother" is somewhat misleading. In the stories belonging to the group, the lustful lady is variously stepmother, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, teacher's wife, master's wife or simply queen. What is constant is that she is a mother surrogate vis-à-vis the hero. Jerzy R. Krzyżanowski emphasizes the motif of incest in his analysis of The Peasants in Władysław Stanisław Reymont (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), p. 78. Though slightly inaccurate, the "tale of the lustful stepmother" has a certain euphony that the "tale of the lustful mother surrogate" lacks and so we have retained the usage throughout.
play's physical setting, as, for example, in the opening exchange between Eben and his half brothers as they watch the setting sun at the end of the working day:

Eben. God! Purty! ...
Simeon. (grudgingly) Purty.
Peter. Ay-eh. (O'Neill 203-204)

There is no comparable use of language among the ancient versions of the tale of the lustful stepmother.

O'Neill's language is both the chief vehicle for the creation of the drama's distinctive ambience and also typical of that ambience. In every aspect, setting and character penetrate each other. Prominent natural elements are personified explicitly or implicitly, while the protagonists, in turn, seem to have absorbed their personalities from the setting.

The most conspicuous example of the personification of natural elements is the pair of elm trees that overhang the Cabot farmhouse:

The two trees seem to have been inspired in part by the statues of Aphrodite and Artemis that flank the action of Euripides' Hippolytus, and they obviously retain the symbolic value of the statues as embodiments of destructive feminine force. Moreover, Euripides' text includes a brief lyrical outburst involving trees. Lines 215 and following have the hysterical Phaedra begging her nurse to let her go hunting: "Send me to the mountain. I will go to the forest and to the pines, where hounds go tracking the dappled deer." Yet this and several similar allusions to the beauty of nature in Euripides' play cannot be adduced as models for the prominence of the natural setting in Desire. Like the Cabot house beneath the elms, O'Neill's characters seem on the verge of being absorbed into their setting. This is not true of Euripides. On the contrary, in Hippolytus and Greek tragedy in general, nature tends to be dwarfed by contrast with the vivid and outsized protagonists.

The Egyptian Tale of Two Brothers also provides some parallels for the treatment of nature by O'Neill. Trees, for example, loom large in the later part of Bata's story, when, after being exonerated from the charge of rape, he retires to the mysterious Valley of the Cedar, and hides his heart for safekeeping in the cedar for which the valley is named.² In addition, just as Ephraim Cabot sleeps in his barn with his cows, to whom he imputes superior wisdom, so Bata is able to converse with his cows. Indeed, their warning saves him from being fatally ambushed by the jealous Anubis. These similarities, however, like Phaedra's longing for pines, are isolated and undoubtedly coincidental.

Not only does O'Neill personify elements in the play's natural setting; he also makes his human characters draw some of their personality traits from their surroundings. This is most conspicuously true of Ephraim Cabot. Although there is softness and sensuality in his character, he has done his best to assimilate himself to the hardness of the rocky fields that he farms. He interprets this, in turn, as a reflection of God's own character. His speech to Abbie in the second scene of Part Two illustrates these tendencies:

²In a still later episode, Bata is even transformed into a Persea tree. It's a long story!
When I come here fifty odd year ago— I was jest twenty an' the strongest an' hardest ye ever seen—ten times as strong an' fifty times as hard as Eben. Waal—this place was nothin' but fields o' stones. Folks laughed when I tuk it. They couldn't know what I knewed. When ye kin make corn sprout out o' stones, God's livin' in yew! They wa'n't strong enuf fur that! They reckoned God was easy. They laughed. They don't laugh no more. (236)

O'Neill's stern father figure is unusual among lustful stepmother stories. In most instances, the father figure is somewhat colorless—sympathetic enough to deserve the hero's loyalty and yet easily gulled by his wife. Hippolytus' father, Theseus, a passionate adventurer, is an exception, but he has nothing in common with Ephraim Cabot—except for some experience in digging up boulders.

Just as life at close quarters with nature has produced Cabot's extreme toughness, so also it fosters occasional outbursts of exuberant vitality. This is evidenced in the drunken banter and wild dancing at the party with which Part Three commences. Despite the tension between the insufferably proud father, Ephraim, and his incredulous neighbors, the overall impression of the scene is one of unrestrained joviality and spontaneity.

II

Desire Under the Elms is based, then, to some extent, on Euripides' Hippolytus. Yet it changes the plot of Hippolytus in a basic way: there is an actual love affair between the stepmother and the young hero. O'Neill also introduces a distinctive rustic ambience, which is given prominence by his use of an archaic dialect that is a constant reminder of its presence. Moreover, this ambience is typified by natural elements that are personified, especially the overhanging elms, and by the reverse: characters who seem to have derived their personalities from qualities of the natural setting. (Ephraim Cabot's toughness is the most prominent case in point.) Neither this ambience as a whole nor any of its constituent parts are modelled on Euripides' Hippolytus, nor on any of the "lustful stepmother" tales mentioned so far.

It is of course possible that this ambience is simply the product of O'Neill's fertile imagination. However, the rural setting is not characteristic of his work, and it is suggestive and perhaps significant that a virtually identical ambience occurs in a slightly earlier version of the stepmother tale—one which, like Desire Under the Elms, includes the consummation of an affair between stepmother and young hero. This work is Władysław Reymont's epic novel, The Peasants (Reymont). Published between 1902 and 1909, The Peasants is the story of the Boryna family and their village of Lipce. And not only is the rural dialect of the region featured prominently, but The Peasants and Desire Under the Elms contain striking and pervasive similarities in setting, characterization and plot. In the next section we outline a number of the most remarkable parallels.

III

Both stories are set in rural communities where the beauty and power of nature dwarf the human inhabitants. The importance of the natural element in Desire has been discussed above. The four volumes of The Peasants—named after the seasons of the year, beginning with Autumn—all contain extensive paeans to the rugged beauty of Lipce. The permanence of the village, its fixed setting in the universe, is observed by Agata, an itinerant beggar, when she returns after two seasons' absence: "And Lipce stood on this side and that of the pond, as it had stood no doubt ever since the world began, buried in its widespreading orchards, and in the undergrowths of its enclosures" (S, 12-13).
Both O'Neill and Reymont find in trees, which they personify, their favorite symbol for the forces of nature. O'Neill's description of the elms was cited above. In much the same way, Reymont personifies the trees that are cut down by the local gentry:

> There fell enormous pine-trees, green with the moss of age; and firs, arrayed in their dark verdure, and spruces with their many outspread arms; oak-trees, too, fell, with dry russet leaves still upon them, and overgrown with gray lichens as with beards—ancestors of the forest that the thunderbolt would not blast, and the lapses of centuries had failed to crumble, now succumbed to the axe!...

> Groaning, the forest was slowly giving up its life as the trees fell: though these were like brave men in a battle, who, packed close and propped up by one another, fall little by little, giving way only to resistless might, and without a cry topple over into the jaws of death by whole ranks at a time. (W, 276)

The characters of the two patriarchs, Boryna and Cabot, are identical in many respects. They are both strong in spite of their years, and they occupy major positions in their communities. Yagustynka and Vavrek, two villagers, describe Boryna:

> "Boryna is still hale, he may marry again...."
> "Hale he is, but over sixty."
> "Never fear, Vavrek; any girl would have him, if he only asked her."
> "He has buried two wives already." (A, 13)

Boryna is "as the stalwart oak" (A, 215). "His gait was full of mettle, and he looked surprisingly young. Clean-shaven, with hair newly cut, and his wedding-suit on, he made a rarely handsome figure; besides which, portly and broad-shouldered as he was, the dignified expression both of his features and his whole outer man made him conspicuous from afar" (A, 213). When Dominikova—whose daughter, Yagna, Boryna seeks as his third wife—reminds Boryna politely, "Only note this: you are somewhat elderly. Besides, we are all mortal," Boryna responds: "Oh, but I am hale—good for a score of years yet. Never you fear!" (A, 161).

Boryna, like Cabot, is strong, proud, stubborn and tough. His neighbors "knew too well that headstrong pride of his, for which he would let himself be roasted alive without uttering a cry; they also knew how he always considered himself above the others, how he would give himself airs, and consider himself the best in the village" (W, 161). "Always had he been a hard man, and a stubborn; but now he had turned into stone" (W, 258). "His hand was heavy on everybody, and when he laid it on anyone, that one must bend even to the ground, and all things be done according to his will" (W, 259). "He was a farmer and the son and descendant of farmers—the foremost man in Lipce" (Su, 12).

Cabot is described as "seventy-five, tall and gaunt, with great, wiry, concentrated power, but stoop-shouldered from toil" (221). When he is irritated by the neighbors' laughter at the start of Part Three and steps forward, "glaring about him," "there is an immediate silence," and they respond to his harangue with "a grumble of resentment," "but they are all evidently in too much awe of him to express it openly" (249).

Both patriarchs, exhausted by long years of toil and widowed twice, feel similarly lonely. Here is Boryna:

> Now he was as lonely as a signpost. There was no one he could complain or tell things to.... He had to think of everything, and make up his mind, and care for everything all by himself—a dog's life!... Never could he speak to anyone, nor get any advice or assistance (A, 24). He was a poor, desolate man, with no one on earth to advise him (A, 35).
Old Cabot, reminiscing about his life, reveals similar feelings:

I was hard an' He made me hard fur it. All the time I kept gittin' lonesomer. I tuk a wife.... I was allus lonesome. She died.... The farm growed. It was all mine! When I thought of that I didn't feel lonesome. But ye can't hitch yer mind t' one thin' day an' night. I tuk another wife--Eben's Maw.... She was purty--but soft. She tried t' be hard. She couldn't. She never knew me nor nothin'. It was lonesome 'n hell with her (237).

Still, he takes a third wife, because the potential lonesomeness of incompatibility is less terrifying than the lonesomeness of isolation: "A hum's got t' hev a woman" (221).

Both Boryna and Cabot are suspicious and distrustful. Witness Boryna's house and its owner:

As when a broken vessel has been repaired with wire woven around it, it indeed looks whole, yet somehow leaks and lets the water through, though the place of leakage is invisible to the eye, so was it likewise in that hut:... through unseen fissures, the secret mistrust it contained came forward by drops; and though resentment was no more so keen, suspicion still remained alive and undying [W, 164]. Hard as he tried, the old man could not quite rid himself of this distrust [W, 165]. Thenceforward he had no peace. Every evening he watched in secret, hiding behind corners, making the round of the house and the messuages, looking under the thatches; and often, waking up at night, he would listen for hours together or, jumping out of bed, go round the premises with his dog [W, 167].

Cabot is also aware that something is wrong in his household: "Even the music can't drive it out--somethin' ye kin feel droppin' off the elums, climbin' up the roof, sneakin' down the chimney, pokin' in the corners!" (253). He is right. When Eben tells Abbie, "The old critter's liable t' suspicion an' come sneakin' up," she responds, with "a confident laugh": "Let him! I kin allus pull the wool over his eyes" (245).

The patriarchs' sons, Antek and Eben, and their lovers, Yagna and Abbie, are defined essentially by their rebellious attitudes towards the old men, and so strike the reader as similar characters themselves.

Reymont's and O'Neill's stories unfold in similar ways, and the similarities are much closer than is rendered necessary, or even likely, by the mere presence in each work of the so-called Hippolytus motif. For example, both patriarchs marry young wives partly as an affirmation of their continuing virility, and both choose to celebrate their victories in this area in the same way--by vigorous dancing in the presence of the community. The scenes are remarkably similar. Boryna (Cabot) enjoys himself at a festive occasion. His son Antek (Eben) is absent and his young wife Yagna (Abbie) is gloomy and irritable. The guests enjoy the festivity, but are well aware of the situation and do not refrain from spiteful comments. Despite the tension, Boryna (Cabot) treats them to a display of vigorous dancing. A few passages from both scenes will illustrate the similarity.

Holding Yagna in a strong grip, Boryna lifted the skirts of his capote over each arm, settled his hat upon his head, clicked his heels together, and set off, swift as the wind!

Ah! but how he danced! Now turning round and round, now with a backward step, now bringing his foot down as if he would stamp the floor to shivers....

Furiously, unceasingly, the players went on playing the Mazur dance!

The crowds in the corners and at the door looked on in silent wonder: Boryna was so indefatigably active, and ever at higher and higher pressure, that he instilled not a few with riotous boisterousness. (A, 217-218)
[Cabot], unable to restrain himself any longer, prances into the midst of the dancers. [He] starts to dance, which he does very well and with tremendous vigor. Then he begins to improvise, cuts incredibly grotesque capers, leaping up and cracking his heels together, prancing around in a circle with body bent in an Indian war dance, then suddenly straightening up and kicking as high as he can with both legs. [The fiddler] starts "Pop, Goes the Weasel," increasing the tempo with every verse until at the end he is fiddling crazily as fast as he can go. [Finally, he] stops playing [and says] exhaustedly: "God A'mighty, I got enuf. Ye got the devil's strength in ye" (251).

Yagna is not happy: she "ate scarcely anything at all. In vain did Boryna urge and coax her, entreating her as one entreats a child to eat. She could not even swallow the meat before her; she was so hot, so tired!" (A, 222). "Just look at Yagna!" exclaims one guest: "Is she not gloomy as night?" (A, 224)

Abbie, likewise, is "very pale, her face is thin and drawn, her eyes are fixed anxiously on the open door in the rear as if waiting for someone" (247). Before she leaves the room, Cabot, like Boryna, speaks to his wife "with real solicitation":

Cabot: Air ye able fur the stairs? D'ye want me t' help ye, Abbie?
Abbie: No, I'm able. I'll be down agen soon.
Cabot: Don't ye git wore out! He needs ye, remember--our son does: (He grins affectionately, patting her on the back. She shrinks from his touch.)
Abbie: (dully) Don't--tech me. (252)

And the public response in both households is the same. Cabot's guests note clearly the tension between husband and wife, and Boryna's guests "began to make fun of him openly" (A, 222):

"Boryna's eyes are shining like a wildcat's."
"Say, like tinder, my friend--rotten tinder!"
"Aye, the man will weep over this day yet." ...
"But I'd lay my head that in no long time--say, before the Carnival begins--Yagna will again be running after the lads." ...
"All this will end ill. you will see. 'Tis no affair of mine, but to my mind, Antek and his family have been unjustly dealt with."
"Of Antek, too, people talk--say they have been seen together here and there." The voices dropped lower as the spiteful talk went on. (A, 224-225)

At the Cabots', the farmers and their wives evidently have some similar "secret joke in common. There is no end of winking, of nudging, of meaning nods of the head toward Cabot" (247). The fiddler is particularly outspoken:

Bet I kin tell ye, Abbie, what Eben's doin'! He's down t' the church offerin' up prayers o' thanksgivin'. (They all titter expectantly.)

A Man: What fur? (Another titter.)
Fiddler: 'Cause unto him a -- (He hesitates just long enough) brother is born!
(A roar of laughter.) (247)

And later:

Fiddler: (with a wink at the others) Ye're the spryest seventy-six ever I seees, Ephraim! Now if ye'd on'y good eye-sight...! ...!
A Woman: (loudly) What's happened in this house is plain as the nose on yer face! (252)

Although lonely and ridiculed, both Boryna and Cabot intend to hold on to the land they have worked so hard to acquire. It might be said that both Boryna and Cabot are similar in refusing to relinquish the privileges of youth at the appropriate time. Both display the same fault in respect to their land and their sons. Neither is willing to countenance a natural transition of control and ownership to his son.
Boryna is repeatedly adamant in refusing to share his property with Antek:

"I won't give in!" he almost cried aloud: "as long as I can move these limbs of mine, not one acre shall be given up to anyone!"  
(A, 25)

"The land is my own. Let anyone else dare claim my property!"  
(A, 33)

"While I live, you'll not have so much as a smell at my land!"  
(A, 41)

"No! Were I even to be quite ruined--made a beggar--no! Beg I may, but so long as I live, not one inch of my land will I give up...."  
(W, 186)

And Cabot, when Abbie asks if he might leave his land to Eben, answers:

Leave ...?  (Then with resentful obstinacy) I hain't a-givin' it t' no one!  
Abbie: (remorselessly) Ye can't take it with ye.  
Cabot: (thinks a moment--then reluctantly) No, I calc'late not.  
(After a pause--with a strange passion) But if I could, I would.  
by the Eternal! 'R if I could, in my dyin' hour, I'd set it afire an' watch it burn--this house an' every ear o' corn an' every tree down t' the last blade o' hay! I'd sit an' know it was all a-dyin' with me an' no one else'd ever own what was mine, what I'd made out o' nothin' with my own sweat 'n' blood!  
(232)

Each son claims that the property is rightfully his. Eben: "Didn't he slave Maw to death? ... It was her farm! Didn't he steal it from her? She's dead. It's my farm" (207-208). And Antek is advised by his brother-in-law, the smith: "We can fall back on the courts of justice. And there is another point besides: the land he got as your mother's dowry. ... For so many years he has sown therein and garnered therefrom! For these he must pay you well, aye, and with percentage too!... And if he is after all unwilling to give the promise, the law may then come in and force him" (A, 188).

The conflict leads to violent confrontation in both cases. Boryna declares, "Mine the land is, and I can do with it as I please" (A, 196). Antek shouts his defiance, and physical conflict ensues.

Boryna, in a paroxysm of rage, struck him such a blow in the face that he fell with his head breaking the pane of a glazed press, which he brought to the floor with him. Springing up instantly, streaming with blood, he charged his father. They both rushed at each other like mad dogs, with a mutual clutch, driving and being driven backward and forward about the room, pushing and hurling one another against the bed, the great trunk, the walls, till their heads rang again.... They rolled down upon the floor, so closely gripped in hatred that they turned over and over, each strangling each, each crushing the other, as best he could (A, 199).

In Desire, Eben's claim to the farm and Cabot's response--"the farm's her'n! An' the dust o' the road--that's your'n! Ha!" (255)--leads to comparable conflict:

[Eben] tries to throw Cabot aside. They grapple in what becomes immediately a murderous struggle. The old man's concentrated strength is too much for Eben. Cabot gets one hand on his throat and presses him back across the stone wall (255).

Both fathers had remarried partly in retaliation against their sons' persistent claims. Boryna had reasoned, "'Without a woman at home, I must either be ruined or make over the farm to my children. ... They would raise a hue over it, the rascals!' But at the thought there rushed over him a wave of indomitable self-confidence, which immediately filled his soul and confirmed him in his purpose" (A, 32-33). And Cabot explains a similar process to Abbie: "It aged me--them coveting what I'd made fur mine. Then this spring the call come--the voice o' God cryin' in my wilderness, in my lonesomeness--t' go out an' seek an' find!" (238).
Marriage does not bring happiness to either Boryna or Cabot: neither their deep need for companionship nor their hope for permanent protection of their land is fulfilled. But there is one hope: to have a child would be a means of preserving the land by eliminating the claims of Antek and Eben. When Boryna assumes that Yagna is pregnant, he stared at her in wonder, and so did her mother. Then they exchanged glances full of meaning, and went out to whisper together in the passage. They came back gay and joyful, and embraced and kissed her with the most tender affection. (W, 76)

And Cabot is equally ecstatic when Abbie tells him, "Maybe the Lord'll give us a son":

Ye mean--a son--t' me 'n' you? ... It'd be the blessin' o' God, Abbie--the blessin' o' God A'mighty on me--in my old age--in my lonesomeness! (234-235)

Of course, Abbie wants a son, not out of love for Cabot, but to confirm her right to the farm.

Cabot: They hain't nothin' I wouldn't do fur ye then, Abbie. Ye'd hev only t' ask it--anything ye'd a mind t'!
Abbie: (interrupting) Would ye will the farm t' me then--t' me an' it....?
Cabot: (vehemently) I'd do anythin' ye axed, I tell ye! I swar it! (235)

Although Yagna herself is not calculating shrewdly to take over the farm, her mother is aware of the opportunity. She reminds Boryna before the wedding, "You promised to make her a settlement," and explains why it is essential: "In order that she may look her stepchildren in the face and laugh at their curses.... My good friend, consider, like the intelligent man you are, and you will see that the settlement is only a protection for my daughter" (A, 161-162), whom she later urges: "Look, Yagna: if you have a child, then, in the case of your husband's death (which heaven forfend!), it would have an equal part with the other children as his heir; and possibly, all the land might come to it in the end" (W, 77).

The parallels multiply rapidly: husband dotes on wife; wife repulses husband; stepmother sleeps with stepson, whose feelings subsequently turn from love to revulsion, largely because the underlying issue of the struggle for land divides the lovers and brings them misfortune.

Antek: "If I have fallen so low as this, it is through you! I have borne all ... all.... Nor did I take revenge when he--that father of mine--gave into your hands so much of the land that's my own! .... Aye, turn and writhe and twist it as you will, you lie! ... What you want is another man: nay, ye would have them all at your heels ... like dogs in the springtime--you!" (W, 264-265)

Eben: "I do hate ye! Ye're a whore--a damn trickin' whore! ... Ye're nothin' but a stinkin' passel o' lies! Ye've been lyin' t' me every word ye spoke, day an' night, since we fust--done it." (256)

In addition to the pervasive similarities of setting, characterization and plot, there are several sub-themes and motifs which link The Peasants and Desire Under the Elms. One of these is the personification of trees, discussed above. Another coincidence, if it is that, is that both patriarchs are strongly attached to cows, even to the extent of conversing with them. This dramatizes the close connection between the people and nature, and in Reymont's novel a religious connection is also implied:
When Boryna first appears, he finds out that a cow is dying. He later has to kill it, and for a long time he cannot get over the loss (A, 17-19). And the association continues: in the next volume, Boryna, "as customary with him--went round to give a last look at the cows ... before going to bed" (W, 130).

Cabot's concern and affection for his kine--indeed, his kinship with them--is remarkably similar. It forms a leitmotif throughout the drama, from his first scene, when, noting the wildness of Simeon and Peter and fearing that "mebbe they've pizened the stock," he "runs off down toward the barn" (225), all the way to the last scene, when he exits "t' round up the stock" (269). In between, the kinship, which does seem to extend beyond the "natural," is often emphasized:

Cows is queer [231]. I kin talk t' the cows. They know the farm an' me. They'll give me peace [238]. I rested. I slept good--down with the cows. They know how t' sleep. They're teachin' me [246].

And when he contemplates burning the farm to the ground, in a passage cited earlier, he makes one exception: "'Ceptin' the cows. Them I'd turn free" (232).

Another theme shared by both works concerns hidden money--Boryna's, which he reveals to Antek's wife before his death; and Cabot's, which Eben had learned of from his mother, and with which he buys off his half-brothers.

V

The Peasants and Desire Under the Elms, then, are much more than simply two modern versions of the "lustful stepmother" tale. In addition to their similar plots, they share an agrarian ambience which is central to the definition of the characters and the unfolding of the stories. The principal protagonists are remarkably similar and speak in a comparably archaic, rural diction. Add the personified trees, the comforting cows, the hidden money and the scenes in which the patriarchs display their dancing prowess, and the similarities seem too close for coincidence.

The crucial question, of course, is whether O'Neill was familiar with The Peasants when writing Desire Under the Elms. In order to answer this, it is necessary to review briefly the publication history of The Peasants, especially its reception abroad, in both Europe and America.

Autumn, the first volume of The Peasants, appeared in Polish in 1902, Winter in 1904, Spring in 1906, and Summer in 1909. They were soon translated into many languages. In 1904, the first volume was translated into Russian. In 1911, Marie-Anne de Bouvet published in Revue de Paris a 60-page adaptation of the first two volumes, entitled "La terre et la femme." In Germany, Eugene Diedrichs published a translation by Jean-Paul d'Arderschah in 1912. A French scholar and admirer of Polish literature, Franck Louis Schoell, translated The Peasants, in two volumes, in 1919, although his full translation was not published by Payot until 1925. In Sweden, the first volume appeared in 1920, translated by Wester, and the remaining three in 1924. The Czech translation of Volume I by Rypaček appeared in 1920, and the Spanish one in 1920.

Reymont attracted the attention of literary critics in France and Sweden. Theodore de Wyzewa wrote an article about him in Revue des deux mondes (September 15, 1910) entitled "Un romancier polonais." Schoell, before translating The Peasants, attracted literary circles (and the publisher Payot) to Reymont's work with his
article, "Les paysans polonais vus par un de leurs," in Revue de Paris (September 15, 1918). Fredrik Böök, an official consultant to the Nobel Prize Committee, had compared The Peasants with the Iliad in "Essayer och kritiker" (IV, 1918), and was later instrumental in convincing the Swedish Academy to select Reymont for the Nobel Prize in literature, which he was awarded on November 13, 1924.

Nor was Reymont unknown to American readers. His first short story in English, "The Trial," translated by Else Benecke and Marie Busch, had appeared in New York in 1916. In the same year, an anonymous translation of his story "Twilight" appeared in The Pagan, a magazine for Eudaemonists. A fragment of his novel The Promised Land, entitled "In the Old Town at Lodz," translated by Selver, was published in 1919, in Anthology of Modern Slavonic Literature in Prose and Verse. The Comedienne, a novel translated by Edmund Obecny, was published by Putnam in 1920. And a short story, "A Polish Scene," was translated in 1921 by Solomon and included, together with "Death," in Selected Polish Tales.

In October of 1919, in Warsaw, G. B. Putnam signed a contract with Reymont that gave him exclusive rights to publish the author's books in America and England. In 1920, Putnam selected Michał Dziewicki, from Kraków, as translator of The Peasants. At the beginning of 1922, Dziewicki sent Putnam two volumes of the novel translated into English. Reymont, in a letter of February 18, 1922 to Wojciech Morawski, his friend and literary agent in New York, wrote, "Mr. Dziewicki wrote to me a week ago that he had finished the translation of The Peasants. The first two volumes are reportedly already at Putnam's, but the last two he is sending by courier as he is afraid to trust them to the postal service" (Orłowski 110).

Putnam, however, not ready to risk the publication of four volumes, was delaying. Meanwhile, a Polish scholar, Roman Dyboski, translated "The Polish Peasants," two fragments of the novel, and published them in The Slavonic Review (the first fragment in December 1922, the second in March 1923). The first fragment was reprinted in The Living Age (February 1923), the second in Poland (June 1923). Another fragment from The Peasants, translated by Żółtowska, was published in The Slavonic Review of June 1923 and reprinted in Poland (October 1924).

In 1923, Putnam gave up the idea of publishing The Peasants, and Dziewicki's translation was taken by Alfred A. Knopf, who employed Morawski as editor. On December 7, 1923, Reymont sent the signed contract with Knopf to New York, and Morawski gave a lecture on Reymont at Columbia University at about the same time.

On March 14, 1924, Morawski wrote to Reymont that Volume I of The Peasants was "doing well." According to figures supplied by Knopf, the first volume sold 30,000 copies, the second 23,000, the third 20,000, and the fourth 20,000 (Orłowski 47). What is more important, the first volume was available in bookstores and already selling well in the middle of March 1924.

Reymont himself spent the summers of 1919 and 1920 in the United States. Leon Orłowski describes the first of those visits: "In New York, Morawski would take Reymont to breakfast at Lotos, a literary club he belonged to, where he introduced him to American journalists and writers. At night he would take him home to dinner or they would go out, usually with someone who could be helpful in their publishing plans, already in embryo" (Orłowski 15).

During Reymont's stay in New York, he met Rupert Hughes, who wrote several articles about him for American periodicals. Hughes was the first to introduce the Polish writer to American readers with his article in *The New York Times Magazine* (July 13, 1919), entitled "Poland's Peasant Novelist." Another critic, Joseph Wood Krutch, praised the "literary architecture" of *The Peasants*, in his review of the first two volumes, "Earth's Diurnal Course," in *The Nation* on January 21, 1925.

Thus, although there is no proof that Eugene O'Neill ever met Reymont or read *The Peasants*, it is clear that both the author and his work were known inside the New York literary circles of which O'Neill was a member.

Interestingly, little is known about the creative process that brought forth *Desire Under the Elms*. In January 1924, O'Neill was in Ridgefield, Connecticut, at work on the play. He wrote it rapidly and talked little about it while it was being written (Bogard 200). In contrast to his usual practice, he scarcely mentioned the play as a work-in-progress in his letters to Kenneth Macgowan (Bogard 200). O'Neill later told Walter Huston, who played Ephraim Cabot, that he had dreamed the whole play one night (Gelb 539), although a note in his Work Diary says that the "idea" for the play occurred to him in the fall of 1923 (Bogard 200).

O'Neill worked on the play during the winter and spring of 1924 (Bogard 199). In March, April and May he was in New York, co-producing *Welded* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. Toward the end of May, he returned to Ridgefield to make the final revisions of *Desire Under the Elms*. In June, Bernard Simon came to Ridgefield to type the revised manuscript (Gelb 557). The play was produced by the Provincetown Players at the Greenwich Village Theatre on November 11, 1924.

Because O'Neill was reticent about discussing *Desire* and wrote it rapidly, critics have searched for various sources for the play. Arthur and Barbara Gelb discuss O'Neill's habit of "artistic plagiarism" (549) and the influence of Greek tragedy on the play. Travis Bogard reviews O'Neill's indebtedness to the legends of Oedipus, Phaedra and Medea, along with Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, and then points out "the possibility of another, closer 'source' than any of these--one whose proximity is so close as to raise a question of plagiarism. That work is Sidney Howard's *They Knew What They Wanted*" (201). After analyzing both plays, Bogard concludes, "In the end, proof fails, yet the possibility remains suggestive and the dubious story of the dream, together with O'Neill's uncharacteristic silence about the play as he wrote it, breeds the suspicion that O'Neill was aware that his planet and Howard's were momentarily in uncomfortably close conjunction" (203).

O'Neill's "demonstrable habit of building his plays on the works of others" (Bogard 201) has led critics to look for still other sources for *Desire*. It has been suggested that Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* and *Riders to the Sea* and T. C. Murray's *Birthright* might have served as other general sources (Sheaffer 206, Bogard 203). O'Neill had seen all the New York performances of the Irish Players in 1911 and acknowledged his indebtedness to the Players in his letter to Edward Sheldon, saying that "Your Salvation Nell, along with the work of the Irish Players on their first trip over here, was what first opened my eyes to the existence of a real theatre" (Bogard 119). Their plays may have inspired *Beyond the Horizon*, *Desire Under the Elms* and *A Touch of the Poet*, especially the theme of farming and struggling for farm land by a farmer's sons (Sheaffer 206).

Undoubtedly, some of the literary sources mentioned above could have influenced O'Neill's use of myths, and others might have served him as material for his rustic ambience and his description of peasants and life on the farm. But it is only *The Peasants* that could have provided O'Neill in one text with the setting, characters and plot combining the themes of ancient myths with descriptions of village life, and of incestuous love with the struggle for land in a remote rural community.

--Michael Mikos and David Mulroy
HUGHIE AND THE ZOO STORY

Although Eugene O'Neill completed his one-act play Hughie in 1941, it was not published until a year after Edward Albee wrote The Zoo Story in 1958. Without evidence that Albee had read O'Neill's manuscript, one finds salient correspondences between these one-acts in technique and idea.

The action in both plays is a rhetorical seduction. A desperate man prevails on a stranger who is conventional, laconic, and resistant. The garrulous protagonist in both works, while not a monologist as in O'Neill's Before Breakfast, so dominates that performances are tours de force for the lead actor. Despite this one-sidedness, the tension in each play derives from the disparate private worlds of the two conversants. The dominant character, O'Neill's gambler Erie Smith and Albee's Jerry, uses forceful and immediate language in his plea for emotional contact, while the passive character is anchored to his territory and to being unresponsive. The event within each play is the passive character's reversal from distance to involvement, in reply finally not to the other's urgency but his own.

With fewer characters and less complicated plots than their authors' longer works, the one-acts repeat the longer dramas' focus on desolation and failed communication. Both settings are lonely islands within a throbbing New York City, in which the protagonist dreads his squalid off-stage room. Death is a real presence for Erie, in the loss of the first nightclerk named Hughes and hints of his own murder, and for Jerry, who is choreographing being killed.
The two stage listeners in business suits are the second Hughes and Peter, lodged at their territorial symbols, the hotel desk and the park bench. Married and employed, they exude a conformity that contrasts with the talkative characters' transience and eccentricity. Erie and Jerry, inept at any type of partnership, express contempt for women and are friendless. What draws each of them to the conformist stranger is not individual qualities but clues, like a name or a pipe, that make him representative. These two stolid types, for their part, guard a fragile grasp of themselves.

The anecdotes that Erie and Jerry tell define their future relationships with their stage companions. Erie's recalled power to enchant the first Hughes becomes a blueprint for the connection that is born before the audience with the present Hughes. Jerry's dog story not only reveals his intense measures to break through alienation from other creatures; it also becomes part of the larger Zoo story, which will be completed and ready for the press only when his rhetoric transforms his spectator into his killer.

What small success the protagonists are able to achieve is dreary; the gambler Erie, his life threatened by creditors, gains a "pal" to survive the night; Jerry wins human engagement at the cost of his life. But it is success, and it lies in trapping their listeners through story-telling.

In Hughie and The Zoo Story the function of persuasion to transform a listener into a participant creates a metaphor for their genre. The affirmative response of Hughes and Peter shows what drama is about--the efficacy of an intense vocal outpouring to move an intransigent heart.

--Marcelline Krafchick

THE FUSION OF THE EPIC AND DRAMATIC: HEMINGWAY, STRINDBERG AND O'NEILL

In The Historical Novel George Lukács expresses his agreement with a statement in which Goethe points out the difference between epic and dramatic motivations for literary action:

Goethe ... analyses the different motifs governing action, finding some that are common to both epic and drama and others that form particular characteristics of either of the two genres. These motifs are, according to Goethe: "1. Progressive ones, which further the action; such are used primarily by drama. 2. Retrogressive ones, which distance the action from its goal; such are used almost exclusively by the epic poem" (Lukács I 145).

Lukács also shares Goethe's view that retrogressive motifs should be distinguished from retarding ones; rather than diverting the action from its goal, retarding factors "hold up the pace or increase the distance; such are used by both kinds of literature to the greatest advantage" (Lukács I 145).

Thus retarding motifs can be both dramatic and epic. In the works of Ibsen, Hauptmann, Strindberg, Chekhov and O'Neill, however, their role is rather pronounced in making the drama episodic, and in not only holding back but also considerably broadening the progress of the action, whose stages are often meticulously portrayed. This brings a strong epic tendency with it.

For the operation of the retrogressive motif in novels, Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls provide clear examples. At the beginning of the
former, set during World War I, Lieutenant Frederic Henry is a volunteer American ambulance corps officer serving in the Italian army. Even when he is seriously wounded and recovers from his injury, he is ready to make the greatest sacrifice he can, and bidding farewell to his love, Catherine Barkley, he returns to the front. However, a series of painful experiences—the military debacle at Caporetto in the autumn of 1917, and the chaotic disintegration and senseless disaster of the Caporetto stampede—make him change his mind. When he sees an old lieutenant-colonel walking in the rain with his hat off between two carabinieri of a firing squad, the painfully sharp image prefigures and indicates Henry's decision to conclude a separate peace and to bid farewell to arms.

Chapters IV and XVI-XVII of For Whom the Bell Tolls also provide a model example. The chief action of this Spanish Civil War novel moves towards its antifascist aim, the blowing up of a bridge in fascist hands. This aim is endangered by a growing tension between Robert Jordan, who wishes to carry out the action, and Pablo, the head of the Spanish partisan group, who opposes it. The opposition is so powerful that a separate, short story-like episode crystallizes around it, and Jordan is about to shoot Pablo. But finally the clash between Jordan and the group does not take place; Pablo's wife, Pilar, supports Jordan and so does the whole group. This means that we have a case of double diversion. The action of the short story-like episode can only progress by diverting the main action of the novel, which in turn can only advance by diverting the by-action of the episode. This latter diversion has a cathartic effect, indicating the formation of unity among the antifascist forces. At this point it should be noted that in the opinion of G. Lukács (Lukács II 802-835), catharsis characterizes not only tragedy or drama but all art as well. Tragedy does not create but only concentrates catharsis. Composing his novels in the pattern of opposition, contrast and conflict, Hemingway also injects a tense dramatic quality into his epic scenes.

The cathartic quality of epic retardation and diversion is also very apparent in Alan Sillitoe's long short story, The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner, where the protagonist, Smith, is on the verge of winning the race but in the last minute slows his pace and deliberately loses rather than win "for them," i.e. for "the Establishment."

The crucial question for drama is this: what happens to dramatic dynamism when the retrogressive motif, narrative retardation and epic diversion attain significance in its action? The answer will vary from play to play, but there are fundamentally two polar possibilities.

One of them is the decreasing of aim-propelled dramatic dynamism. There are hints of such a development in naturalistic drama, which has the general tendency of elaborating dramatic scenes in epic detail (Hauptmann, The Rats).

Strindberg's The Dance of Death, in spite of its hysterical and monomaniacal drive, elaborates on the tendency by building up over and over again the impression of a fatal heart attack threatening the Captain, who, however, keeps surviving, only to be killed at the end of the second part of the huge play by a stroke. This results in a mechanical cyclic pattern and a grotesquely grim effect with an involuntary comic component that was only resolved in Dürrenmatt's ingenious Play Strindberg by making this component explicit.

The Dance of Death abounds in instances of diversion as well. In Act II, Scene 1 of Part One, the Captain returns from town with news specially prepared for his unloving and unloved wife, Alice. He has seen to it, he confides to her, that Allan, the son of her cousin and lover, Kurt, will be placed under his command on the island (the "Little Hell," as it is called by people who live there); and he also informs her of his decision to deposit at the courthouse a petition for divorce. Alice takes vengeance on her husband by informing the Ordnance Officer against him for
embezzlement. Later on, however, the Captain himself admits he had told a lie: he went to town only to see his doctor. And his arrest, which Alice awaits first in hopeful expectation, then in fearful dread, does not take place (Act II, Scene 2).

At the end of Part Two the action again deviates, as it were, to counterbalance its deflection in Part One. If at the end of Part One Alice and Kurt seemed to have the upper hand over the Captain, now the Captain seems to be victorious: Kurt—in part due to the Captain's intrigue—has gone bankrupt; the Captain is going to give his daughter Judith in marriage not to Allan, her lover, but to a sixty-year-old Colonel, his own superior. The Captain hopes to score the greatest success of his life, but he meets with his final failure: Judith rejects the Colonel, the Captain has a fatal stroke, Alice spits in his face, hits him, pulls his beard, and wants to tear out his tongue. Strindberg's talent is able to refer the narrative diversion of the dramatic action to the conflict of love and hate, of gloating triumph and abject fall; however, he is only able to do so in an epically extended plot, whose dramatic turns are brought about by events which are prepared with scrupulous care, but fail to take place.

When retardation and diversion become overwhelming, dramatic dynamism disintegrates into dispersed and frustrated scenic gestures leaving behind a basically static and metaphysical milieu with keen dramatic tension (and a fascinating reference of the predicament of inaction to the need of action), but without dramatic development (as in Beckett's compelling vision of an absurd universe characterized by metaphysically grim and playfully grotesque buffoonery in Waiting for Godot).

There is, however, another possibility as well. The epic trend inherent in a great degree of retardation and diversion may also merge with dynamically dramatic endeavors. O'Neill took incipient, tentative and groping steps in this direction when he composed Strange Interlude, a play of novelistic dimensions, written with a great many epic repetitions, and finished in a somewhat conventional manner, but created with dramatic verve, social interest, psychological insight and human compassion.

Epic retardation of the dramatic action appears in a number of ways.

1. It takes a novelistically long time for Marsden, the novelist, to travel all the way from his early and latent yearning for Nina, the would-be heroine of his novel, to the last stage of his journey, where he can become her belated husband in a sexless marriage of autumnal twilight. It is, to say the least, a heavily retarded process. First Nina must enact her drama in O'Neill's play, must lose Gordon Shaw, Sam Evans and Ned Darrell. In this way, however, dramatic dynamism is also married to novelistic retardation.

2. The novelist's frequent appearances on the dramatist's stage often withold even such advances towards the explosion of an open revelation as seem to be imminent in a situation. When, for instance, Marsden appears in Act Eight, he interrupts a developing love scene between Nina and Darrell, and forestalls Nina's almost successful attempt to rekindle Darrell's love. On the other hand, the obstruction of external action is the promotion of internal movement, of moral and psychological development. A veritable dramatic collision evolves between the novelist and the dramatist.

3. The characters' silent thoughts, reflections, emotions and interior reactions also tend to hold back the dynamism of the action. Philip Moeller, the play's first director, actually hit upon the idea, approved by O'Neill, of playing the interior monologue sections with physical action momentarily arrested and the actors frozen into the position and attitude of the moment (Gelb 648-649). At the same time, however, the passages also have the dramatic function of unmasking and contrasting
appearance and reality, and have the dramatic role of showing, if slowing, the true motivation of the protagonists' actions. The epic and the dramatic are closely intertwined. The interior soliloquies—or, as Marsden calls them, the "mosquitoes of the soul" (O'Neill 52)—differ according to the person thinking; Sam's, for instance, are more confused than Darrell's (O'Neill 67–68, 77). The thought-aside can express the mental processes of a character both in a restless state of mind, when he is "thinking disjointedly" (O'Neill 124), and when he is "rallying himself" (O'Neill 30). The strategy of capturing the stream of consciousness uses the pattern of free association with a dramatic direction and contrasting concern, and thus it takes the form of a dramatic interior monologue. The contrastive character and dramatic aspect of the device was described by Kenneth Macgowan:

To the dramatic contrasts and conflicts of ordinary spoken dialogue O'Neill added the contrasts and conflicts of thought. There was the speech of Nina against the speech of Charlie, the thought of Nina against the speech of Nina, the thought of Nina against the thought of Charlie, and sometimes the speech of one against the thought of the other (Cargill 452).

The course of an intended action may be not only retarded but also modified and even completely changed. This can be observed in Strange Interlude to a considerable extent, bringing about an epic (indeed novelistic) diversion of the dramatic plot.

1. Nina wants to be Gordon Shaw's, feels compelled to give herself to crippled soldiers, marries Sam Evans, loves Dr. Darrell, and finally becomes the wife of Charles Marsden. Here, something quite unexpected takes place.

2. Sometimes, however, something expected, hinted at, and thoroughly prepared for does not take place. A characteristic example is the often attempted disclosure of the Evans family secret. The opposition between desire and morality as an external confrontation of interests (Nina and Sam, Darrell and Sam, etc.) and as an internal contradiction (within Nina and inside Darrell) can be brought to a breaking point, but no outward clash realized in action is possible. Both Nina and Darrell lack the necessary resoluteness or unscrupulousness for that. Such characters also determine the character of the conflict and the action. The moral uplift of the catharsis is derived from the fact that an action does not take place: Nina and Darrell do not tell Sam about the inherited insanity in his family, do not wreck his marriage, and do not unite in marriage. In Strindberg's The Dance of Death the non-arrival of a prepared event also represents a dramatic turning point crossbred with epic diversion, but it is usually not cathartic, or is so only momentarily. The tearing at one another of two equally deformed and possessed creatures in a Swedenborgian "Little Hell" may querulously question the raison d'être of the human condition, but it can hardly lead to a lasting dramatic catharsis. (The phenomenon can also be regarded as an absolute degree of retardation.)

Another case in point is the deliberate building up of the appearance of Sam's falling victim to a nervous breakdown and insanity. When he first appears in Act Two, O'Neill notes "a lack of self-confidence, a lost and strayed appealing air about him, yet with a hint of some unwakened obstinate force beneath his apparent weakness" (O'Neill 29). In Act Three, "Sam looks timorously happy, as if he could not quite believe in his good fortune and had constantly to reassure himself about it, yet he is riding the crest of the wave, he radiates love and devotion and boyish adoration" (O'Neill 53). After Mrs. Evans has broken the bitter news to Nina that she must not have a baby, Sam becomes pathologically unbalanced. Of course Sam knows nothing of Mrs. Evans' intimations; it is only by way of a novelistic indirection and mediation that the repercussions of the painful problem reach him. What he senses directly is Nina's estrangement from him, and this elicits his nervous condition. In Act Four his expression is "dispirited, his eyes shift about, his shoulders are collapsed submissively. He seems much thinner, his face drawn and sallow" (O'Neill 67). He is afraid he has become sterile, his boss has upbraided him, he cannot work
efficiently, and he fears he will be fired. In Act Five, Sam's "eyes look pitiably harried, his manner has become a distressingly obvious attempt to cover up a chronic state of nervous panic and guilty conscience" (O'Neill 92). He has come to the point of telling Nina he is going to divorce her, because he has realized he cannot make her love him; she, in fact, started hating him, and he cannot even give her a child.

But the whole process of nervous deterioration stops and is reversed as soon as Dr. Darrell tells Sam that he is soon to become a father. In Act Six O'Neill's characterization indicates a decisive change in Sam:

There is a startling change in Evans. He is stouter, the haggard look of worry and self-conscious inferiority has gone from his face, it is full and healthy and satisfied. There is also, what is more remarkable, a decided look of solidity about him, of a determination moving towards ends it is confident it can achieve. He has matured, found his place in the world (O'Neill 111).

Nevertheless, this meticulously novelistic building up and relinquishing of a motive (reminiscent of, if not identical to, Strindberg's treatment of the Captain's heart condition in The Dance of Death) serve a dramatic end. They help us in understanding why Dr. Darrell undertook what he made himself believe was a purely scientific experiment, i.e. why he gave Nina a child; and how a man (Sam) was made happy at the cost of the happiness of others (Nina and Darrell).

The conspicuously heavy use of novelistic retardation and diversion in Strange Interlude is indicative of the crystallization of a formal pattern in drama. Its operation is related to the principles laid down in Hegel's philosophy of history. In his view, a historical tendency is the sum total of individual endeavors. Each individual pursues his own aims, and his personal aspirations are included in the final historical outcome. But history as the upshot of a multiplicity of individual efforts is also different from the personal and conflicting wishes of the individuals concerned. Hegel calls this phenomenon the trick of reason (cf. Lukács I 148).

This pattern of history came into full swing after the French Revolution of 1789. The period was the classical era of the novel, which incorporated the pattern in its basic structure. Thus the epic deviation of the protagonists' endeavors is a reflection of the social-historical deviation of individual aspirations. This explains why the penetration of the pattern into the build-up of drama inevitably brings an epic quality with it (Lukács I 124-125).

When, in the second half of the 19th century and in the 20th century, the relative independence of the social-historical tendency from personal contributions grew greater, the new phase of the alienation of life found its way into drama as well. The result was the strengthening of novelistic tendencies in dramatic form (Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, etc.). This can even be felt in the alienation effect of Brecht's non-Aristotelian theory and practice of epic drama.

In his youth O'Neill had ample opportunity to study and experience the way in which personal aspirations can be deflected from their wished-for course. As a disillusioned son, unhappy father and divorced husband, a heavy drinker and expelled student, an unsuccessful gold-prospector in Honduras, a seaman sailing to Buenos Aires, Africa and England, a frequenter of waterfront dives in New York and Argentina, a man attempting suicide and contracting tuberculosis, a reporter, poet and tyro playwright, the drinking companion of Greenwich Village criminals ("The Hudson Dusters") and the friend of radical intellectuals (John Reed, Louise Bryant and Terry Carlin), O'Neill had first-hand experience of the seamy side of life—even if some of those experiences, like the voyage to Buenos Aires, also gave him intense excitement and pantheistic pleasure.

It was, however, the "shell shock" of World War I which focussed his vision. He
was not swept away or taken in by the wave of chauvinistic war propaganda. As early as May 1914, in the poem "Fraticide," he recognized that "The loud, exultant call to arms," the "patriotic blare of band," was really a summons to fratricide: that "The jingoes are the first to flee," because "The plutocrats who cause the woe are arrogant but cowardly." He saw clearly that there was no worthy cause in that war at all; the cause was, in fact, "asinine," and the loot was rapacious "robbery of a brother's whole/Store of a lifetime." The conclusion of the poem therefore is: "All workers on the earth/Are brothers and WE WILL NOT FIGHT!"

In accordance with this recognition, the artistic emphasis in O'Neill's works on the war is not on cause-conscious heroism. In the one-act Shell Shock, it takes Doctor Wayne a long time and considerable ingenuity to prove to Jack Arnold, Major of Infantry, that the immediate impulse which caused Jack to rescue his seriously wounded comrade was not irrepressible nicotine hunger but hearing the comrade scream. In S.O.S., a long short story elaborated from the earlier one-act play Warnings, John Lathrop, the meek and modest wireless operator of the steamship Rio Grande, goes deaf, causes the sinking of the ship by a German raider, is despised by his countrymen and humiliated by the Germans. When the gun of the raider is fired close to him, he regains his hearing, is frightened to death, becomes filled with mad anger and stabs the German radio operator. Sending out S.O.S. signals which an American cruiser receives, Lathrop rescues and pacifies his comrades, justifies himself, is executed by the Germans—and is made a national hero for the wrong reasons. His touched-up patriotic image in the newspapers pictures an exceptionally brave man who, out of shrewdness and patriotic feeling, pretended to be deaf and gave his life for the capturing of a dangerous German warship. O'Neill saw the real heroes and heroines in people who did not fight in the war, but fought against the war (e.g., Tom Perkins and Olga Tarnoff in The Personal Equation, even if at the end of the play Tom is also a victim).

On the other hand—apart from a few passages in Shell Shock—O'Neill was not much interested in presenting directly and in detail the physical atrocities of the war. His war pieces emphasized the way in which the war dehumanized, disturbed and destroyed lives and souls; he exposed the manner in which it fatefuly derailed and diverted individuals from their human and humane courses ("Fraticide," The Sniper, The Personal Equation, In the Zone, Shell Shock, and S.O.S.).

Such an approach could inform a poem with indignation ("Fraticide"), could lend a natural turning point to a short story (S.O.S.), and could provide a short story-like peripeteia for one-act plays (The Sniper, In the Zone and Shell Shock). In a four-act play (The Personal Equation) it already resulted in some epic-episodic intrusions. When in Strange Interlude this approach was applied to a thoroughgoing examination of the moral and psychological consequences of the aftermath of the war in a nine-act play, the diversions inherent in the material and approach came to be series-connected. The epic and the dramatic became fused.

--Peter Egri

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SUSAN GLASPELL AND EUGENE O'NEILL: THE IMAGERY OF GENDER*

In the Summer-Fall 1985 issue of the Newsletter, Michael Manheim argued that Eugene O'Neill is "a uniquely American playwright," one who should clearly be designated America's "national playwright." A fundamental criterion for such designation is, of course, a connection to the tradition from which the playwright springs, an American grounding. A number of scholars--among them, John Henry Raleigh, Brenda Murphy and Professor Manheim--have explored the relation between O'Neill and American literature and drama of the 19th century. I propose to discuss a more contemporary connection: the strands that link O'Neill and the most significant other playwright of his own period and milieu--Susan Glaspell.

Glaspell's relation to and influence on O'Neill have heretofore not been explored by critics for two obvious reasons. First, her name for too long has been exclusively yoked to the Provincetown Players, the group she co-founded; and therefore her connections to O'Neill have been enmeshed in the debates surrounding O'Neill's indebtedness to that theatre and most particularly to its head, George Cram Cook--Glaspell's husband. Second, her plays have not been readily available. Although critics in O'Neill's time considered her a serious writer worthy of the highest critical attention, she has now virtually disappeared from the canon, condemned until recently to a footnote in theatre history, one of those shadowy figures hovering on the periphery of Warren Beatty's Reds.

That situation is now changing. Glaspell is emerging from those generic studies of Provincetown contributors to become a subject for consideration in her own right. Recently Marcia Noe has published a Glaspell biography, Voice from the Heartland, offering helpful background material; and C. W. E. Bigsby, in his massive three-volume study of Twentieth-Century American Drama, has acknowledged her importance in American writing, arguing that she is "much more accomplished than her present dwindled reputation would suggest." While he still lists her under the Provincetown banner, he does provide an eleven-page study of her major works, often comparing her to O'Neill. (Bigsby will also soon be editing a selection of Glaspell's plays so that the general critical community will have the opportunity of making their own assessment of Glaspell's importance.) What I wish to offer are some general observations on the direction such studies might profitably take. I am less interested in proving influence than in placing Glaspell and O'Neill in juxtaposition, the better to illuminate the works of each, and perhaps to offer some insights about how these two writers--one with exclusively female personae and the other with predominantly male figures--employed particular imagery and themes.

The problem with studies of relation and influence often involves making a case for the direct association and familiarity of the pair being critically coupled. With Glaspell and O'Neill the case is already made. They not only knew each other but were close colleagues, neighbors, and friends from the period when O'Neill first joined the Provincetown group in 1916 until Glaspell's departure in 1922 to accompany

*This paper was delivered at the O'Neill session, chaired by Paul D. Voelker, at the Modern Language Association convention in Chicago on December 28, 1985. Fuller treatment of Glaspell's oeuvre appeared in Professor Ben-Zvi's essay, "Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill," in the Summer-Fall 1982 issue of the Newsletter, pp. 21-29. --Ed.
her husband on his pilgrimage to Greece. Agnes Boulton, in *Part of a Long Story* (1958), recalls the close relationship that existed between her husband of three months and their neighbor, Susan Glaspell, during the summer of 1918 in Provincetown. She says that, besides visiting the Cooks most evenings, O'Neill had a daily ritual that involved meeting with Susan:

*After Gene was finished working he went across the street to Jig Cook's house, read the headlines, talked to Susan Glaspell, who would be through her work by this time.*

The close friendship with Glaspell continued. In a series of letters O'Neill wrote to Agnes in the winter of 1920, while he was in New York preparing for the opening of *Beyond the Horizon*, he often alluded to Glaspell, even mentioning that he was trying to get Tyler, his producer, to read her new play—probably *The Verge*. O'Neill reports Tyler's reaction: "that girl has a real touch of genius"—O'Neill underlining girl since Tyler assumed that Glaspell was quite young. Actually, she was 44 at the time.

That O'Neill should try to aid Glaspell was not surprising, since both authors were intimately involved in each other's work as board members of the Provincetown Players. Along with Cook, they were the only permanent members from its inception until 1922. All of O'Neill's biographers record that Glaspell and Cook were the first to hear O'Neill read *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Diff'rent*, and *The Dreamy Kid*. In Glaspell's own papers, in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, are letters indicating her desire to have O'Neill's reactions to her latest works, prior to scheduling them for production by the Provincetown Players.

Glaspell clearly had a unique relationship with O'Neill, disproving the narrow roles that Travis Bogard says women played in O'Neill's life—"wife, mother, mistress, or chatelaine." It was to her more than to Cook that O'Neill seemed to turn in matters concerning the Provincetown. When, for example, he needed the Provincetown subscription list to use for solicitations for his Broadway production of *Beyond the Horizon*, he asked Agnes to contact the Cooks, since "Now I'm not especially friendly with the queer gang except Jimmy who are at present pervading the P.P." Yet in his next letter, in January 1920, he thanked Susan for her help, and for her suggestions on the matter, indicating that it was she who had come to his aid, not Cook.

Although Glaspell may have fulfilled the roles of editorial adviser and confidant before the advent of Kenneth Macgowan in O'Neill's life, it is as a playwright that she may have had the most significant (albeit unacknowledged) influence on O'Neill. In order to assess this connection, it is essential to sketch briefly the major themes in Glaspell's own canon.

Susan Glaspell was born in Davenport, Iowa on July 1, 1876—six years earlier than her standard biographical listings indicate. As the sea is central to O'Neill, the plains and particularly the corn fields of Iowa and the banks of the Mississippi River are at the heart of Glaspell's writing, as is the image of the pioneers who settled the land. A great granddaughter of the earliest settlers of the area, she constantly marveled over the pioneering spirit. In *The Road to the Temple*, her biography of her late husband Cook—another child of Iowa pioneers—she asks, "what makes a man who has a farm or an orchard or a mill in Massachusetts or New York where there is room enough for him ... get into a covered wagon and go to Indians, rattlesnakes, to backbreaking work of turning wilderness into productive land." "They go to loneliness and the fears born in loneliness," she says of these pioneers.

Young enough to remember her grandmother's tales of life in Davenport's early decades, Glaspell also recognized the difficulty facing the following generations. How do those who come after retain the pioneering impetus? Far too often they lose
the vision that motivated their forebears, commit themselves not to further exploration but rather to fixity and stasis, the very antitheses of what their antecedents sought, creating stultifying institutions in the name of a tradition they do not understand and in fact corrupt. Glaspell suggests that while succeeding generations may not be able to move on physically, they certainly can seek new frontiers of the mind and spirit. Her own emancipation from the narrow confines of conventional second-generation life in Davenport is described as a pioneering venture. When, in 1907 at the urging of Cook and his 16-year-old protégé Floyd Dell, she attended a meeting of free thinkers, called the Monist Society:

Some of us were children of pioneers; some of us still drove grandmother to the Old Settlers' Picnic the middle of August. Now--pioneers indeed, that pure frightened exhilarating feeling of having stepped out of your own place and here, with these strange people, far from your loved ones and already a little lonely, beginning to form a new background.

This pioneering thrust becomes, I believe, the central paradigm in Glaspell's work. Repeatedly in her plays her personae— all of whom are women—break with the confining forms of society, almost always presented as male-dominated, and reach forward to some new awareness, breaking in the process the traditions of society—traditions usually foisted as the inheritance of the past, but now only stagnant and life-threatening. In Trifles, her most famous play, while the men, representatives of the law, move and talk in linear fashion, crisscrossing the scene of a murder as they crisscross the facts of the case in straight lines, undeviating and fixed in their responses, the women, left to themselves, trace new shapes, piecing together on their own, and almost without volition, the motive for murder and their own ties to the act, quilting a pattern of awareness. The same dichotomy between male fixity—the fixity of a society gone rigid—and female pioneering at the outskirts of that society is repeated in one-act plays (The Outside and Woman's Honor) and in the full-length works Bernice, Chains of Dew, The Comic Artist, Inheritors, and Glaspell's masterpiece, The Verge.

In order to understand Glaspell's connection to and possible influence on O'Neill, it is necessary, I believe, to keep this image of pioneering and the thrust for movement in mind. In Glaspell's historical drama Inheritors, her female hero Madeline Morton says to her college professor Dr. Holden, "Just a little way back—anything might have been. What happened?" He answers (speaking with difficulty), "It got—set too soon." In contrast, when O'Neill was asked to comment on the failure of American society, he attributed it to the inability of the country to "set down roots." While the body of both Glaspell's and O'Neill's writing cannot be fully subsumed under this simple dichotomy, I do think that their opposite reflections on America's failure reveal something about their own writing. In Glaspell's plays, invariably, the protagonists attempt to break with society, leave family and home behind, to become independent—which in Glaspell's world usually means outside of the confines of marriage, family and home: alone and free. In many of O'Neill's plays, the reverse is true. Heroes—males—yearn for the very things Glaspell's women spurn: love, closeness, home, family, and belonging. They are, however, condemned by forces outside of their control to lose what they desire. Chance, fate, nature, duplicity, and sex rob them of their hoped-for fixity and place.

The plays that best offer this dichotomy and make the clearest case for the relation between the two writers are The Verge and The Hairy Ape, which I also choose because in them Glaspell's influence on O'Neill in terms of setting and expressionistic detail is most clearly discernible.

Glaspell wrote The Verge during her sabbatical year's leave from the Provincetown during the 1920-21 season. It opened on November 14, 1921, to a mixed reception. O'Neill was in New York at that time, but he may not have seen the play because he
was involved with two openings of his own—Anna Christie and The Straw, on November 1
and 10—after which he returned immediately to Provincetown to begin work on his next
play, The Hairy Ape, which he finished in two and a half weeks and read to the Cooks
at the end of December.

Keeping with the habit of plumbing European sources rather than more obvious
American possibilities, critics fail to cite The Verge as a possible source for Ape.
Traditionally they have argued for such works as the film The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari
and the German expressionistic play From Morn to Midnight, works O'Neill knew far
less well than The Verge. The Kaiser play does have a similar plot to The Hairy Ape,
involving a woman who dislodges a young man from his familiar routine and life; but
it offers far fewer similarities in staging, scenery manipulation, expressionistic
devices, and even plot than Glaspell's work.

Briefly, The Verge is about a botanist, Claire Archer, who experiments with new
forms of plant life in an attempt to create what hasn't been before—to pioneer into
directions that are unknown, "the big leap" as she calls it: "explode their species—because something in them knows they've gone as far as they can go. Something in them knows they're shut into just that. So—go mad—so that life may
not be prisoned." Her first attempt is called Edge Vine, but it is a failure, "it
does not want to be what hasn't been," it retreats to the familiar form, what Claire
calls "going back home," and she rips her creation out by the roots for its lack of
daring. Instead she turns her hopes to another form, Breath of Life, that may during
the course of the play dare to be "alive in its otherness."

While her experiments with plants may prove successful, Claire's own search for
escape into new areas is thwarted by three men appropriately named Tom, Dick, and
Harry—soulmate, lover, and stolid husband—and by her daughter, sister, ancestors,
and religion. Even language, the only means available to frame her desired quest for
"otherness," impedes her. When she attempts to explain what makes her different from
those around her, she finds herself limited by the patterning effect of the words she
must use: "Stop doing that! Words going into patterns ... thoughts take
pattern—then the pattern is the thing." Words limit; they also corrupt, since they
are often affixed to the very ideas she wishes to escape. When her conventional
sister Adelaide entreats her to think of her responsibilities to her family, Claire
shouts at her: "I'm tired of what you do— you and all of you.
Life—experience—values—calm—sensitive words which raise their heads as
indicators. And you pull them up— to decorate your stagnant little minds and think
that makes you— And because you have pulled that word from the life that grew it and
you won't let one who's honest, and troubled, try to reach through to— to what she
doesn't know is there ... " Her words break off. Glaspell's use of repetition,
pauses and incessant logorrhea by a hero who struggles with a language that imposes
itself between her desire and herself prefigures the playwrights of later decades who
make of the failure of language their theme, and the struggle of characters to
articulate the unknown their plot.

In The Verge these struggles for personal escape—for pioneering into new
territories—are reinforced by the sets and lighting, both expressionistic. The play
is in three acts, the first and third set in Claire's laboratory, the second in her
tower retreat. Neither venue is realistic. The laboratory is small with a low back
wall and sloping glass ceiling whose vaulting dimensions indicate the direction which
Claire desires to go—upward. The tower, that she calls her "thwarted tower," is
also expressionistic. The stage directions indicate that "the back is curved, then
jagged lines break from that and the front is a queer bulging window—in a curve that
leans. The whole structure is as if given a twist by some terrific force—like
something wrung." The action of this act is seen through the window, "as if
[Glaspell notes] Claire is shut into the tower." On it and on the laboratory strange
shadows play, produced in Act One by the patterns of frost, in Act Two by an
old-fashioned watchman's lantern, hanging from the ceiling, whose innumerable pricks
and slits throw "a marvelous pattern on the curved wall--like some masonry that has't been."

The most obvious parallels between The Verge and The Hairy Ape are in these expressionistic details. Light, shadow, and dark become externalizations of the inner struggles of the protagonists in both works. The byplay of light and dark seems to imprison the figures as much as the expressionistic shape of the playing area, with the exception that while Claire's laboratory has a ceiling as frustratingly high as her own dream of flight is, Yank's world is oppressively contained, the ceiling bearing down on him just as the forces in the play will thwart any possibility of movement or escape. While the playing areas in The Verge are the domain of Claire--her workplace, her tower--it is clear that she has no control over who enters and who leaves; Glaspell even indicates that the tower confines her as much as it protects her. She, like Yank, is at the control of others, defined by others, even though in Claire's case she owns the house in which the play is set.

The sound effects in the plays are also strikingly similar. In The Verge a persistent bell repeatedly rings on a barren stage before a trap door opens and Anthony, Claire's assistant, climbs up to the stage from the laboratory's unseen cellar to answer it. In The Hairy Ape, the direction is reversed but the effect is the same: a whistle, from some unseen source above, initiates action and controls from without the movements of the men within the hold of the ship.

One of the most striking similarities between the two plays lies in their endings. In The Verge, Claire overcomes the obstacles created by laconic-husband Harry and torpid-lover Dick, but she is less successful in dealing with soulmate Tom, who in many ways shares her desire to isolate self from the conventions of a society in which both feel alien. Tom is constantly making physical escapes, forays to India, options that seem impossible to Claire, who has repeatedly sought freedom in the past through the more common method for women: marriage, first to an artist who proved capable of drawing only banal portraits, and then to a flyer--the 1922 equivalent, I suppose, of the adventurer. (Unfortunately, as she observes of the second, "man flew and returned to earth the man who left it."). At the end of the play, Tom, giving up the role of understanding friend, finally professes his love and, with it, offers what in Glaspell's plays seems to be the obligatory concomitant: protection and confinement. "I love you, and I will keep you--from fatherness--from harm. You are mine, and you will stay with me! (Roughly) You hear me? You will stay with me!" Tom, whose last name is Edgeworth—a human surrogate for the timid plant that hovered on the edge and retreated to safety in convention—proves to be yet another impediment to Claire, and she handles him with the same stroke she used for the plant in Act One: she strangles him, giving him a hug of death, after which she lapses into insanity. This end is, of course, recreated in The Hairy Ape—except that the death hug is administered by a gorilla rather than a potential spouse; and except that, in O'Neill's play, the hero is acted upon rather than acting.

While there are striking similarities between the two plays, what is even more interesting are the variations and the questions they raise about both Glaspell and O'Neill. To analyze them, let me return to the earlier paradigm of Glaspell's dramas, the pioneering movement. Claire is a pioneer who wishes to move outside of the already established forms. "Stabbed to awareness!—no matter where it takes you, isn't that more than a safe place to stay?" she asks Tom. While Glaspell has Claire lapse into insanity—that all too familiar end, along with suicide, for female heroes who dare to be different—she leaves her character standing with face upturned. She may even leave her victorious, because Claire has repeatedly noted earlier that only in madness does society allow one to escape: "Sanity is a virtue to lock one in."

The Hairy Ape is also about displacement, but of a far different kind. Yank does not desire to move from his initial position; he is forced to, and never in the course of the play—except, O'Neill suggests, "perhaps" in death—does he regain the
paradise he had lost. Yank begins by knowing his place and relishing it. He
belongs. Through the agency of Mildred—the archetypal Eve causing displacement from
the modern Edenic albeit horrific home—Yank is unfixed and set adrift. Having been
named and labeled, he becomes obsessed with the power of words he cannot control or
understand. Like Claire, he suffers because of the limits of language. Given a form
and a name—hairy ape—he rejects it, but is incapable of either substituting another
or of reclaiming his lost self or name. However, rather than embracing what his
displacement affords him—freedom in a world outside the stokehole—he yearns only to
return to the prelapsarian home. His forays in scenes five through eight are clearly
substitutes for the desired return to the scene of his safety: the home of the ship.
When Yank confronts the gorilla—the natural force he would but cannot be, an animal
alive without speech or thought—he is crushed, acted upon, controlled by the force
of a fate that makes it impossible for humans to achieve release in reversion, just
as it is impossible for mechanistic society to return to clear foam and skies except
in sea chanties.

From what I have described, one can conclude that a basic difference between the
two playwrights is their angle of vision: O'Neill, committed to a tragic world where
human suffering leads to awareness, perhaps, but not to victory; Glaspell, to a more
optimistic, meliorative world. (The very image of pioneering is after all comedic,
assuming as it does that things will be better somewhere else along the way when the
pioneer finally arrives.) While certainly true, the differences between the two
point to something beyond tragedy and comedy—to something connected, at least in
these two writers, with gender. Seen in juxtaposition, it becomes clear that they
unfix the common stereotypes of male/female imagery. Yank does not seek new vistas;
he longs for protection and home. Claire does not articulate the status quo, the
homing instinct, the civilizing motif that Leslie Fiedler loves to describe: she
abjures and renounces it. Simply put, both indicate that traditional imagery may be
interchangeable, and not routinely affixed to a work because of the gender of the
creator. Additionally, these two works, written by friends at approximately the same
time, may almost be seen as mirror images of each other: Yank longing to retain what
Claire longs to overcome. Perhaps what we have is an indication of the very
different desires of the two playwrights: O'Neill, a loner, seeking fixity and home;
and Glaspell, about to leave, seemingly against her will, for Greece because her
husband wanted to seek freedom and independence.

In the expressionistic detail of The Verge, and in these more subtle ways, Susan
Glaspell was an influence on O'Neill, one that O'Neill scholars will have to deal
with now that other critics of American culture, feminist writing, and drama have
begun to uncover the power in Glaspell's plays. A good starting point, I would
suggest, might be Glaspell's connections to Strange Interlude, O'Neill's own play
with a strong female persona, surrounded by her own Tom, Dick, and Harry!

--Linda Ben-Zvi

EUGENE O'NEILL AND EDWARD GORDON CRAIG

In the early twentieth century, Edward Gordon Craig (1872-1966) symbolized the
"new movement in theatre" that Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) later associated himself
with in America. Craig was among the first to resist the juggernaut of realism and
naturalism in Europe at the turn of the century; and although his seemingly radical
notions often caused him to be denounced as an impractical dreamer, many of his ideas
helped shape the "new stagecraft" and the "little theatre" movements that were to
significantly change the American theatre. The Provincetown Players, perhaps the
most important "little theatre" in America, introduced the early works of O'Neill
(and the scenic art of Robert Edmond Jones), setting the stage for the era of
experimentation that followed World War I. Although they never collaborated, or even
met, the iconoclastic Craig recognized the importance of O'Neill in the changing world of the theatre.

Craig, son of actress Ellen Terry, began his theatrical career as an actor, but in his youth he turned away from acting and began his highly controversial journey towards a new theatre. In his periodicals The Page (1898-1901), The Mask (1908-1929), and The Marionette (1918-1919), as well as in numerous books, especially his manifesto The Art of the Theatre (1905, expanded as On the Art of the Theatre in 1911), Craig explored his notions of a non-realistic, symbolic theatre under the control of a master artist exceptionally proficient in all aspects of theatrical production. Between 1900 and 1911, when he produced a landmark Hamlet at the Moscow Art Theatre for Constantin Stanislavsky, Craig tested his theories in imaginative but, unfortunately, little known productions. His unique ideas became widely influential, however, through his writings and designs, and much of what he suggested was to be carried forth in productions by Max Reinhardt and several Russian visionaries, including Vsevelod Meyerhold, all of whom relished Craig's ideas of a unified, symbolic, anti-naturalistic theatre.

But what did Craig know of the American theatre and the impact there of these particularly European ideas? In 1912, Craig wrote, "Americans are queer, adorable and abominable.... They have the biggest cities in the world and the biggest jungles, and nothing very vital seems to come out of either of them" (V, 2, October 1912, 169).* Craig was concerned about the move toward commercialism in the theatre and chose to instruct American theatre artists on this subject: "Study what belongs to the art of the Theatre and what belongs to the trade of the Theatre, but never mix the two" (IV, 1, July 1911, 27). Although he had some of his earliest roles with Henry Irving's Lyceum Theatre on an American tour in 1884, Craig never returned. He did design a production of Macbeth for American producer George C. Tyler in 1928, but the production, which he himself labeled a "Craig Pot-Boiler," was only based on his designs.

Craig ultimately paid some attention to the American drama, at least through published plays and critical and historical accounts of the American theatre. In The Mask Craig admiringly quoted George Pierce Baker's call for a union of scholarship and art. He also admired the scene designs of Robert Edmond Jones (which is not surprising since the influence of Craig's designs on Jones is obvious), and in reviewing Continental Stagecraft by Jones and Kenneth Macgowan he stated that the "forty sketches by Mr. Jones are all one wants--they could not 'be more expressive--one only wants more of them" (IX, 1923, 35). When he reviewed five one-act plays by American writers influenced by the new movement in theatre, Craig zeroed in on the then virtually unknown Theresa Helburn's play Enter the Hero: "I think Miss Helburn has the genius of the theatre in her veins.... For Miss Helburn...bravo America!" (VIII, 12, 1918-19, 53).

And what of O'Neill? Certainly Craig never saw an American production of O'Neill's work, and it is unlikely that he ever saw an O'Neill play in a European performance. Mention of the playwright first appeared in The Mask in 1928 when Craig reviewed Barrett H. Clark's Eugene O'Neill. Although most often thought of as a scene designer, Craig always referred to himself as an actor (although he never acted publicly after 1897), and it is interesting to note that he found O'Neill's early experiences as an actor in his father's company significant in the playwright's development.

Later in 1928, however, while reviewing the published play script of Lazarus Laughed, Craig decried "the habit of printing plays which should be heard and seen and never read" (XIV, 4, October-December 1928, 177), and proceeded to make his case with characteristic vitriol, after quoting a passage from the play:

*All quotations in this essay are from Craig's periodical, The Mask. Each parenthetical citation provides volume, number, date, and page, in that order.
Lazarus: (His voice is heard in a gentle, expiring sigh of compassion, followed by a faint dying note of laughter that rises and is lost in the sky like the flight of his soul back into the womb of Infinity). Fear not, Caligula! There is no death!

Well, we should call this devilish highbrow in England, and in Italy we should call it precisely highbrow, and in France they would call it a lot more. And what would they say in Germany? I think they would rather like it, but I also think that the printing of a play is a most unfair proceeding, because it has to come before ordinary men with a sense of humour and other common senses, and when they read this.--

Ha-ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha-ha!
Let us die, Lazarus!
Mercy, Laughing One!
Mercy of death!
Ha-ha-ha-ha! Ha-ha-ha-ha!

--No, it simply won't wash, they are in no laughing mood, and although I am pretty positive that O'Neill is not a man with a great sense of humour, yet with a lot of practicability in his nature, with the sense of a theatre man and a really most able being, in the piece I have quoted there is so much insincerity and so much twaddle, that I am forced to believe that it is not O'Neill's fault but the fault of the beastly print.... (XIV, 4, 177)

Craig goes on to suggest that the play is "much too full of stage directions" (XIV, 4, 177). When working on a project Craig typically removed the stage directions from the script to allow himself freedom of interpretation. He always bridled at perceived attempts to limit the creative powers of any individual artist of the theatre, particularly the actor, feeling that all aspects of production should be given equal importance. After his landmark essay, "The Actor and the Über-marionette," first published in The Mask in 1908, Craig was accused of wanting to do away with the living actor, replacing him with a larger-than-life puppet. Craig later explained that he wanted the actor to re-emerge as the eloquent symbol of humanity through intense training that stressed improvisation. He pointed to the Italian actors of the commedia dell'arte for examples of the triumph of this type of theatre, as well as the ancient Greek, Roman, and Oriental theatres, that succeeded, in his opinion, as a result of the use of masks and symbolic ritual, both of which Craig felt of maximum importance if the theatre truly hoped to move beyond naturalism. In observing Lazarus Laughed, Craig stressed the limiting nature, and the ultimate futility, of specific stage directions:

Between almost every speech is a stage direction. Mary is to say "hysterically", the father is to say "frenziedly", the mother is to say "fanatically" or "tearfully". Mary is to speak "defiantly". Now there are at least seventy shades of defiance per person, one hundred shades of hysteria and frenzy, and therefore it is making it so easy for the actor when he is told as here that all he has to do is to be frenzied or defiant in one and the same old way--the one and only way according to the author.

If there are going to be long stage directions I like them to be all of a more subtly discriminating nature than this. Let the author look into the whole past life of Mary and the father and the mother. Let us hear what kind of voice Mary actually had. How it was affected by a feeling of defiance on Monday, Tuesday, and so on. What sort of thing made her snap or snarl her words. What made her coldly defiant, frantically defiant, and sincerely defiant and so on. But that would mean long discussions of Mary and her ways, her life, and even then I doubt if we would get it. Surely the great actor is needed at last. (XIV, 4, 177)
Craig's reaction to O'Neill's stage directions is undoubtedly also a result of his suspicion of the predominance of literary drama. Craig felt that literary men, such as George Bernard Shaw, had drained spontaneity from the theatre, particularly undermining the actor, in a misguided move toward naturalism. Although the power of O'Neill's stage directions and character descriptions, especially in the later plays, is widely considered essential, in the case of Lazarus Laughed Craig may have a point:

Pompeia walks to the dais which she ascends slowly until she stands by Caesar's couch, beside him, confronting Lazarus.

The stage directions continue for another six lines and end up:

Pompeia leans over and takes a peach from the bowl of fruit on Caesar's table, and taking Tiberius' hand in the other, she kisses it, and calls insistingly: "Caesar, it is I, Pompeia".

Now when you have to tell actors there have to be peaches, and not pears, in a bowl on a table and this chief actress has to walk slowly to a dais, and that she has to stand behind, and not at the side of Caesar, things are getting very impracticable. Suppose in King Lear we had some such strange and useless stage direction. Take for instance Cordelia's line: "And so I am". You all remember it. Good! Now let us rewrite the stage direction:

Lear "...Believe this lady to be my daughter".

Cordelia (walking to the dais, up to which she trips with rapidity, and stands behind Lear's couch. Lear continues to stare into space. His whole being relaxing, a dreary smile softens his hard mouth. Cordelia runs over, taking a wisp of hawthorne from a bowl on the right of Lear, and stroking the white hair of her father with the bough, kisses his forehead, coos into his ear:) "And so I am".

Now doesn't this spoil the whole thing? (XIV, 4, 177)

But finally, in spite of his criticisms, Craig recognized the tragic imagination and extraordinary creative ambition that brought O'Neill world acclaim when he noted (XIV, January-March 1928, 42):

At the age of thirty-five he had found that "happiness is a word," and believed that he perceived it hidden somewhere in tragedy.

And so we may note that O'Neill has put himself a most difficult task--the most difficult in this remarkably false age ... to smash up that barred door which is guarded by prejudice against all arts and all the artists is something that has to be done to balance things a bit better.

And it won't hurt anyone; it will do the reverse.

I hope O'Neill will be writing when the door is down.

--James Fisher

* * * * *

APOLOGY. The letter of Carl Van Vechten that appeared on pp. 41-42 of the last issue should not have been printed without the authorization of Mr. Van Vechten's literary trustee. The editor apologizes for the oversight, and is happy to inform readers that the letter will be included in a selection of Carl Van Vechten's letters that is soon to be published by the Yale University Press.
REVIEWS AND REPORTS OF O'NEILL PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

1. THE GREAT GOD BROWN, directed by Jarka Burian and produced by the Department of Theatre, State University of New York, Albany, November 20-23, 1985, with stage design by Robert Donnelly, lighting design by Jerome Hanley, and costume and mask design by Janet Harreld. The following are the director's "comments after the event."

Three things impressed me particularly as I read and reread this play (O'Neill's self-described favorite): the sheer Americanness of its cultural and psychological orientation, most obvious in its idiom; the particular period of the 1920s as a time of fresh energies, naive materialism, and receptiveness to foreign models of art and thought; and O'Neill's intensely autobiographical investment in the play.

I wanted to reinforce the presence of these elements in O'Neill's dialogue and stage directions by embodying them scenographically. To begin, although working in a proscenium theatre, we decided not to attempt conventional realistic settings; but not wanting to go to an opposite extreme of abstract, isolated space, we arrived at a series of settings with minimal, selective realism in furniture and props, mounted alternately on two wagons that moved in from stage right and stage left as needed, for the five locations and thirteen scenes. Remaining downstage below the curtain line for all scenes was a low, bordwalk-type platform representing the dock of the Prologue and Epilogue and functioning as a neutral downstage area for all the other scenes, which rode in on the wagons to adjoin this neutral boardwalk platform. We made no use of curtains, all changes occurring in lowered lighting in view of the audience. The costumes were realistic and in period.

Our special scenographic reinforcement consisted of seventeen variously shaped panels with graphic images of the era and of O'Neill. (Ideally, we would have used projections on one or two screens, but we lacked sufficient equipment.) These panels were configured in three discrete planes that could be flown in and out during scene changes to form various backdrops for the succeeding scenes. The panels were sometimes accented with special lights, sometimes only dimly visible, sometimes not present at all for certain scenes. Similarly, period music of the 1920s was chosen to introduce and bridge the many scenes: jazz, blues, and dissonant classical--Beiderbecke, Armstrong, Bartok, for example. Bartok is hardly American, but some sections of his quartets of the 1920s captured the angst of several key moments in the play, especially as Brown agonizes under Dion's mask. (Is there American music c. 1910-1930 that has a Bartok dissonance?) Most nearly ideal, for me, was the instrumental portion of Louis Armstrong's "Saint James Infirmary," which came in after Brown's death in Act 4, Scene 3, and segued to the Epilogue.

The Masks. We decided on lifesize halfmasks that left the jaws and mouth free. The masks were made of celastic from casts of the actors' own faces, but then stylized according to O'Neill's stage directions; consequently, for example, we wound up with four masks for Dion and three for Billy Brown. The masks were held to the head by the sideframes of eyeglasses, to which the masks were firmly bonded. Thus, the necessary clapping on and removing of the masks was reasonably efficient.

O'Neill did not make things easier by writing in three sons--seen at two ages--so that one may need as many as six actors, unless, like O'Neill, he apparently has at hand a cluster of Jones siblings (four of them) to play the boys, and a fifth Jones to play the police captain! (See original-cast list in Margaret Loftus Ranald, The Eugene O'Neill Companion, p. 270. Does anyone know if
Complete set of panels upstage of boardwalk railing.

Brown (Steve Hart) holding Dion's mask (his own is on the table).

Brown at his desk, in conversation with Margaret (Karen Sherman) in Act III, Scene 1.

Dion (Mark Walthers) at the feet of Billy (Steve Hart) in Act II, Scene 3.

Margaret with Dion's mask in the Epilogue.
these Joneses were related to Robert Edmond Jones, the director and designer of the original production?) I seriously considered cutting the boys but was finally able to line up some off-campus youngsters for the young sons and then used young-looking college students for the older sons.

Sentimental, melodramatic, pretentious, and clumsy as some of the play is, it has a core of impassioned sincerity and theatrical dynamics that carried beyond the footlights effectively. Our production was favorably received.

Second Thoughts. Our main problem was the length of the play, or, perhaps more precisely, the length of time and repetitiveness involved in moving the wagons on and off stage for the thirteen scenes of the play. Were we to do it again, I would like to maintain even less realistic fidelity to O'Neill's stage directions for the settings and, instead, establish something like a simultaneous setting of three separate acting areas designated by lighting. Changes of scene would be accomplished by cross fading the lights and would take only as long as the actors needed to move from one area to another. The graphic panels worked well but, like the changing wagon settings, became repetitive and perhaps heavy handed. Instead, I would now try fewer, essentially larger panel images, all of which would be present throughout most of the play. Instead of being flown in and out in groups of five or six, individual ones would be accented by lighting for specific scenes.

--Jarka Burian


One of the major problems in producing O'Neill's impressive Americanized Greek tragedy Mourning Becomes Electra is the marathon length of the three plays which make up the trilogy. PBS solved the problem a few years ago by broadcasting the work in several parts. Indiana Repertory Theatre director Tom Haas produced a 2 1/2 hour version, cutting each of the three plays to the length of an act. The shortened script intensified the conflicts among the Mannons in the aftermath of the Civil War and accentuated the melodramatic nature of the piece. O'Neill purists would undoubtedly find the extent of Haas' radical editing a distressing violation of a classic; but thanks to inventive staging, strong acting and excellent scenic and costume designs, the power of O'Neill's themes and characters was revealed with surprising freshness.

In Haas' version all of the action took place on Christopher H. Barreca's sparse setting which consisted of four towering gray columns, a few furnishings to indicate the interior of the Mannon home, and an ornate portrait of Ezra Mannon dominating the scene. Cumbersome scene shifts were thereby avoided and the effectiveness of the selective simplicity of the setting was heightened by the stark lighting designed by Rachel Budin and stunning period costumes by Gail Brassard. But it was the exquisitely choreographed staging by Haas that created an unrelenting series of memorable images. The clarity and detail of the movement made otherwise ordinary gestures, as when Ezra Mannon placed his hand on the shoulder of his unloving wife, electrifying. Haas cleverly eliminated Ames, Louisa and Minnie from Homecoming; Borden, Emma, Hills, Hills' wife, Blake and the Chantyman from The Hunted; and Mackel, Silva and Small from The Haunted, and replaced them all with Seth Beckwith, the Mannon family gardener, as an omniscient presence. Seth spoke many of his lines directly to the audience, framing the central action of the play within Haas' intimate production concept.

The pruning also diminished the tragic overtones and heightened the melodramatic qualities of the work. This, too, might be a distressing slant if the actors had not been able to play the melodrama with the heroic abandon they so capably demonstrated. Emotional transitions were made with lightning speed and
fierce conviction. Janet Sarno was superbly commanding as the libidinous Christine Mannon. Her transition from a stalking huntress in Homecoming to a guilt-ridden hysteric in The Hunted charged the first half of the production. Unfortunately, her final moments were marred by a strange and sudden lack of passion. When she confessed to Hazel that "I don't believe there's such a thing on this earth as sleep! It's only in the earth one sleeps! One must feel so at peace--at last--with all one's fears ended," it was difficult to believe that she truly longed for the release of death. And instead of fleeing the stage to commit suicide when she learned of her lover's death, she seemed to be strolling off to take a nap. Michael Lipton was a fine Ezra Mannon and managed to create, despite limited stage time, a skillful portrait of a man tortured by the disgust his beloved wife feels for him. Among the major characters Frederick Farrar gave the weakest performance as Orin Mannon. From his first appearance he was unable to rise to the intense mood created up to that point. And while it is appropriate for Orin to be dominated by the other characters, Farrar's performance lacked the necessary energizing anguish and style that would allow him to project a weak character with strength. Without a doubt, the standout performance was by Amelia Penland as Lavinia Mannon. With stunning ease and power the striking Penland made the roller coaster transitions of emotion inherent in the anguished Lavinia of Homecoming and The Hunted. Her ultimate transformation into a frightening reincarnation of Christine was miraculous, and the play reached an explosive emotional climax when, haunted by the violent deaths of her parents and brother, she hissed, "Why can't the dead die!" Penland, along with Sarno and Lipton, played compellingly and the heightened melodrama was never in danger of slipping into absurdity. Among the supporting cast Marylou DiFilippo was a particularly gentle and sympathetic Hazel; Martin LaPlatney was appropriately slimy as Brant; Craig Fuller was delightfully bland as Peter; and Matthew Harrinton did well with the restructured character of Seth.

This production proved that in the hands of an audaciously talented director a difficult classic can have new life. It is to be hoped that Haas will soon bring his considerable abilities to productions of other works by O'Neill too often considered too troublesome to produce.

--James Fisher


Two parts of the Winter Company triptych proved interesting affirmations of the young O'Neill's ability to create dramatic mood ("Cross") and enhance atmosphere through the employment of slang ("Dreamy"). But in the central panel, "Before Breakfast," an attempt to alter O'Neill's intentions served only to confuse the audience and to suggest that in playing O'Neill--especially in playing such experimental and strangely delicate works as these--it is best to trust the author. When they did, as in "Where the Cross Is Made," the Winter Company succeeded admirably.

The set for "Cross" was stark and simple: two black flats upstage, a table downstage right, and a stairway that led up to Captain Bartlett's deck--a platform between the flats, lighted by an appropriate lantern. By dispensing with nautical trappings, the company heightened the effect of the play as a drama of the mind and made it what O'Neill called it in a letter to George Jean Nathan (quoted by Louis Sheaffer on p. 443 of O'Neill, Son and Playwright)--"theatrically very thrilling." While O'Neill's "experiment" in treating the audience as though it were mad did not come off--could it ever?--the spectator was forced to confront essential notions of sanity and of familial duty, two themes that run through the playwright's entire career.
The production stressed the relationship between Captain Bartlett (Chuck Brining) and his son. At the outset, Bartlett stood on his "deck" and etched a series of tableaux that would be echoed later by Nat--most notably when, after contemplating the sea, he raised his arm and clenched his fist in defiance, a gesture that Nat would later utilize in mirroring his father. Captain Bartlett was visible throughout the first scenes of the play, always watching the sea, his actual physical presence above the action serving as an embodiment of the spiritual presence that directs Nat. The production was able to successfully flout conventions of sanity via the characterizations of the Bartlett family. The grandeur of father and son contrasted effectively with the "blandeur" of sister Sue (Jen MacDonald) and Dr. Higgins (Peter Whitten). Sue's quotidian tidiness of mind, coupled with the workaday quizzicality of Higgins, moved the audience toward the more compelling visions of Nat and his father. And since Captain Bartlett had the only unflagging vision, we were caught up by his unswerving certainty.

Nat's differing levels of intensity were conveyed effectively by Richard Callahan. His pipe dreams of his "book," the "map" and the trinkets he possesses are but the broken dreams that he lives by--dreams fed by the frustrations of his broken body. Nat is desperately trying to escape his familial destiny, yet what else is there for him? By the time the three ghosts enter, it seems as though his "madness" lies in his attempt to reject his inevitable fate. The ghosts were, incidentally, saved from melodrama by Kenneth MacDonald's Silas Horne, who led in the trio with such intensity and purpose that he managed to overwhelm the inferiority of his supernumerary comrades. The map Horne gives to the Captain and that ends up in Nat's hands led to the play's final image--Nat's taking his father's place on "deck." The performance left the audience questioning the dreams of all the Bartletts. When Callahan burned up the "only" map, he kept hold of it until, with a flourish, he clamped its embers into Nat's hand. This moment was almost a recapitulation of the entire play, for Nat's grasping at the embers of a treasure map was as futile as his striving for literary glory with his illusory book, and as Sue's dream of settling down far away from the sea. For Nat in the end found, like his father, that the sea itself was the only valid dream.

The cast of "The Dreamy Kid" proved that O'Neill's slang could create a dramatic milieu that is neither stilted nor awkward. When delivered with the fluency that it was here, the play is a gripping crime melodrama. The set was not elaborate: a heavy cast-iron bed painted a bilious green, two pictures--of Frederick Douglass and of Christ at Gethsemane, the latter directly over Mammy Saunders' head--a bureau, and the mirror in which Dreamy's vanity would survey itself. Most interestingly, the wall that ran along the hallway was a scrim through which, at the play's penultimate moment, we could see the policemen about to spring on Dreamy. And a hurricane lamp, the play's final light source, created deep shadows that added mightily to the tension of the denouement. Equally deep was the patina of timelessness and hopelessness that extended from beginning to end.

Georgette Leslie had a poignant authority as Mammy Saunders, a power that render believable her compelling the "kid" to remain. Dreamy is like so many of O'Neill's heroes in that through his struggle to get home, to "belong," he traps himself: he is cornered while listening to Mammy Saunders recount how he came by his name. Michael Jones brought a mournfulness to Dreamy that allowed him no sentimentalization. Despite his swagger and his flashy clothes, he seemed to accept his fate; indeed, Jones' Dreamy was genuinely fatalistic. Zakiya Alake, as Dreamy's hardened lover Irene, was no mere sketch but a real woman in love with a doomed man. In all these performances, it was the actors' fluency with the dialogue that rendered the play successful--no mean feat, given the vintage of the slang. When Leslie's Mammy Saunders began to murmur a spiritual, the entire play took on the atmosphere of a wake--an appropriate coda for the Dreamy Kid's last
The trouble with "Before Breakfast" was less in what we saw than in what we didn't see: the trembling hand of Alfred Rowland never appeared. This left us wondering whether there was an Alfred Rowland. Was he but the product of the speaker's guilt-ravaged mind? Or were we Alfred Rowland? (After all, we were repeatedly addressed directly.) It can be argued that any of those perspectives is possible—yet this production appeared to offer all three at once. At play's end, Paula Jowanna directed her final (and all too readily anticipated) shriek downstage right, behind a coatrack, doing nothing to alleviate our confusion.

Save for the coatrack, the set was fine. A single functioning faucet indicated that this was a cold-water flat; the floor was thick with cigarette butts and ashes. And Mrs. Rowland's appearance was just right: the archetypal frump, complete with twisted stocking seams that spoke of other twists within. Jowanna caught all the anguish of a tortured woman, and earned fleeting bits of pity by underplaying the role's comic possibilities. But a fine performance was undermined by our nagging uncertainty about Mr. Rowland. Had the director at least had her focus on one location for Alfred, her nascent pitiableness might have borne fruit. But he did not. And he compounded the confusion by giving her two extra belts from the gin bottle, emphasizing an alcoholic tendency that inspired a fourth possible notion about Alfred: perhaps the entire play was nothing more than a dipsomaniacal dowager's bout with delirium tremens. Ms. Jowanna, and Mr. O'Neill, deserved more.

In sum, while two rights could not overcome a disastrous wrong, the evening's performances were worthwhile—especially "Where the Cross Is Made," which demonstrated that play's enduring dramatic value and highlighted themes that O'Neill would draw upon in later, larger works. All three revealed that O'Neill's short early plays are theatrically viable and can move contemporary audiences if the playwright's instructions are faithfully heeded. Even "Before Breakfast" taught that lesson, in reverse. Tamper excessively with such delicate artifacts, remove just one tremulous appendage, and you may lose everything.

—Thomas F. Connolly

THE EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY SECTION

I. O'NEILL SESSION AT MLA '85: a report by Paul D. Voelker.

The 1985 program of the Eugene O'Neill Society, held on December 28, in conjunction with the Modern Language Association convention in Chicago, was chaired by Paul Voelker (University of Wisconsin Center—Richland) and featured papers by Brenda Murphy (St. Lawrence University), Linda Ben-Zvi (Colorado State University), and Stephen Watt (Indiana University, Bloomington).

Professor Murphy's paper, "O'Neill, Belasco, and Herne: Beyond the Horizon and American Intertextuality," demonstrated the importance, to a complete understanding of O'Neill's work, of earlier American plays. As a case in point, Professor Murphy placed Beyond the Horizon into a web of "intertextuality" comprised of works by David Belasco and James A. Herne. By tracing the evolution of a structural paradigm from Henry Leslie's English play, The Mariner's Compass, through Belasco and Herne's 1879 Chums (eventually Hearts of Oak), and from Mrs. Gaskell's novel, Sylvia's Lovers, through Belasco's adaptation (eventually titled May Blossom) and Herne's Shore Acres and Sag Harbor, Professor Murphy demonstrated that the basic plot of O'Neill's play was well-known at the turn of the century. She concluded by suggesting that the success of Beyond the Horizon may have rested in part on
O'Neill's alteration of a familiar theme to reflect his own personal vision of the "poet's quest" to break out of the limits imposed by contemporary American culture and its institutionalized values of love, marriage, and family.

In "Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill: The Imagery of Gender" (which appears in this issue), Professor Linda Ben-Zvi argued that the influence of Glaspell and her work has too long been overlooked by O'Neill critics. Professor Ben-Zvi reviewed the evidence for the closeness of O'Neill and Glaspell and his high regard for her work, and analyzed Glaspell's "masterpiece," The Verge, as a more likely influence on The Hairy Ape than previously suggested European models. Ben-Zvi further indicated that Glaspell and O'Neill, as revealed in these two plays, present opposed images--Glaspell's, of "pioneering"; O'Neill's, of the return home--normally associated with members of the opposite sex. As a result, "they unfix the common stereotypes of male/female imagery." In closing, Ben-Zvi noted that another place to look for Glaspell's influence was Strange Interlude.

The final paper was Stephen Watt's "O'Neill and Otto Rank, The Double and Individuation," in which a strong case was made for Rankian psychoanalysis as a more valid tool for probing O'Neill's plays than Freudian theory. After establishing Rank's place in, and eventual break from, Freud's "inner circle," Professor Watt established the prominence of Rank's thought in New York in the 1920s. Without suggesting a direct link between Rank and O'Neill, Watt went on to show, using Mourning Becomes Electra, that Rank's theories of individuation, the double, and narcissism clarify O'Neill's explorations of Orin Mannon in a new way, by elevating narcissistic return to the mother over images of Oedipal murder of the father. Ultimately, Watt suggested, Rankian theory may also shed light on Reuben Light, Con Melody, Simon Harford, and Jamie Tyrone, and may finally allow us to see O'Neill "not as a poor reader of Freud, but as a writer acutely aware of alternative explanations of psychic conflict."


The Seventh Annual Meeting of The Eugene O'Neill Society was held at 7:15 p.m., December 28, 1985, in the Burnham Room of the Hyatt-Regency Hotel, Chicago. President Albert Wertheim presided.

The Minutes of the Sixth Annual Meeting as distributed in the Newsletter were approved. Reports from the Secretary and the Treasurer were presented (see items III and IV) and accepted.

Election of President, Vice-President, and five members of the Board of Directors for the 1986-1989 four-year term was held by secret ballot. However, since there were no nominations from the floor for offices of President and Vice-President, it was moved, seconded, and approved that the Secretary cast a unanimous ballot for these two positions. The ballots for Board of Directors were distributed and the membership directed to vote for up to six candidates. Among the six with highest votes, the candidate with the least votes would be named to fill the position vacated by Michael Manheim, who will serve as Vice-President.

The following are the election results:

President, two-year term, 1986-1987 - Frederick C. Wilkins
Vice-President, two-year term, 1986-1987 - Michael Manheim
Board of Directors, four-year terms, 1986-1989
  Travis Bogard
  Adele Heller
  Jordon Pecile
  Paul Voelker
  Albert Wertheim
Board of Directors, unexpired term (Manhaim) 1986-1987 - Eugene Hanson

The O'Neill Session topic for the 1986 MLA convention in New York City was announced. Chaired by Jackson R. Bryer, it will be "O'Neill: The Composition Process." Papers pertaining to O'Neill's process of writing the plays, through study of manuscripts and/or other sources, will be presented. The 1987 session in San Francisco will be chaired by Jordan Miller. Suggestions were solicited from the membership, and at present the topic will center around O'Neill and the Orient--his influence by, interest in, and so on. The precise topic is not yet determined, but suggestions for papers are earnestly solicited now. Further information will be included in forthcoming Newsletters. Even though the deadline will not be until March 1987, the session Chair requests that all interested get in touch with him at the Department of English, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881, as soon as possible.

The membership was informed that the Society will help underwrite the Boston conference on O'Neill's later years in the amount of $2000.

The following amendment to the Society by-laws was proposed:

V. 6.d). International Secretaries. The Board of Directors shall be authorized to appoint International Secretaries as the need arises. These International Secretaries shall assume responsibilities identical with the Secretary for those portions of the Society's membership outside the United States. In addition, the International Secretaries shall 1), 11), and 111) remain as currently in the by-laws.

The rationale for this amendment is based on the fact that international members in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere, have considerable difficulty with international currency exchanges and other matters, which an International Secretary can assist in handling. At present Tom Olsson, Stockholm, is International Secretary for Europe. Society member Haiping Liu, Nanjing University, People's Republic of China, has asked if the Society might consider establishing an International Secretary for the Orient, considering the strong interest in O'Neill in Asia. Therefore, the Board of Directors authorized the presentation of the above amendment for acceptance at this time by the membership and for final vote at the 1986 Annual Meeting. The amendment was approved unanimously.

The Board proposed that Mr. Liu be appointed an interim International Secretary for the Orient, pending final approval of the position next year. Unanimously approved by the membership.

Michael Hinden moved that the membership commend outgoing President Albert Wertheim for services rendered during his four-year tenure as Society President. Approved unanimously.

President Wertheim outlined the contents of the proposed Centennial Volume of essays to be published under Society aegis in 1988. The four general areas will be:

O'Neill's manuscript sources; The development of the O'Neill heritage in various sites and centers; O'Neill and the theatre--productions, actors, directors, etc.; and Recent O'Neill criticism and revaluation.

The volume will be under the general direction of Jackson R. Bryer, Albert Wertheim, and Frederick Wilkins. Professor Bryer emphasized that these areas of interest are open to wide latitude, and any person wishing to contribute in any way to the volume, even though the subject may not precisely fit these stated categories, should not hesitate to submit the idea to one of the editors.

Tom McDermott announced the start of an O'Neill Festival in Los Angeles in the fall
of 1986, beginning its first season with HUGHIE, BEFORE BREAKFAST, DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS, and A TOUCH OF THE POET. He expressed hope that there might be a performance at Tao House in 1987. The hope is to make this into a permanent O'Neill festival theatre in the same manner as the Stratford and Shaw festivals in Ontario.

Tom McDermott also suggested that the Society might check AMERICAN THEATRE magazine, which lists performances around the country, and attempt to secure publicity, and possibly members, by asking that information about the Society be included in programs of productions of O'Neill plays.

Jackson Bryer spoke concerning the June 1987 program in Provincetown being planned by Adele Heller. There will be three or four days of celebration of the arts in Provincetown, with a series of panels on visual, dramatic, and other arts, with plans to stage the first plays produced by the original Provincetown Players and other attractions including walking tours of the area.

Michael Manheim also mentioned the plans for the Stockholm Strindberg-O'Neill celebration in 1988, probably in the spring.

Paul Voelker raised the question of desirability of some sort of coordination across the country in the performance of O'Neill plays during the centennial year. He felt there ought to be some effort by the Society to promote the production of plays during that year by making contact with various university and community/resident companies so that there would be a genuine national awareness of the centennial year. In the course of discussion it was suggested that there be some sort of coordination with the American Literature section of MLA, particularly at the 1988 MLA meetings. Al Wertheim suggested that ASTR might be involved. Question was raised about seeking production funds from such agencies as NEH and NEA, but those with experience in these matters pointed out that the NEH does not like to be associated with anything implying "production." If the term "production" is buried deeply enough in proposals, the NEH will sometimes make grants. Marvis Voelker mentioned the possibility of use of state funds for such grants, through state arts councils. Paul Voelker will contact the president of LORT (League of Resident Theatres) concerning some sort of coordination. All members were urged to speak to their own regional theatre groups to encourage them to participate in centennial productions. Paul Voelker was appointed by outgoing president Wertheim as the Society's liaison for O'Neill centennial activities.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jordan Y. Miller
Secretary


The Society closed the 1985 year with 148 members, a net gain of 4 over the 1984 membership. While we continue to lose old members at a rather alarming rate (18 during 1984), our gain of 22 helped us break even. Our international reputation continues to grow, with 19 members from 10 countries, including 5 from Japan and 2 from the People's Republic of China.

During 1985, 10 Society members chose the joint membership with the Tao House Foundation. (Interestingly enough, of the 46 who have so far rejoined for 1986, 10 have taken the joint membership already, none of them carry-overs from last year). The Eugene O'Neill National Historic Site, which supervises Tao House, joined the Society as an Institutional Member. 21 members also took advantage of the special offer on Margaret Ranald's book, The Eugene O'Neill Companion, which was sold to
Society members at a substantial discount.

The Secretary investigated possibilities for substantial increases in publicity through national advertising, but took no immediate steps pending approval by the Board of the rather high costs. The Secretary also looked into the matter of the government's striking a special centennial medal, but found, through discussions with the office of his congressional representative, that it would literally take an act of Congress to do so--a long and probably fruitless undertaking.

As the Treasurer's report indicates, we are in excellent financial shape. All we need now is members. --JYM.


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Submitted by Virginia Floyd, Treasurer.

V. A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT.

This is not an inaugural address: the editor wouldn't allow me space for one of those, and besides, I greatly prefer valedictorians to introductories. But I did want to say how honored I am to have been entrusted with the position of helmsperson for the next two years. My predecessors--Horst Frenz, Winifred Frazer and Albert Wertheim--have established a strong and flourishing organization, and I will do all I can to keep it that way and to further the realization of the founders' dreams.

The years ahead should be particularly exciting ones--a fact, I hasten to add, that has nothing to do with who is president. Interest in O'Neill and the Society is burgeoning around the world, particularly in the Orient; and one of our immediate goals must be to assure harmony and cooperation among the Society's widespread membership and see that all are equally represented. This may well mean meetings in other countries as well as in the United States--without, of course, severing our important link with the Modern Language Association--and also, perhaps, the establishment of regional divisions that could periodically hold meetings on their own. The appointment of two international secretaries is an important step in the right direction, and I hope that the Asian and European members who attend the May conference in Boston will have time to pool their ideas about what additional steps might appropriately follow.

Another important link that we should attempt to strengthen is the one between O'Neill's scholarly and theatrical constituencies. Both should be equally represented
if the Society's goals are to be accomplished. This is particularly true in the immediate future, as we approach the centennial of O'Neill's birth in 1988. Hence the importance of Paul Voelker's appointment (mentioned in the minutes above) as Society liaison for centennial activities. More on that in the future, but I hope that any member who is involved already in any centennial plans, or who has an interest in becoming involved, will contact Paul at the Department of English, University of Wisconsin Center-Richland, Richland Center, WI 53581.

The editor says that my time is up, so I will close, with thanks to the membership and a promise to try to prove worthy of your confidence. --PCW.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

February 19, 1986

My admiration for Jordan Y. Miller knows no bounds, and I agree with much of what he says in praise of Judith Barlow's Final Acts: The Creation of Three Late O'Neill Plays (review in Winter 1985 issue). But I must take exception to both Miller and Barlow in their view of A Moon for the Misbegotten as a "flawed masterpiece." I have not been able to perceive the flaws.

Barlow objects to the emphasis given Phil Hogan's intrigues in a work which ultimately concentrates on the pathos of confession and the miracle of forgiveness. Phil's intrigues are no flaw. Nor do they make the play "tedious," if they are understood in the light of O'Neill's consummate artistry. I explore the relationship between Phil's intrigues and the Jim-Josie action in my article "O'Neill's Transcendence of Melodrama in A Touch of the Poet and A Moon for the Misbegotten" (Comparative Drama [Fall 1982], 238-250). By juxtaposing two such diametrically opposed moods and types of dramatic action, O'Neill is commenting on the whole history of drama's popularity, including the popularity of his own earlier drama. He teases and entices his audience with Phil's antics—the humiliation of the "Standard Oil millionaire" and the plot to trap Jim Tyrone into marriage—before he lets the play give way to the gargantuan outpouring of feeling by the lovers. In doing so, O'Neill is in effect saying to his audience: "What you come to the theatre for is not what theatre is really about. You come to be entertained and mystified by the engaging superficialities of comic and serious melodrama. What you should be coming for is what the Greek tragedians and Shakespeare provided so well—a wrenching of your innermost feelings and a severe challenge to you lives' meanings, and to life's meaning."

Phil Hogan's come-on traps the audience into thinking it will not have to feel anything, that it will only be entertained. But as the action unfolds, that audience is made to feel very deeply indeed, as the audiences of Oedipus and Lear were made to feel. The early portions of the long Jim-Josie exchange—in which Josie is thinking about trapping Jim while Jim is trying to find the courage to confess—are a brilliant transition between one (fascinating but trivial) kind of drama and another (painful but all-important) kind of drama.

Sincerely,
Michael Manheim
Univ. of Toledo

REPRINTS AND ABSTRACTS

1. "ROBARDS ON ICEMAN AND O'NEILL" is the title of an interview with Jason Robards, conducted by Los Angeles Times drama critic Dan Sullivan, that appeared in the Times "Calendar" section on Sunday, February 9, 1986, shortly before the Los Angeles opening
S. Barnard Hughes was saying that even those of you who had done Iceman before didn't remember much about it. So this was like a new play for everybody.

R. It was. People say, "Oh, you must remember," but I'm here to tell you—you don't. Also, there's a whole experience in living now that wasn't there the first time. The tragedy of a guy in his 50s who kills his wife—I understand a lot more about that than I did at 33. But with O'Neill it's a new beginning every day. His plays drive you to the conclusion. But if you've rehearsed it well, and set it up well, and come in with it fresh, you find new things all the time. Even now I'll say to myself before going on as Hickey: "I'm really going to sell these guys this time. They're really gonna buy it."

S. What's it like to rehearse with [José] Quintero?

R. José starts telling stories about his mother and his father and his brother, who was a priest or something. He goes on and on, with the terror of life, and the family, and the guilts, and all of a sudden you realize: he's applying it to the play. Doing the play, he's very specific.

S. You've played Hickey in Iceman, and Erie Smith in Hughie, and Jamie O'Neill in Moon for the Misbegotten and Long Day's Journey Into Night. Don't you find that they're the same character?

R. No, I don't. Erie Smith in Hughie is a guy who's hanging around the edges of the rackets in New York. He's staying over at the Knickerbocker Hotel on 45th Street. I stayed in that same damn toilet when I first came to New York. Jamie—he was a brilliant guy who failed through drink, in a family that was all messed up. He's sunk to cheap hotels, but he's an entirely different guy.

S. Who's Hickey?

R. Hickey's a salesman, a drummer from the Midwest whose father was a Jerry Falwell-type preacher. He comes to Harry Hope's saloon once a year to celebrate Harry's birthday. He loves to sit there and tell lies and get drunk and "forget love," as O'Neill says. However, this time he's not that guy. He's now the true outsider. He thinks that he's faced reality. But in the end he finds that he has a bigger pipe dream than all the rest of 'em put together. And then he's taken to the asylum. He's removed. Despair is removed. By hope.

S. But it's a false hope.

R. But, I mean, what isn't? What about this world? Do you want to face the reality of this world? And yet, as O'Neill says: Man lives.

S. Did you ever meet O'Neill?

R. The Theatre Guild invited a group of us students at the American Academy to a preview of the original Iceman back in '46. Paul Shyre said to me, "See that guy standing in the back, with those eyes? That's O'Neill." But by the time I looked he was gone.

S. But you knew Carlotta, his widow.

R. Funny about Carlotta. Once I'd played Jamie in Long Day's Journey, Carlotta would get angry with me every time she saw me. Because she hated Jamie. She couldn't separate the role from the actor. Hickey was removed, but Jamie was...
S. Her brother-in-law.

R. Yes. Here's something else that's funny. One night Helen Keller came backstage after the show. With Carlotta, by the way. She reached out and she touched my face ... and she slapped the hell out of me! She said, in that strange voice, "Ba-a-a-d boy." She didn't like me either. It wasn't me, it was Jamie.

S. So when people talk about actors being inhabited by a character ... you really have been.

R. By Jamie more than anyone. Maybe because my father was an actor and, in a strange way, did what O'Neill's father did with The Count of Monte Cristo. My dad just kept doing B films until he ran himself into the ground. My mother was absent, like O'Neill's. I had a younger brother, like O'Neill. Maybe the whole thing was too much for me. Freddie March even looked like my Dad. Anyway I couldn't separate my life on the stage. I'd go out afterward and get drunk and try to sleep it off and, ooh, I couldn't lose him. I'd say, I gotta get rid of this guy! And as the show [Long Day's Journey] went on--I played it two years, you know--I got more and more into it.

S. Yet you played Jamie again in A Moon for the Misbegotten.

R. And I got sober on that. It's funny that it would be Jamie again. Had I gone on drinking, I would have died. I almost did anyway. But I stopped in the middle of that run. I took the road that Jamie didn't take. I said, I can't die. Because I will die if I keep this up.

S. I remember you and Colleen Dewhurst in Moon for the Misbegotten at the Ahmanson in '74.

R. I hope you were sitting close.

S. What came across was that, although the play was much too long, the length was part of the journey.

R. This is a very long one, too. Will people come down to Vine Street to see a five-hour play after working all day? That's what worries me. Originally they performed it with a dinner break, you know. After a while they cut it out. People didn't come back, or they came back loaded and started yelling from the audience, "Take your filthy play."

S. How do you manage a part that long?

R. The other guys have a much tougher job. I only have 12 minutes in the first act. I have 10 minutes in the second, and then off for about 15, then 15 minutes on. Third act, I don't come on until halfway through. Then I do that narrative, and leave. Donald Moffat and the others are on from the word go.

S. Do you remember much about the original Iceman?

R. James Barton played Hickey. I remember his face, but not what he did. Face like a skull. What I remember is how it all stayed in the same mood. It never grew into anything.

S. You played Hickey in the old Play of the Week version of Iceman in 1960, but when it came to making a film of it (1973), Lee Marvin got the part.

R. With Lee, they were ready to put money into it. They weren't going to put it in with me, especially not then. I wasn't doing so well. I didn't see the film. I
don't know that Hickey is Lee's part. You really have to sing an aria.

S. Literally an aria? You have to notate it?

R. You really have to prepare it well. As I've gotten more and more into shape—I've started a whole cardiac program, exercise and diet—I've found I'm getting much more out of the show. It was wonderful to find I could get a thought out on a breath. It was like Shakespeare in the old days. I had gotten away from that in this documentary acting I've been doing in films.

S. You like things with a little sweep to them.

R. That's what I like, yes. Freddie March and I once did a scene from Count of Monte Cristo at a benefit. Oh, he was terrific. You felt the surge. You accepted the fact that he was impassioned. I love that kind of theater. Make-believe. That's what's fun. That's what it's all about. It's not a lot of self-analysis. And the better you make believe, the more the audience makes believe with you, and the more wonderful the evening is. Either that, or they walk out. You know that little change in Moon for the Misbegotten, when I fall asleep in her arms? Colleen used to say in the dark during the change, "How many are we losing? Tell 'em to come back, the damned play is not over." I'd say, "Come back. We've got another act."


It has become a critical commonplace that Eugene O'Neill turned American theater away from its tradition of popular melodrama and toward the mainstream of modern dramatic ideas and style by introducing to it naturalistic plots and settings, Freudian and Jungian themes and expressionistic staging. His late plays, often hailed as triumphs of realism, carry forward into the twentieth century the complexity of Ibsen's realism and Strindberg's expressionism. His tendency to embrace several seemingly contradictory ideas contributes to this complexity; for example, his continued fascination with melodrama's implications of romance even as he experiments with realistic and later expressionistic perspectives. His language, the subject of much critical debate, reflects this complexity of style, but the contribution made by his language to the new modern theater movement he helped establish has been undervalued, even neglected and scorned. Too often judged solely from a realistic perspective and thus found discordant, repetitive and unnatural, O'Neill's language, nonetheless, reflects the experimental nature of his drama no less emphatically than other aspects of his plays so often praised. Rather than challenge the conventions of dramatic language with a language radically different from that of his melodramatic predecessors, O'Neill follows the path taken by Joyce and others of creating something new, not from whole cloth, but from the remnants of other forms, from, in fact, the mixture and juxtaposition of forms. Thus, his language often comes to represent a simultaneous juxtaposition of the language of melodrama, naturalism and expression[ism], a collision of styles which places O'Neill within the shifting confines of modernism.

The introductory chapter locates O'Neill in the modernist tradition, associating his rejection of melodrama with modernism's movement away from romance toward realism. Like other modernists, however, O'Neill constructs new forms out of the fragments of the tradition he seems to overturn. Thus, the melodramatic perspective continues to operate, along with that of realism and, later, expressionism, as is evident in the persistent juxtaposition in his work of the language features which characterize those perspectives. In modernist fashion, O'Neill refuses to replace the old romantic language of melodrama with one authoritative new language, preferring instead to try out a series of dynamic alternatives suggestive of the ongoing struggle for expression in a world where no language is any longer necessarily expressive of total reality.

This historical study identifies an important connection between Eugene O'Neill and the Federal Theatre Project (FTP). It investigates the Project's thirty-five professional O'Neill productions from 1936-1939, a time when his plays were not produced on Broadway or elsewhere in the country. The study demonstrates that FTP was, in part, responsible for O'Neill's reputation as 'America's greatest playwright' and concludes that the Project's near-nationwide exposure brought O'Neill plays to more people in more parts of the country (notably the South) than had previous efforts of the Theatre Guild and other commercial managements.

The documentation employed to trace the O'Neill/FTP connection includes correspondence from the O'Neill Collection at Yale University, original FTP materials from the Institute on the Federal Theatre Project and the New Deal Culture at George Mason University, and the records of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), housed at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Included in these collections are production notebooks, director's reports, playreader reports, local reviews, administrative files and reports, playlists, letters, and miscellaneous papers. Standard biographical data about O'Neill are also incorporated.

The dissertation comprises eleven chapters. The "Introduction" briefly surveys O'Neill's career as dramatist. "The History of the Federal Theatre Project" recounts the economic crisis in the United States in the late 1920's and the creation of the WPA and FTP. "The O'Neill/FTP Connection" brings the playwright and the government agency together. The productions of the plays themselves are treated in seven chapters.

Ah, Wilderness! (discussed in chapter three), the most popular FTP O'Neill play, was produced eleven times with two full-scale tours. Anna Christie (chapter four) was mounted five times and Beyond the Horizon (chapter five) twice. The Emperor Jones (chapter six) was enacted by Negro units in Hartford and Salem, and adapted for production by the San Francisco Marionette unit. The Sea Plays (chapter seven) were produced in Philadelphia and New York City where changes made in the scripts to facilitate presentation by the Negro unit resulted in critical controversy. Other O'Neill titles produced by FTP were The First Man, The Straw, Days Without End, Welded, Diff'rent, Where the Cross Is Made, Before Breakfast, and The Dreamy Kid (chapters eight and nine).

Included in the appendices are production histories of O'Neill plays (pre-FTP and FTP), the geographical distribution of the productions (pre-FTP and FTP), a list of O'Neill works mounted by FTP, and a breakdown of the FTP O'Neill productions by title.


Strindberg, Kaiser, Toller and Joyce may have served as inspiration for the inner monologues in Strange Interlude; but one need not look beyond America for a source, or at least an analogy. Henry James' use of the inner monologue in fiction is really closer to O'Neill's realistic method than any of the European examples. A comparison between Isabel Archer's "night vigil" in the 42nd chapter of The Portrait of a Lady and the spoken thoughts of Nina Leeds reveals numerous affinities, both structural and thematic. In both James' novel and O'Neill's play, "the 'stream-of-consciousness' technique serves to unify the fragmented parts of the work and to illuminate aspects of the heroine's soul, on her journey towards self-discovery."
The differences revealed by such a comparison are partly generic and partly philosophical. O'Neill, employing the medium of drama, exceeds James' "degree of syntactic fragmentation"; and he uses the inner monologue device for more than Jamesian purposes:

while James is primarily concerned with psychological issues, O'Neill makes efforts to rise from the personal to the general and to formulate a compelling statement on the metaphysical predicament of mankind. ... Nina's interior monologues chart the evolution of her metaphysical considerations.

Hence the "flaw in O'Neill's asides: their Jamesian structure often fails to insure a suitable support for the playwright's metaphysical pretensions." But even if flawed, the device has merit, and the asides in Strange Interlude "certainly deserve more critical consideration than they have received hitherto." [Ed.]


Whatever its flaws as an individual and uncompleted text, More Stately Mansions (1936-1938) "merits--and repays--serious critical study" in the context of O'Neill's artistic career. It provides a transitional link, in terms of O'Neill's "increasing concern with the past," between the history plays that precede it ("distant-history" plays like The Fountain, Marco Millions and Lazarus Laughed; followed by works like Desire Under the Elms and Mourning Becomes Electra, "which deal with the more recent past of American history"), and the plays after Mansions, in which "O'Neill turns to the immediate past, autobiography." And it similarly links the earlier use of masks and split characters with the later integration (notable in the characters of Sara and Deborah) "into the characters themselves [of] those oppositions which previously were maintained by masking."

In addition to its transltional importance, Mansions also "continues longstanding patterns" in O'Neill's dramaturgy--patterns both of theme ("past betrayal and the present search for substitutes") and of characterization, especially the "tendency for the dramatis personae in plays written throughout O'Neill's career to conform to the archetypes of the four Tyrones." For instance, "Deborah Harford and Mary Tyrone bear affinities as close as any in the O'Neill canon." So Mansions "occupies a unique chronological and developmental position in the playwright's canon, and students of O'Neill ignore the work at their own risks." [Ed.]


It seems appropriate that the handsome first issue of The Recorder should begin with an article on Eugene O'Neill. (There are also essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald, James T. Farrell, John O'Hara and William Kennedy, and a review of Margaret Ranald's Eugene O'Neill Companion.) While Recorder editor Sullivan offers little that is new about the playwright's "Irish connection," he does cite the relevant comments on the subject--foremost among them being O'Neill's own; consider the possible influences of Synge, Joyce, O'Casey and the Irish Players; and point out the three forces that comprise O'Neill's "Irish dimension"--family, cultural affinity, and temperament. Temperamental connections are the hardest to support concretely. For instance, if a non-Irish American had treated Jamie O'Neill as Mr. Sullivan has done, he might well be accused of derogatory stereotyping. (Jamie was, he says, "a Mama's Boy, a type not unfamiliar among the Irish," whose attitude toward his younger brother was understandable because "among the Irish envy is the most common of the deadly sins" [p. 11].) Sullivan's essay frequently veers away from its announced focus, and it cites no sources more recent than 1973. But it is a pleasant if not an essential read, and it does permit this promising new journal to begin where it should--with the
7. John Gatta, Jr., "The American Subject: Moral History as Tragedy in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill." Essays in Literature, 6 (1979), 227-239. The following abstract, by Nancy C. Martinez, Univ. of Albuquerque, NM, is reprinted from Abstracts of English Studies, 28 (December 1985), 401:

The New England psyche furnishes the essential matter of O'Neill's tragic vision, and the failed American dream, an appropriate fable for expressing humanity's limited destiny. The plays chronicle the distortions and corruptions of American idealism and the characteristic Puritan tension "between one's public identity and the unwelcome truths of the private psyche." This dramatization of American moral history raises the question whether greater freedom may simply provide greater opportunities for self-destruction or self-indulgence.

BOOK REVIEWS


This is an important book that merits the attention of all serious students of O'Neill. I say this at the start lest the objections in my third and fourth paragraphs, and later, seem condemnatory. Dr. Ahuja's study has much to recommend it, it survives its own thesis, and its felicities ultimately outweigh its flaws.

It is Ahuja's contention that the gifts displayed in O'Neill's early, "lost" plays--gifts for comedy, irony, and iconoclastic upendings of the traditions of the paternal "show-shop"--were subsequently undermined by his conscious attempts, first to find a contemporary equivalent for classical tragedy, and then to incorporate into his work the "modernistic theatricality" inspired by the returning "exiles" of the early 1920s (52); and that it was only by finally rejecting both that he was able to create the masterworks of his last years. Accordingly, the villains of the piece are the men who encouraged those conscious attempts: Jig Cook, whose messianic classicism was not only antithetic to O'Neill's own nature but was distorted, in the playwright's mind, by the prior influence of Terry Carlin; and Kenneth Macgowan, whose "Theatre of Tomorrow" further thwarted O'Neill's tragic aims (especially when he tried to yoke the goals of Cook and Macgowan) and motivated the wild and seldom fruitful eclecticism of his middle period. Finally, after the years of silence, "when he resumed playwriting with the growing consciousness that he was writing some of his last works, he laid aside the ghosts of Freud, Jung and Nietzsche and tried to tell the truth as he had known it, without any tragic gloss. In this last phase, he came to transcend both tragedy and modern temper" (12). In fact, because the final plays, "instead of pity and fear, ... evoke understanding and compassion," they constitute "a higher form of art than tragedy itself" (169).

One may readily agree with Ahuja's view of O'Neill as a playwright whose "genius" was "essentially ironic" and whose innate comic gifts are apparent to those "prepared to read [his plays] without any tragic pre-conceptions" (4). One may well concur that O'Neill suffered from an "innocence of dramatic theory" (5); that he misunderstood the true spirit of classical tragedy; that his obsessive reading, inspired by others, resulted in "intellectual indigestion" (80) and a "philosophical preoccupation that gradually elbowed out interest in vital life" (9); and that the re-emergence of that interest in the "towers beyond tragedy" of his final years (the phrase is the title of the penultimate chapter) led to his greatest achievements. But the author is so concerned with showing, over and over, how play after play is ironic but not tragic that the book becomes annoyingly repetitive.

A few examples will suffice. Warnings "is by turns comic, sentimental, pathetic and melodramatic, but never tragic" (24). The Long Voyage Home "is pathetic,
melodramatic and ironic, but by no means tragic!" (40). The Hairy Ape, "though a theatrical masterpiece, and a great drama, ... is not a tragedy" (64). The Great God Brown "may be a tragic allegory, its philosophy may be tragic, but it is not a tragedy" (91). Strange Interlude "is, on the whole, a cruel joke rather than a tragedy" (97). And A Moon for the Misbegotten, "far from being a tragedy, ... is almost a grotesque comedy" (162). Enough, already! If Ahuja had freed himself from the "tragic pre-conceptions" he decries in "tradition-crazy critics" (185), had acknowledged before his final chapter that O'Neill's attempts were foredoomed both because "tragedy" and "modern temper" are incompatible and because true tragedy is anachronistic in the twentieth century (177), and had focused more directly on O'Neill's career-long genius as a consummate ironist, he would have produced a more affirmative study and saved himself and his reader a lot of time. As it is, he calls O'Neill "a colossus among the men of the twentieth century American theatre" (170), although, in a semantic distinction that is not altogether clear, the colossus is "not a giant in stature" because he combines the "truly great" and the "utterly pedestrian" (170-171). But if only Desire Under the Elms is authentically tragic, is it really necessary to devote a whole book to proving that everything else that O'Neill wrote--except perhaps for Beyond the Horizon, The Straw and Anna Christie--is not? If it is, then the task has been abundantly accomplished.

Why, then, my approbation? Because many valuable insights about specific plays punctuate the aforementioned thesis; and because, in Ahuja's largely chronological survey of O'Neill's entire career, as much attention is paid to the early, fledgling work as to the middle-period monoliths and the late triumphs. And besides, if one rereads the book, overlooking the tragic gloss, one does discern the never-completely-squelched bases of "O'Neill's essentially ironic mind" (31)--especially in the "ironic counterpointing" of a series of ubiquitous "polarities--pragmatism versus spiritualism, primitivism versus civilization, illusion versus reality, activity versus dreaminess, and innocence versus experience" (44).

Seldom are O'Neill's first efforts given the attention that they are here, since scholars most often nibble hurriedly at the hors d'oeuvres in their zeal for the entrées to follow, whereas Ahuja believes (and largely proves) that the highlights of the O'Neill feast are its beginning and end. "The 'lost' plays and the last plays," he notes, represent "the most authentic expression of O'Neill's genius" (172). In the former, we see how, one by one, the tyro tried his hand at the various genres of traditional theatre--sentimental comedy (A Wife for a Life), melodrama (The Web), tragedy (Thirst), "commercial romantic thriller" (Recklessness), etc.--and each was transmogrified by the "core of irony" inherent in its treatment. It is nice to see the "lost" plays given, for once, the full and equal attention they deserve, not least because they reveal how temperamentally attuned the young writer was to the brands of theatre he was at the same time publicly denouncing.

Sometimes the search for symbols approaches the outré, as in Abbie's washing the dishes in Desire Under the Elms--"symbolically, she is washing the dirt and soot of puritanism off the Cabot household" (125); Josie Hogan's name--can it really have been chosen to suggest "a female (chaste) Joseph born in the family of the (sensual) Hogs" (164)?--and the mundane gestures and activities of the speaker in Before Breakfast (28):

When Mrs. Rowland starts with a yawn, she suggests the dullness of her life. Her thumping, taunting, contemptuous laughter, her angry outbursts--all represent the cracking of a microcosm. Her sweeping suggests the raising of the settled dust of the past. Her cutting the bread outside is symbolic representation of a similar cut received within; likewise, her sipping coffee, too, symbolizes her sipping [her husband's] blood. She had him as her breakfast--the cannibal.

And I was frequently left with as many questions as answers. Is it right to say that
the Yank in Bound East for Cardiff "dies cheerfully" (37)? (A "face convulsed with agony" suggests something other than glee.) And while it is true that the last words of the other Yank, in The Hairy Ape, are delivered "laughingly" (66), it would be best to define the kind of laughter, especially if one is contending that, in that play, "empathy is thwarted by the comic handling." Is the first-act Josie Hogan really "obsessed with sexual desire" (164)? And is Con Melody's final brogue "another illusion" (111) or "the abandonment of play-acting" (114)? It cannot be both.

But most of the time the analyses are insightful and illuminating. For instance, if Ile and The Emperor Jones, despite each's emphasis on overweening pride, are not tragic, it may well be because, in the former, the hubris and suffering are divided between the Keeneys and not embodied in one, tragic protagonist (43); and because, in the latter, "panic is by no means the substitute for tragic exaltation" (59). (A "bundle of nerves" does not a tragic hero make!) Again, much of the "befuddlement" fomented by The Great God Brown is resolved if we consider Anthony and Brown, not as separate individuals, but as "the two selves of the same human being.... If we view the action as the story of the split personality of Dion Brown, torn between the artistic desire to create and the ambition for worldly success, many things, otherwise inexplicable, become intelligible" (87). And they do! Again, a brilliant endnote on p. 204 reveals the "kaleidoscopic" brilliance of Long Day's Journey. Are the four Tyrones uniformly flops? or uniformly guilty creatures? or uniformly escapists from reality? The only possible answer is, yes, they are "all of the above," depending on the angle from which they are viewed and judged. And the message of the play's "fable" varies, depending on which of the haunted four one treats as the "hub." Seldom have 19 lines revealed so much of this great play's mercurial substance.

And so it goes. There is so much of merit here that Dr. Ahuja can be forgiven his own obsession with tragedy. I doubt that anyone will agree with all of his observations, especially the negative ones. For example, it seems a bit insensitive to belittle Yank, in Bound East for Cardiff, because of his "desire to settle on a farm, with a wife and brats!" (37); and Strange Interlude might have been accorded a kinder label than "intellectual belch" (80)! Generally, however, the conclusions are sound, though I would, ironically, question a number of the assertions about the play that Ahuja praises most highly as tragedy. Ephraim may be "a satyr, not a saint," but is he also "too inhuman and grotesque to be a tragic hero" (121)? And why the prosecution anyhow, if, as the author infers, the tragic hero is Eben? Does Abbie, "when she learns to take the punishment," become "adorable" (122)? (The "Dear Abbie" mantle seems questionable.) And can we say that Eben's ultimate love for his stepmother "sanctifies all that a common man would call adultery or incest" (121)? I was sorry, when Ahuja got to the one "real tragedy," that I could concur with so few of the premises on which that verdict was based.

It is unfortunate that there is no index, and better editing and proofreading would have permitted a smoother read. An editor might have suggested that the late Hughie did not exactly "treat [Erie Smith] as big game" (168), and that the paraphernalia of melodrama in The Web did not include "bank-lifting bandits" (21). And a proofreader should have caught such howlers as "Macro Millions" (77-78) and "Strindberg" (199), even if he were unaware that Winifred Frazer is not a he (202) and that it is Hickey, not Larry Slade, who says "All I want is to see you happy" at the end of the first act of Iceman (151).

These last are mere quibbles about the surface; but my more serious reservations leave me concerned. What began as a qualified panegyric wound up as a demonstration that current composition teachers are right when they speak of "writing as discovery"—and in this instance the discovery torpedoed the original intent! I still believe that Tragedy, Modern Temper and O'Neill is an important book. And I know it is a catalyst for thought: I learned a great deal just by arguing with it! I hope other readers will offer their views in future issues. Copies can be acquired from Humanities Press, Inc., Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716.

--Frederick C. Wilkins
If all the year were playing holidays,  
To sport would be as tedious as to work;  
But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come....  
--Shakespeare, I Henry IV

Not, I suppose, the best epigraph to introduce a collection of reviews by a man who said that "most of the spoken words of the Immortal Bard are like so many drops of rain on a tin roof to this particular member of the intelligentsia." and who praised Julia Marlowe as "the only living actress who has kept me awake throughout an entire performance of Shakespeare" (p. 11). But the quotation seems apt: this is a holiday sort of book, just the tonic for a critic cloyed by the exegetical excrescences that fill the groaning board of contemporary dramatic criticism. Shakespeare, of course, was right: such a tonic is best taken in small doses, lest a reverse discomfort set in.

Charles Getchell, a Boston lawyer who fell in love with Benchley's published works when in high school, and to whom, when he finished the last one, "the world seemed very flat and dull indeed" (p. xvi), has added one more to their number and brightened the world for the three audiences he expects will most enjoy the book: theatre buffs, social historians, and Benchley fans. As a wag once remarked, "one man's Mede is another man's Persian" (the Benchley tone is contagious!), but I expect that all three groups will find much pleasure in Benchley at the Theatre. The collection, arranged chronologically, is about evenly divided between Benchley's years at Life (1920-1929) and at The New Yorker (1929-1940).

Benchley was more a reviewer than a critic, a reporter rather than an analyst, who knew what he liked and also knew that he was seldom going to find it. Getchell notes that he "was not an especially easy man to please" (p. xv), and the collection proves him right--fortunately, because Benchley on the warpath was Benchley at his best. Among his bêtes noires were folk plays, homegrown college shows, the circus (sometimes), and Abie's Irish Rose--a running feud, given the play's longevity, extending even to a note on La Rose Hibernaise d'Abie in Paris--"a typical product of the French theatre, out of the soil of France, and representative of the spirit which resists debt-refunding to the last sou" (p. 51). Psychoanalytic criticism takes its knocks in the person of William Bolitho, whose analysis of the Marx Brothers in Animal Crackers arouses a scorn that is perhaps justified (p. 51):

As so often happens these days among earnest critics, deep and significant symbolisms were read into this harlequinade which, if generally accepted, would lower clowning to the level of a Channing Pollock morality drama.... The Marx Brothers ought to be very easy to enjoy. We find it absurdly simple. In the first place, we know the language, which is a great help [Mr. Bolitho was British], and, in the second place, we don't stop to think whether we are laughing at Harpo's inviolable mutism [a phrase of Bolitho's] or because he is just comical.

And typical New York theatre audiences--"the myriad sons and daughters of Cougher
Prairie"--receive a full measure of wrath: "It has been estimated that the average powers of discrimination in a matinee audience in New York City would, if stood on end, not quite fill a demitasse" (p. 21). But Benchley is really the merriest of misanthropes: "the theatre would be much better off if everyone, with the exception of me and a few of my friends, stayed at home. And even then I should like to go alone once in a while" (p. 8).

It's hard to resist quoting more, but I don't want to spoil the reader's fun. Benchley was quirky, testy, idiosyncratic, and above all candid in expressing likes and dislikes that were admittedly his own alone: "this page is nothing if not personal" (p. 130). He offers few rewarding explanations for his preferences, is more visceral than cerebral in emphasis, and was sometimes questionable in his judgments. One suspects, for instance, that it was less her failings as a performer than her crashing Broadway on the strength of a screen career that led him to belittle the talents of Katharine Hepburn in The Lake (1934):

Not a great actress, by any manner of means, but one with a certain distinction which, with training, might possibly take the place of great acting in an emergency.... Miss Hepburn does not peter out along with the play, but she does show that she has a great deal to learn about acting. (pp. 163, 165)

At least her subsequent career, on screen and stage, would suggest that, if he was right, Miss Hepburn was a darned good learner.

No, Benchley is not to be read as a sage. But he was, largely, what Getchell says he was: "a discerning critic who was on hand for hundreds of opening nights during two decades that can now be seen as a golden age of the American theatre" (p. x). And because a number of those opening nights were of O'Neill productions, the book earns the notice of this journal.

Six O'Neill plays are included in Getchell's selection, from All God's Chillun Got Wings (1924) to Mourning Becomes Electra (1931). The first is dismissed as "a rather long and wordy play, with a powerful idea behind it" (p. 15). Characteristically, the idea is not discussed, but Benchley effectively pooh-poohs the advance dread of the "champions of Nordic supremacy," and his praise of Paul Robeson, along with his earlier defenses of Charles Gilpin and Claude McKay, reveals the warm humanitarian beneath the curmudgeonly persona. (Gilpin had been denied an invitation to a New York Drama League dinner; and McKay, presenting his orchestra ticket as guest reviewer of a Theatre Guild production, was asked by the manager to sit in the balcony.) Of Desire Under the Elms and They Knew What They Wanted, reviewed in the same issue of Life (November 27, 1924), the nod went to Sidney Howard because "Mr. O'Neill's tragedy has moments of unconscious comedy, a terrible thing for a tragedy" (p. 44):

O'Neill takes his people and has them wallow in Weltschmerz until the chief protagonist can think of nothing more terrible to do than threaten to turn all the cows loose. Unless the cows should enter into the spirit of the thing and tear moaning down the road, this would seem a rather flat manifestation of tragedy. One pictures them rather as stopping a few feet away from the barn and wondering meditatively what it was all about.

The empathy for the released cattle is rather touching, but Mr. Benchley, who seems to share their uncertainty of "what it was all about," never really catches "the spirit of the thing."

The review of Strange Interlude (1928) makes clearer what had troubled him in Desire. Aside from his scorn for O'Neill's "pompous resuscitation of the old-fashioned 'aside'" (p. 70)--the characters' thoughts, he says, "for the most part, ... could easily have been guessed by any alert child in the audience"--what he
disliked most was the play's utter humorlessness, a flaw that he commented on again, a year later, in his review of *Dynamo*: "With a sense of humor Mr. O'Neill could have made *Strange Interlude* a two-and-a-half hour play and a great one" (p. 97). O'Neill, he concedes after seeing *Dynamo*, is still America's greatest dramatist—"But it does seem too bad that America's greatest dramatist should be a man entirely devoid of humor," since "no one without a sense of humor should ever write seriously" (p. 96). And when humorlessness and unintended comedy are joined with ambiguity, as in *The Great God Brown*—"nobody could tell what the last part of *The Great God Brown* was about, not even Mr. O'Neill (p. 96)—the threshold of Mr. Benchley's tolerance has been passed.

What is it that rescues O'Neill from his own inadequacies? It is "the royal blood of the 'Count of Monte Cristo'") (p. 97), "good, old-fashioned, spine-curling melodrama... his precious inheritance from his trouper-father" (p. 129). And it is the melodrama, not the classicism, that earns Benchley's highest praise for *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1931): "Greek tragedy, my eye! The idea may have been the Greeks', but the hand is the hand of Monte Cristo" (p. 130).

In this tremendous play he gives us not one thing that is new, and he gives us nothing to think about (unless we are just beginning to think), but he does thrill the bejeezus out of us, just as his father used to, and that is what we go to the theater for. (p. 129)

So it is *Mourning Becomes Electra* that renews Benchley's oft-wavering faith in Eugene O'Neill as "the First Dramatist of Our Time" (p. 131).

Doubtless O'Neill, if he read these pieces, was as irked by the praise as by the censure: a humorless writer with a puerile mind who triumphed in the very brand of theatre to which he was avowedly opposed! But we don't go to Benchley for the full picture; we go for a taste of the initial responses of a veteran theatregoer in O'Neill's own day, and we get it.

Mr. Getchell may not have done a great service to theatre history or O'Neill scholarship, but that was not his aim. He has increased the Benchley shelf by one valuable volume, and the Ipswich Press has done a dandy job of packaging it (spiffy jacket drawing by Gluyas Williams, from a 1925 issue of *Life*, showing a theatre audience during the usual post-performance turmoil in the aisles; and witty end-piece decorations by Fred G. Cooper, *Life*’s art editor during the Benchley years). Don't send it to the Nietzscheans on your gift list; but ordinary mortals are in for a treat. And at $14.95, it's a steal.

—Frederick C. Wilkins


Virginia Floyd has been one of the most privileged O'Neill scholars, having been the first to be granted access to the long-restricted O'Neill papers in Yale's Beinecke Library, and one can only say that she has taken the fullest advantage of her privileges and has produced some outstanding published results. Her *Eugene O'Neill at Work* (1981) has provided what must be the definitive study of O'Neill's artistic methodology, revealed to us through the amazing collection of notes, diaries, scenarios, and letters which O'Neill left behind. The playwright's notebooks from 1918 to 1938, plus other material written down until his debilitating illness totally prevented his continued writing, have shown a creative mind seething with enough ideas for several lifetimes.

Floyd's latest effort in this "New Assessment" makes excellent use of her knowledge of the notes and diaries in presenting a comprehensive overview of every completed
play, whether actually produced or not, from A Wife for a Life (1913), the "short vaudeville sketch" with which he began his playwriting career, to A Moon for the Misbegotten (1943), the last completed play and the last to be produced in his lifetime. Throughout the book are also numerous references to and summaries of plays planned but never produced--from the Dispossessors and Obit cycles, among others--and even later but abandoned plays for his "antitotalitarian trilogy" which was to have included "The Visit of Malatesta," "The Last Conquest," and "Blind Alley Guy," conceived during the early years of World War II.

At first glance, in surveying the contents of this volume, one can raise some questions as to its value. Do we really need yet another collection of detailed plot summaries? Is there a place for further life chronology and biographical outline of the playwright's career from birth to death? How much more do we need to know about O'Neill's guilt complexes, as well as those of his family, and the continual search for a sense of belonging, for love, for the lost Mother and so on and so on? All of the above are integral parts of this study, but the more the volume is considered, and the more aware the reader becomes of its ultimate accomplishments, the more significant it becomes. The questions above become of secondary importance.

The book treats all of the plays in strict chronology, with only minor deviations to fit the major topical divisions. It is divided into four main sections: "The Sea-Mother's Son: Early Plays and Beginnings" (A Wife for a Life through The Straw); "The Mariner's Horizon: Experimental Plays and Maturation" (Gold through Dynamo); "Lost Horizons--Interrupted Journey: 'Self' Plays and the Cycle" (Electra through The Calms of Capricorn); and "Homecoming--The Last Harbor: The Last Great Plays" (Iceman through A Moon for the Misbegotten). Each play within each division is given its own individual treatment under a separate sub-heading. Each of the four sections is followed by a list of ideas for other plays taken from the appropriate notebooks. Each major division is prefaced by extended discussion of aspects of O'Neill's life and his artistic development pertinent to the exploration of the plays which follow. A series of photographs of O'Neill, his family, and a variety of productions appears before each division, providing a rarely seen glimpse into O'Neill's "private" and "public" life in pictures hitherto unpublished so far as I am aware.

What ultimately makes this book so valuable is the "linkage" which it provides between and among all of the plays in the O'Neill canon. Having been able to study and assimilate what must have seemed a great clutter of notes and ideas in the mass of O'Neill papers, Floyd has been able to do what nobody else up to now has been able to accomplish--to show the development of the theme and idea for each play, and to trace through each of them the threads of family connections which compelled O'Neill over and over again to write the history of his parental and sibling relationship, however disguised or blatant they might be, in play after play. As each play is discussed, Floyd shows in backward glances and in forward "predictions" how O'Neill in character description and development, in dialogue and story incident, followed consistent patterns.

Floyd does, of course, do more than trace the personal/family relationships, for she is aware of O'Neill's social and philosophical outlooks which influenced his plays as well: his constant worry, for instance, about the loss of the "old God" and the inability of his characters to find a "new" one--whether Brutus Jones in his jungle "empire" or Reuben Light with his dynamo. While she may find in several plays more of a socio-political outlook than one might normally assume in O'Neill's plays, evident in the anti-establishment passages of, say, The Hairy Ape, or the Irish-Yankee clashes in the Harford-Harker-Harder sequences of A Touch of the Poet, Long Day's Journey, or Misbegotten, Floyd does seem to remain on fairly solid ground as she is able to account for much of the resentment felt by O'Neill from his youth against the snobbishness of New London society and the encroachments of steel and oil interests.

And underlying so much is the continuing residue from lapsed Catholicism, of failed
faith, of the God which, so often as in Jim Harris' statement in *All God's Chillun*, would seem to find it difficult to "forgive Himself" for what he has done. Floyd has done a tremendously impressive job in bringing all of these elements together and emphasizing their importance in the wide variety of methods which O'Neill employed in plays as divergent as *The Fountain, Welded, The Great God Brown, Strange Interlude*, and *Long Day's Journey*.

Fortunately, Floyd sticks to a consistent pattern of presenting each play in order and developing the several points mentioned above while avoiding in the main subjective evaluations. This is not a critical analysis of the plays in any but the most general sense. Once in a while a personal viewpoint does come forth, some of which I personally accept, others with which I sharply disagree. Citing *Ile* as the best of the early sea plays raises questions, and placing *Electra* as third in importance behind *Journey* and *Iceman* could raise eyebrows as well. But the brief evaluation of *Desire Under the Elms* as tragedy is excellent. However, these random expressions of subjective judgment do not really intrude, and the book must be evaluated on the basis of what it purports to do in the orderly presentation of the development of O'Neill's artistic career play-by-play in a fashion that no other scholar has been able to do.

All literary artists, to be sure, create out of their own experiences, and perhaps O'Neill followed this procedure even more intensely than others. The trials and traumas of his life clearly form the basis for most of the plays in the canon, and while one might wonder in O'Neill's case if there is too much seeking and finding what the individual wants to find, it is difficult to avoid doing just that. The evidence is so often overwhelming. The great thing about O'Neill's genius is that his own life experiences, terrifying and destructive as they may have been and forming the basis of so much of what he wrote, still emerge in the plays as universal concepts, transcending the personal and becoming truly artistic expressions of mankind's dilemmas and struggles. *Long Day's Journey* may have been the ultimate exorcism of O'Neill's tormenting ghosts, but it does remain as the playwright's greatest, and probably the greatest American tragedy, in its tremendously moving exploration of human loves, hates, and fears.

Virginia Floyd's *New Assessment* is new, original, and valuable in its ultimate accomplishment. Its overall picture of the entire canon, and the individualized treatment of each play make it highly useful, with the material readily accessible. Much of the material, as I have noted, parallels a lot of information we already have, but for a single volume, standing alone, it provides a great deal of important information to those of us who have not had the time, energy, or privilege, to do the scholarly work which Virginia Floyd has done so well for us.

--Jordan Y. Miller

**NEWS, NOTES AND A' THAT**

1. **QUINTERO TO SPEAK AT BOSTON CONFERENCE.** Add one more major speaker to the roster of O'Neill conference participants listed in the last issue of the Newsletter (pp. 3-4): José Quintero, the greatest director of O'Neill's works, whose recent revival of *The Iceman Cometh* moved to the Doolittle Theatre in Los Angeles after its Broadway run. All who have read Mr. Quintero's memoirs, *If You Don't Dance They Beat You* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), know how moving and insightful his comments on O'Neill can be. His evening talk at the conference should prove a valuable addendum to that unforgettable book.

2. **O'NEILL PLAY SLATED FOR PERFORMANCE AT MAY CONFERENCE.** The Eugene O'Neill Theater Festival, Tom McDermott, Artistic Director, will bring its acclaimed west-coast production of *Hughie* to the conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Later Years" at Suffolk
University in Boston at the end of May. The Festival, with headquarters in Los Angeles, plans an extensive series of O'Neill productions, both at home and on tour, beginning in the summer of 1986. This will be the group's first visit to the east, and Mr. McDermott will be on hand to discuss possible later visits to other cities and campuses throughout the country.

3. FILM ON O'NEILL WINS PRIZE. "Eugene O'Neill--a Glory of Ghosts," the 2 1/2-hour documentary film that will be seen on PBS this summer, and will be the first-night feature at the O'Neill conference in Boston this May, has just won the Special Jury Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival. This prestigious award should whet the appetites of conferencegoers, who will not only see the film before its television premiere, but will see it in a big-screen format (16mm) and will be able to discuss it afterward with script writer Paul Shyre and director Perry Miller Adato. What a glorious second dessert for that evening's baked stuffed lobster banquet. (The first dessert will be Indian pudding!)

4. BERGMAN FILM AT O'NEILL CONFERENCE? Given the affinity that Sweden has shown for O'Neill, it's not really surprising, is it? As a preamble to the talk, "'Daddy spoke to me!': Gods Lost and Found in O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night and Bergman's Through a Glass Darkly," that Thomas P. Adler of Purdue University will deliver on Friday afternoon, May 30, screenings of the Bergman film will be featured on the mornings of May 29 and 30. (The film of Long Day's Journey [like that of The Iceman Cometh] will also be available for viewing, in both big- and small-screen formats.)

5. A FEW NOTES TO MAY CONFERENCEGOERS. If you plan to attend the Thursday banquet and don't like baked stuffed lobster, please let us know in advance (tel. 617-723-4700, ext. 271). A chicken alternative will be available for those who tell us beforehand. If you have not yet sent in your registration form and fee, please do so posthaste: we need the information (hotel dates, etc.), and the money won't hurt either! Besides, our supply of allocated rooms at the Parker House is diminishing rapidly. By the way, everyone who has requested a slot as participant or spectator at the first-day conference-within-the-conference can consider her/himself accepted. But space is running out, so wing us your request soon if you haven't already done so. The formal conference program, delayed because information is still coming in, will be sent to all registrants as soon as it appears—probably by late April. If you requested a room at the Parker House, be assured that your room will be waiting, although you will not receive a confirmation directly from the hotel. Do let us know if there is any change in the dates you previously announced. Be warned, by the way, that the Thursday sessions will begin very early, and it would be best to arrive in Boston by Wednesday evening, May 28. The whirlwind of preparations continues unabated, the prognoses are extremely favorable, and we look forward to welcoming you to Boston at the end of May!

6. EGRI READIES SECOND O'NEILL BOOK. With his book on Chekhov and O'Neill approaching publication day (it may be ready in time to be available at the May conference in Boston), Peter Egri is nearing the end of a second book-length manuscript on the playwright, to be entitled "The Birth of American Tragedy." He describes its aim and focus:

The main thrust of the volume is a systematic analysis of possible reasons for the extraordinary fact that American fiction had already been on a universal level in the middle of the 19th century, and American poetry (Poe and Whitman) became models for European poets; but American drama stepped on to the stage of national and international significance only after World War I. The merit of O'Neill in achieving universal significance appears to me to have been even greater under these special circumstances. The book starts with the aborted effort of Thomas Godfrey, a literal beginning of American tragedy, and then offers a close reading of selected plays by O'Neill as representatives of a literary beginning. The plays included are The Personal Equation, The Hairy

7. O'NEILL CASEBOOK IN THE WORKS. Did you know that Mourning Becomes Electra is the most popular of O'Neill's plays in English university syllabuses? That's what Normand Berlin learned when he agreed to edit a Casebook on O'Neill for Macmillan of London. The mandate was to emphasize Electra, with side glances at The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey. (Professor Berlin subsequently persuaded Macmillan to permit equal emphasis on all three works.) O'Neill will be the first American dramatist to be represented in Macmillan's popular casebook series, which in the past has concentrated on Shakespeare and other English playwrights, and the book should be out by the O'Neill centennial in 1988. It will be followed by a casebook on Arthur Miller.

8. TIMELY WORDS. Two occurrences in recent months have given evidence that the legacy of Eugene O'Neill lives on--perhaps in surprising places. Last fall, in an interview with Dotson Rader ("Now, a New Beginning," Parade Magazine, November 17, 1985, pp. 6-9), actor Robert Wagner was asked "what kept him from totally falling apart" when his wife, Natalie Wood, died at 43.

"A doctor once quoted me a great line by Eugene O'Neill," Wagner recalled. "'Man is born broken. He lives by mending. And the grace of God is the glue.' To me, that meant I had an awful lot of glue around. I had my children, and I had an awful lot of people to help hold me together."

And more recently, just after the air shuttle disaster, O'Neill Society Secretary Jordan Miller received a call from the Speech Writing Office at the White House. They were searching for an O'Neill remark "about tragedy being related to life and more life," for possible use in a forthcoming speech by President Reagan, and had located the Society in an annual directory of professional associations. With the aid of Society Treasurer Virginia Floyd, Jordan was able to locate the remark, a 1922 statement in an interview with Mary Mullett that originally appeared in the American Magazine (Nov. 1922, p. 118) and was quoted by Doris Falk on pp. 112-113 of Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension:

tragedy, I think, has the meaning the Greeks gave it. To them it brought exaltation, an urge toward life and ever more life. It roused them to deeper spiritual understandings and released them from the petty greeds of everyday existence.

So if the lines appear in a forthcoming presidential address, you can credit the Society: its officers have been diligently at work. (The passage quoted by Robert Wagner, as readers of this journal are likely to know, appears in The Great God Brown.)

9. REDOLENCE AT HARRY'S PLACE. Thanks to loyal subscriber John J. Virtes for noting, in a letter of 17 February, another effective moment in Paul McCrane's performance as Parritt in the recent revival of The Iceman Cometh in New York City:

I think that at times we forget how low Harry Hope's is and its inhabitants are--you can see but you can't smell. In Act I, after Willie [Oban] comes over to Larry and Parritt's table, as he begins talking to Parritt and moves closer and closer to him, Parritt pulls away with a disgusted look on his face. A small point, but one that I thought was very effective.

Agreed--and not all that small a point, though I confess to not recalling the moment. But adding an olfactory element to Parritt's set-apartness from the others at Harry's strengthens the important emphasis on his alienation. What a rich and meticulously detailed production that was! --Ed.
10. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS.

Before Breakfast, The Dreamy Kid and Where the Cross Is Made, dir. Kenneth MacDonald.
(Reviewed in this issue.)

Beyond the Horizon. Connemara Players at ATA Sargeant Theatre, 314 West 54th Street,

Desire Under the Elms, dir. Keith Baker. Florida Repertory Theatre, West Palm Beach,
Jan 9 - Feb. 2, 1986. [Mr. Baker, FRT Artistic Director, also played the role of Eben.
Vicki Sanders, reviewing the production in The Miami Herald (Jan.30, p. 6B),
had particular praise for the Abbie of Cheryl Risley: "a compelling study in
single-minded aggression, coquettish deviltry and unwholesome instincts, and yet she
is not detestable. Her characterization instead reveals forces beneath the surface
that make it clear she herself is a victim."]

20-23, 1985. (A report by the director appears in this issue.)

The Iceman Cometh, dir. José Quintero, with Jason Robards as Hickey. Doolittle
Theatre, Los Angeles, CA, Feb. 12 - March 9, 1986. [A transplantation of the
Washington-New York production, the only newcomer to the cast being Gerald Hiken,
who replaced Leonardo Cimino as Hugo Kalmar when the latter stayed in New York to
tut-tut Kevin Kline as Polonius.]

D.C., March 25 - April 20, 1986; Broadhurst Theatre, New York City, April 28 et
seg., 1986. [Produced by Emanuel Azenberg, the Shubert Organization, Roger Peters,
Roger Berlind and Pace Theatrical Group Inc., the production stars Jack Lemmon as
James, Sr., with Bethel Leslie, Peter Gallagher and Kevin Spacey as mother and sons,
and Jodie Lynne McClintock as the maid. Scenery is by Tony Straiges, costumes by
Willa Kim, and lighting by Richard Nelson. A six-performance week (in New York, at
least): Tuesday through Saturday evenings at 8, and a Sunday matinee at 3. The top
ticket price is $37.50--just $33.10 more than the front-row-center seat I had for
the first public U.S. performance of Journey, at Boston's Wilbur Theatre on October
15, 1956! --Ed.]

14 - March 2, 1986. (Reviewed in this issue.)

A Touch of the Poet. Department of Theatre, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, Feb.

11. BIBLIOGRAPHIC ADDENDA (exclusive of items reprinted, reviewed or abstracted herein).

Robert E. Fleming, "O'Neill's The Hairy Ape as a Source for Native Son." CLA
Journal, 28 (June 1985), 434-443.

Louis Sheaffer, "Genesis of a Bleak Drama of Pipe Dreams." Los Angeles Times, Sunday,
February 9, 1986, "Calendar," pp. 3-4. [A summary of the content of The Iceman
Cometh, the circumstances of its composition, and its real-life models and
autobiographical elements.]

12. TAKING A NAME IN VAIN. Steven Kretser Ltd., Fine Jewelry Design, of Albany, NY, wins
the 1986 "distasteful drummer" award for a February ad announcing a special
jewelry sale with the words, "THE ICEMAN COMETH." "When the iceman cometh," it
chirrups, "you saveth."
PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

LINDA BEN-ZVI, Associate Professor of English at Colorado State University, is a frequent contributor to the Newsletter's pages—most recently as the author of "Eugene O'Neill and Film," which appeared in the Spring 1983 issue (pp. 3-10).

JARKA BURIAN, Professor of Theatre at the State University of New York in Albany, has taught several seminars devoted to O'Neill. In addition to The Great God Brown, he has directed productions of The Emperor Jones, The Iceman Cometh and Hughie.

THOMAS F. CONNOLLY, an alumnus of Suffolk University, is pursuing a graduate degree in English at Boston University. (He expects to catch it at the end of the present semester.) He will serve as bar- and tape-master at the May O'Neill conference in Boston.

PETER EGRI, Professor of English at the University of Budapest, is a regular contributor to the Newsletter's pages. His book, Chekhov and O'Neill, will be published this spring; and he has completed a second book-length manuscript, "The Birth of American Tragedy." (Both works are in English.) Professor Egri will be a speaker at the O'Neill conference in Boston this May.

JAMES FISHER is Chair of the Theater Department at Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana. He unearthed Edward Gordon Craig's reactions to O'Neill, which he shares in this issue, during his recent research for a book on Craig and his interest in the commedia dell'arte.

MARCELLINE KRAFCHICK, Assistant Professor of English at California State University, Hayward, has published articles in Theatre Journal and Arizona Quarterly. Her "Hughie: Some Light on O'Neill's Moon" appeared in the Winter 1984 issue of the Newsletter (pp. 8-11).

MICHAEL J. MIKOS is Associate Professor and Chairman of the Department of Slavic Languages at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and author of numerous publications on Polish linguistics and literature.

JORDAN Y. MILLER, Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Rhode Island, is Secretary of the Eugene O'Neill Society and the author of numerous books and articles on the playwright. His review of Judith Barlow's Final Acts: The Creation of Three Late O'Neill Plays appeared in the Winter 1985 issue of the Newsletter (pp. 28-32).

DAVID MULROY is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He has published essays on many different aspects of ancient Greek and Roman literature and regularly lectures on the topic of classical mythology.

FREDERICK C. WILKINS, Chairman of the Department of English at Suffolk University, is editor of the Eugene O'Neill Newsletter and President of the Eugene O'Neill Society. He is organizing the conference on "Eugene O'Neill—the Later Years" that will be held at Suffolk University from May 29 to June 1, 1986.
CALL FOR PAPERS

The November 1988 THEATRE SURVEY will be a special issue devoted to "Eugene O'Neill and the Theatre of His Time." Scholars are invited to submit articles on O'Neill and his colleagues at the Provincetown Players, major productions of his dramas, the popular and critical reception of O'Neill's plays in this country and abroad, changing styles in O'Neill productions, and any related topics appropriate for a theatre history journal. The deadline for submissions is July 1, 1987. Please send articles to

Judith Barlow, Associate Editor
Theatre Survey
Department of Theatre
S.U.N.Y. Albany
Albany, NY 12222

EUGENE O'NEILL: The Later Years

BOSTON
29 MAY-1 JUNE 1986
The contents of the inaugural issue, to be published in mid-1986, are as follows:

Anne Paolucci  Albee and the Pirandellian
Restructuring of the Modern
Stage

Gilbert Debusscher  And the Sailor Turned into a
Princess: New Light on the
Genesis of Sweet Bird of Youth

Nicholas Canaday  Toward Creation of a Collective
Form: the Plays of Ed Bullins

Steven R. Centola  The Monomyth and
Arthur Miller’s After the Fall

Dennis Grunes  God and Albee: Tiny Alice

Matthew C. Roudane  An Interview with David Mamet

J. Madison Davis  David Mamet: A Classified
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