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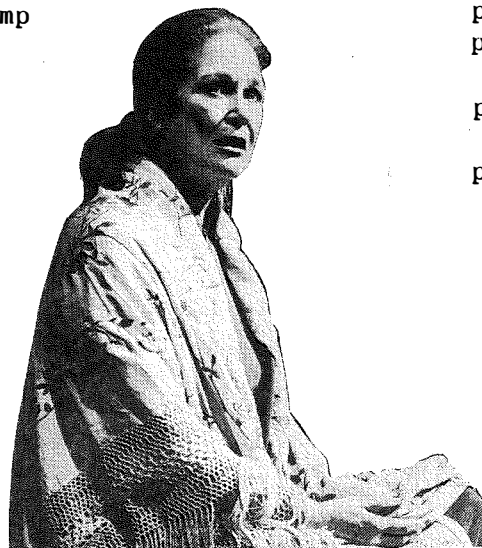


The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

—SPRING 1987—

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Colleen Dewhurst as Carlotta Monterey
O'Neill in the production of Barbara
Gelb's My Gene. Photo: Martha Swope.

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

The Newsletter inaugurates its second decade with as vast an array of varied entries as it has ever provided--thanks both to the large number of contributors and to editorial tardiness in getting the issue into print. I won't say that there's something for everyone in what follows; O'Neillians are too heterogeneous a lot for that to be claimed with certainty. But I would expect, if it is not too immodest a claim, that almost everyone will find something of use and value herein. I am particularly pleased to share with non-attenders the talks by Israel Horovitz and Albert Bermel at last year's O'Neill conference in Boston; and to provide the first forum for the work of James McKelly, whose assessment of Hughie deserves a prominent place in the growing body of literature about that play and the special power of the later O'Neill. (Mr. McKelly's distinction between illusion and fiction on p. 18 is a nice complement to Prof. Bermel's differentiation between dream and pipe dream on p. 12.) As promised, I have compiled an alphabetical list of the authors and titles of all the articles that appeared during the Newsletter's first ten years (pp. 27-32). I hope that the decade now begun will result in as impressive a list in 1997. And knowing the industriousness and dedication of the Newsletter's ever-growing cadre of contributors, I am confident that it will.

Rather than delineate further the contents of the present omnium gatherum, I'd like to offer a prefatory note to the boxed request at the bottom of the page. The centennial of O'Neill's birth is well nigh upon us: as is noted on a later page, the generally agreed upon dates of the centennial year are October 16, 1987 to October 16, 1988, the latter date being the actual 100th anniversary of the playwright's birth. This does not mean that a publisher or theatre company should not bring out a book or mount a production later in '88 or even in '89, especially if late planning necessitates a later target date. (No one would wish to squelch O'Neill-related activities whenever they occur!) But it does mean that if there is to be any coordination and complementarity among centenary efforts--so many of which are cited throughout this issue (and I am sure that more are not listed than those that are)--the various and widespread celebrants need to know as quickly as possible what their distant colleagues are doing and planning. And the Newsletter stands eagerly willing, to the extent of its thrice-ennial ability, to serve as the vehicle of communication among them all (you all, us all). Whatever your plans, however big or small, do please rush word of them to the editor, who will share them prominently in the next issue, which should reach subscribers about one month before the start of the centennial year. And if you don't have any plans as yet, the news items and "Countdown to Centennial" reports in this issue should suggest a number of ways in which your affection for America's greatest dramatist can be communally and prominently expressed. Working together, we can give Eugene O'Neill the celebration he so richly merits. And if I might close on a note of personal prejudice, I believe he deserves to have his entire canon represented, in informal readings if not on the boards, for the celebration to be truly complete. One more fully staged Long Day's Journey is always welcome, of course: a play that rich and multifaceted can never be overdone. But a family's backyard, poolside reading of Servitude or Recklessness would be just as noteworthy a contribution to our communal endeavor. The Newsletter looks forward to announcing and congratulating every contribution. So DO write--PLEASE!!

ON THE OCCASION OF THE IMMINENT CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF O'NEILL'S BIRTH
(Saturday, October 16, 1987 to Sunday, October 16, 1988)

THE EUGENE O'NEILL NEWSLETTER EARNESTLY REQUESTS
THAT ALL INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS PLANNING TO OBSERVE THE OCCASION WITH
CEREMONIES, PERFORMANCES, PUBLICATIONS, FORUMS OR ACTIVITIES OF ANY KIND
INFORM OTHER CELEBRANTS BY ANNOUNCING THEIR INTENTIONS IN A FUTURE ISSUE.

Specify activity, person(s) in charge, dates,
address, and availability (if it exists) to the public.
USE ADDRESS AT BASE OF PAGE ONE. MARK LETTERS "CENTENNIAL INFO."

THE LEGACY OF O'NEILL*

For me to presume to deliver a speech on O'Neill to O'Neill scholars is quite a presumption indeed--something on the order of speaking French to the Académie française. It is a well-known fact, in certain circles, que je parle français comme une vache espagnole. And it will soon be evident in this particular circle que je parle Eugène O'Neill comme deux vaches espagnoles. So if you've come tonight expecting opaline insights into "Hughie," or "Moon" or "Emperor Jones," let me, now and forevermore, dash every hope you have.

So why am I here? I could recite stanzas of ottava rima. AB AB AB CC. I could dance the tarantella. I could stop now and ask for questions. Much flew through my imagination when I faced my typewriter in London this past week, facing the onerous honor of speaking before such a distinguished group of playwright-lovers--O'Neillophiles, yet, in search of O'Neilllight. (Why does this sound like a line of customers in the 1950s at a local Thom McAn shoe store?)

My purpose for the next 29 minutes will be to share with you some thoughts about growing up in O'Neill's shadow.

*

When I was born, in 1939, O'Neill had already established himself as the American Master. By June of my birth-year, O'Neill had already written down his plans for "Iceman" and "Long Day's Journey." I am not yet on solid food, and O'Neill is three years past his Nobel Prize, a quarter of a dozen Pulitzers, and outlines for two of the three best plays ever written in American English. I look out of my crib and notice all of this. I write in my notebook, "O'Neill will be tough competition."

What was it like--and what IS it like--to formulate a life as a playwright in the shadow of O'Neill's greatness? After all, these are not paleographics we consider when we consider O'Neill's plays: these are living, breathing dramas. Just a few weeks ago, "Long Day's Journey" once again split the critics and is, according to its producer, Manny Azenburg (who was my houseguest in Gloucester last night), "racking a nice advance."

To view O'Neill as a colleague and competitor is far more realistic than it might be to view O'Neill as Parnassian--or even as a Parmesan cheese. He is what he is: the most extraordinary of America's playwrights, to date. In a very American word: Eugene O'Neill is the best--to date.

Yes, of course, similarities to O'Neill ... imitations of O'Neill ... are unavoidable. What are my particular credentials as a prime imitator of O'Neill? I had seven plays open last season, in a space of eight months: "Henry Lumper" in my own theatre in Gloucester; "The Widow's Blind Date" in a major production at the Theatre des Mathurins in Paris; my Growing-Up-Jewish trilogy--"Today, I Am A Fountain Pen," "A Rosen By Any Other Name" and "The Chopin Playoffs"--in New York, Off-Broadway; "The Former One-On-One Basketball Champion" in Seattle, starring our greatest Celtic, Bill Russell; and now, finally, "Park Your Car in Harvard Yard," back home (as they say) at the Gloucester Stage Company. The New York Times critic, during the treading-water/warm-up section of his review of one of my plays in New York earlier this year, wrote, as an offhand description of my career thus far, "Horovitz is a prolific playwright who specializes in trilogies and cycles...." This description gave me pause, made me smile, sat me down a moment, and caused me to think of Eugene O'Neill.

* A talk delivered as part of the "Tribute to O'Neill" on Saturday, May 31, during the 1986 conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Later Years" at Suffolk University in Boston, Massachusetts. Copyright (c) 1986 by Israel Horovitz.

*

Two strong influences on my writing are clearly Eugene O'Neill and Samuel Beckett. (Could there be better objective correlatives for a Yankee Jew such as *toi-même*?) And there are such great similarities between O'Neill and Beckett--but that is a subject for one of you Celtic fans, not me.

But do let me pause here to tell you a story of Beckett and me--about writers, writing, and influences.

I moved to Paris in the early 1970s, to be near Beckett, among others--and, of course, to be an American writer in Paris. Beckett and I met each Tuesday evening and talked about writing and about life.

In need of money, I had agreed to do a reading of some poems of mine at the American Cultural Centre, rue du Dragon; \$50, I think, was my fee. I was ashamed to tell Beckett that I was doing the reading. I knew he wouldn't approve of such a public display--certainly not for \$50! The reading was on a Tuesday night, at 9 p.m. We met at 7 p.m. ... usual bar ... he drank his brandy and I drank my Badoit (gazeuse). On arrival, he seemed a bit glum. Contrary to popularist opinion, Mr. Beckett is not a glum sort. He doesn't wear a clown-suit--but, nevertheless, not glum. This night he was.

"I hear you're doing a public reading," he said.

"How did you know that?"

"It was noted in Le Monde."

"Really?" I was amazed.

"Did you send me an invite?"

Of course I hadn't, because I was ashamed of myself for doing the reading in the first place, and also because Beckett never goes, as they say, "out." I sensed his feelings were hurt and quickly countered with "I'd love to have you listen. Will you come to the reading?"

"Oh, no," he said. "I never go out."

And then he startled me with a request. "Please, would you recite one of the poems for me?" (Beckett is extremely forthright with his friends. He once asked me to run for him so he could watch my stride. He knew I was about to run in a marathon.)

I chose a four-line poem (one he would later translate into French)--a poem about my bumping into a girl on the street and literally knocking both of us down. (We rose to our feet and each ran in separate directions.) My inferior English version went something like this:

How easily our only smile smiles
We will never agree nor disagree
The pretty girl is perfected in her passing
Our love lives within the space of a quietly closing door.

"Very nice," he said. There was a small pause which I, in a sudden, broke:

"Oh, shit!"

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"I stole that from you."

"Stole what?"

"The last line of my poem--'our love lives within the space of a quietly closing door.' That's from your Dieppe poem--'we shall live our lives in the space of a window that opens and closes.'"

"Oh, yes," he said, "that's right. ... Oh, shit!"

"What?" I asked.

"I stole it from Dante meself!"

*

I wrote a novel when I was 13 years old and sent it off to a publisher in New York--Simon and Schuster, in fact, as they had published some or another book I'd read and admired. They had a summer editor in their employ--Bob Gottlieb, then 20, an undergraduate, soon to become the wunderkind of Knopf, editor of Updike and Heller--but then 20 and brilliant. He wrote a letter of rejection to me. I, of course, didn't know Gottlieb was 20, and he, of course, didn't know I was 13. He praised my novel for what he called "its wonderful, childlike quality." The unkindest cut of all! He savaged my career in prose fiction with that one remark. Failed, I turned to the drama and never turned back.

I titled my first play, summoning my most powerful subtlety, "The Comeback." I was 17 years old, and the play was performed on this very stage upon which I stand before you now. "The Comeback" was a father/son play. The characters were a father/son acting team, in the midst of a failure with a two-character play about a father and son. In the play within the play, the son kills the father. They accuse each other for the failure of their play within the play, and they agree to reverse roles. Once the roles are reversed, they find a true passion--one that goes beyond the limits: the son actually kills and is killed by the father. Both lie dead, in a laundry-like heap, at the play's conclusion.

I played the son, and then-Suffolk University theatre instructor Peter MacLean played the father. We toured the play to Emerson College, where we were curtain-raiser to Arthur Miller's "A Memory of Two Mondays." Our own curtain rose--but never fell. I recall lying dead atop Peter MacLean, asking, "What should we do? They don't know the play is over!" And MacLean, an old pro at 26, replied, "Stand up and bow." And so we rose from the dead, and we bowed ... but they still didn't know the play was over. And so we exited, and never returned, and soon enough they intuited and they knew.

That night I asked my girlfriend, "Who is this Arthur Miller? Is he as good as O'Neill?" She was an O'Neill buff. On her birthday in '53, when she was a high school freshman, O'Neill, a look-alike to her father, died of drink and other complications--as would this girl's father--as would this girl herself. She answered, "No, nobody is as good as O'Neill."

*

On November 27th in '53, my friend George Lodge was a cub reporter working the obit desk at the Boston Globe. (George is Dossy Peabody's father. Dossy is of late starring in my play, "Park Your Car in Harvard Yard," at the Gloucester Stage Company.) George's boss rang his line: "Lodge, get over to the Shelton. Eugene O'Neill just died."

When George got to the room, the door was open. The fireplace was ablaze. Carlotta was still turning manuscript pages into ash. George was allowed to view O'Neill. A nurse led him into the back bedroom, where O'Neill lay unceremoniously dead on the floor. Carlotta stayed at her labor, which was a vast stack of scripts.

The next day, George took Carlotta on a rowboat ride and they chatted. What she had burned was work O'Neill had written after the Parkinson's disease destroyed his skills: work that O'Neill felt was "no good." And there was also work that O'Neill had written earlier but had felt was not for a world to ever see.

It's silly and futile to think of O'Neill had he lived with word-processors and Xerox ... or Mozart with a drum-machine....

*

What O'Neill has left us is a canon of some fifty plays, more than one out of each ten what we call "great"--High Art--an extraordinary outpouring even for a man of 19th century influences, even for a man who would grow up in Ibsen's shadow. You all know. I'm sure better than I, how very many echoes of "Hedda Gabler" and "The Wild Duck" are said to exist in "Now I Ask You" and "Iceman," plays that basically bracket O'Neill's entire oeuvre.

I take calm comfort in these echoes, as should you. These are the echoes still ringing in Beckett's "I stole it from Dante meself!" This is the passing of the baton. This is the greatest hope we writers have. And this was the humanity of O'Neill.

There are families and there are families...

Turn out the light and then turn out the light...

We pick our parents carefully and then we pick our parents carefully...

If James O'Neill was Eugene O'Neill's father of chance, it seems to me that Ibsen was Eugene O'Neill's father of choice. In truth, "The Count of Monte Cristo" counts for a lot. From James's great commercial success, Eugene seems to have learned to take success in stride. Success seems to me to be the second greatest killer of American playwrights. From Ibsen, Eugene O'Neill learned a great seriousness of self.

What I have learned from both Ibsen and O'Neill, as well as from Beckett--three fathers of choice--is an utter seriousness of self. I am simply human. My experience is simply human experience. What is for me is for humanity, no more, no less...

*

We are taught that love conquers all. We observe in O'Neill a tremendous hatred--of overbearing, cruel father, of complicitous mother. In dialogue: "Help me, mother ... protect me from him..." And the mother can only reply, "I love him, first. I cannot protect you any more than I can protect myself ... I refuse."

This special set of childhood circumstances should, by all that's Freudian and holy, produce prisoners, not playwrights? Absolutely right ... absolutely wrong...

I was amazed, recently, in researching a murder in Gloucester's Dogtown, to discover that the psychopathic killer had almost precisely the same history as the late Roger Babson, the philanthropist...

Energy turns this way or that...

It is striking that O'Neill wrote out of so little love--my euphemism for his writing out of so much hatred--and yet his writing is so moving to so many. Can the human condition be described in terms of "Protect me against him! I can't! I won't!"?

*

If not next to impossible, it is certainly silly to separate O'Neill's life from his creations for the stage. O'Neill threatened us all, constantly: "Take care of me, or I will kill myself ... I will drink myself to death ... I will die!" And a world responded with Pulitzers and Nobels and farms in Connecticut and seaside houses on this coast and that. The threat, and the response, continues.

The deal is made, the die is cast, the perfect compound--polymer--sets up: a world responds and O'Neill continues his part of the bargain ... not unlike the woman we beg for protection, he cannot exist without the cruelties against him, he cannot--will

not--protect himself against the pain. He welcomes it, it feeds him, it gives him sustenance, strength ... it continues a connection to his youth.

*

O'Neill's fathers of choice were powerful and talented: Ibsen, Nietzsche, Aeschylus, and of course Strindberg. O'Neill, in accepting his Nobel Prize, called Strindberg "the greatest genius of all modern dramatists..." (Have you ever read "Recklessness"? Of course you have.) These are all men of seriousness of self, all excellent models for O'Neill. We attribute an Irish stereotype to O'Neill's drink, and to his sharing Joyce's typically Irish observation, "Your mind is supersaturated with the religion you say you disbelieve..." But where is the lilt of Joyce or even Goldsmith? Where is the edgy laugh of Swift and Sterne? No, it seems to me that O'Neill's fathers of choice were clear, consistent choices--men of unbending, unrelenting seriousness.

Consider this fact: before James O'Neill spent 15 years as a romantic swashbuckler (whatever that is) in a dramatization of Dumas' "Count of Monte Cristo," he played both Iago and Othello with great success. He must have lectured young Eugene about standards of Art ... and later lectured a less young Eugene about a loss of these standards. And if there was not a forthright lecture, there was certainly a forthright life for O'Neill to observe. Of O'Neill's 50 plays, only one--"Ah, Wilderness!"--can be categorized as cheerful, as light entertainment, from a man now visibly capable of great good humor, a man now visibly capable of irony and of wit and of beery good cheer.

One finds, in a fancy edition of "Ah, Wilderness!" an introduction by O'Neill which seems to me to be pure bullshit, in which O'Neill waxed on and on about his purpose being "to write a play true to the spirit of the American large small-town at the turn of the century"--something about his own generation passing "from adolescence to manhood." It's the sort of bullshit I spew forth when asked to explain why I've chosen to write this or that. The cover reveals nothing more than itself. What is clear, however, is that Eugene O'Neill had considerable comic talent, and that a light, commercial, sitting-room comedy was well within his capability. That he set aside "Days Without End" in order to start and complete "Ah, Wilderness!" is in itself no laughing matter. It is, in its own way, Eugene the son saying to James the father, "Look, you, I am able to eat one salted peanut and no more." How hideous that this man of such wisdom, of such seriousness of self, of such remarkable self-control, could redefine an audience's tastes, could bring reward from high places, and yet could choose to drink away a dignity with such visibility, such purpose.

*

Serious dramatists have few secrets. What they feel, they show. What they are, they display. Such is the nature and condition of the work serious dramatists do: it comes with the territory.

*

O'Neill's notebooks, housed in the Manuscript Libraries at Yale University, reveal the man, the plan, the canal. Ideas for projects outline work for ten lifetimes. It all fits. It is hardly possible that even O'Neill's great fecundity could have given birth to so many plays without so much planning.

Consider the fierce loneliness of O'Neill's creation. Alone, writing; alone, planning; alone, in drink; alone, in sleep. It is said that a child, on seeing a lion roar for the first time, registers fear, cries, and quickly roars--"owning" the thing that caused the fear, as soon as possible. It seems not to have been James O'Neill's roar that Eugene was bound to imitate, but the elder O'Neill's terrible loneliness.

O'Neill's love was a love of the theatre, of what he was: a playwright. Perhaps the

holiness missing from the religion in which O'Neill so fervently disbelieved was found--better said, was placed or located--in O'Neill's beloved work.

For me, the legacy of O'Neill is the holiness of being a playwright. What I have taken from O'Neill is seriousness of self and a great pride in the work that I do. And where else does the serious American playwright go for this sort of inspiration if not to O'Neill? Certainly not to Broadway, or to Hollywood. To have had O'Neill as a standard, as a colleague and competitor, has been my great good fortune.

*

The old Jews tell us we should pick a friend if we're looking for an excellent enemy, as friends know exactly where to strike. O'Neill was the ultimate loner: for himself, his own best friend, his own best enemy.

O'Neill was a natural, bred for the drama (and for really nothing else) by father and mother alike. But acting, as every writer knows deep down, is whoring. There is a necessary hunger, and a necessary loss of self. No actor, O'Neill. Vain and from time to time dandy as Joyce himself, but still, not by any stretch of the imagination--not even his own--was he an actor.

For Eugene, the son, life was to be looked at ... to be slowed down ... studied ... controlled ... which is to say written. The boy Eugene's voice seems omnipresent to me: "Look, you, father, this is not acting! This is living!"

*

What character had O'Neill written for himself? From "Long Day's Journey": "I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death." From "Strange Interlude": "Dive for the gutter just to get the security that comes from knowing she's touched bottom, and there's no farther to go." And, of course, from "Iceman": "No one has to worry where they're going next, because there's no farther they can go. It's a great comfort to them."

For O'Neill, hitting bottom carried with it the sense of safety that a pilot must feel when his plane's wheels touch down to Earth. Yes, it's safe. But it's not flying...

*

How odd and frightening it is that so many artists create their greatest work and then either die, or stop creating. Rossini stopped composing after "William Tell." Sibelius, as well, created his greatest work and then stopped, surviving himself, as it were, for another 30 years. Mozart, as we know from the movie, knocked out his greatest work, his last three symphonies, in six weeks, before his death. It is as though we are all circling some great truth. Once the truth is touched, there seems no reason to go on. Or to go on, to break through into the absolute unknown, is just too frightening...

There is a story I know--some might even call it a joke--about two Jews who were prisoners in Buchenwald together, at the end of the War. Their families and friends were all lost in the gas chambers there. They were, themselves, beaten and tortured. But, miraculously, the war ended and neither of the two was yet dead, which is to say they were both alive.

One Jew went to Russia, the other Jew went to the United States. Forty years passed. The American Jew, Goldberg, grew to be wealthy, calm, secure. He made a trip to Russia with two young grandsons--sort of a grand tour centered in Eastern Europe, in the places of the man's birth.

In Moscow, Goldberg stayed with his grandsons in a posh, expensive hotel. He took a

morning stroll, early, as old men do, at 6 a.m. One morning, he spied a familiar-looking old man--a messenger--carrying a delivery parcel. The old man was Finklestein, Goldberg's friend from Buchenwald: Goldberg was certain of this. He called out, "Finklestein! Finklestein!" And just as Goldberg started across the street, a KGB van--unmarked but for silent flashing lights--whizzed to the curb beside the old messenger. Four KGB men leapt from the van and beat Finklestein to the ground, pummeling him with punches, bruising him with kicks. As suddenly as they had appeared, they left.

Finklestein was on the pavement, bloodied, barely alive. Goldberg ran to him, stooped down and cradled the old man's head in his arms, calling to him, softly, "Finklestein, Finklestein, it's me, Goldberg ... from Buchenwald..."

And the old man opened his eyes, looked up at Goldberg, and smiled, lovingly: "Ahhhhhhh, Buchhhhenwalllllddd..."

*

I am a writer. I offer my insights to you in metaphor. I am a playwright. I offer my insights to you in entertainments...

*

It has been said that O'Neill was never happier, really, than he was here in Massachusetts, in Provincetown, when he and Agnes and baby Shane lived in the place Shane called "the house where the wind blows." While it seems, finally, brilliantly, mystically appropriate that this house O'Neill loved so--Peaked Hill Bars Station--one day slipped into the sea; first tilted toward the sea and then fell and rolled, lapped up by hungry waves, was devoured ... but really, finally, hit bottom and rested. Yes, brilliantly, mystically appropriate... How do we playwrights create these odd facts of our own lives?

But Peaked Hill Bars Station's fall to the bottom wasn't nearly so striking to me as this gorgeous, sublime fact of Eugene O'Neill's life there. Every so often at Peaked Hill Bars--sometimes every few weeks--the swirling sand would cause the windows of O'Neill's beloved home to become opaque. Sometimes, O'Neill would replace the glass. But more often than not, he would allow the opaqueness ... until some visitor or another would comment...

*

While researching and tossing this salad of responses together for tonight, I stared at photo after photo of O'Neill and his family. Watching the appearance of James's moustache on Eugene's face made an imprint on my brain.

It is as though Eugene finally made an odd sort of peace with James, responding to the constancy of the father's cruelty--the "Ahhh, Buchenwald" of his particular life. Forgiving the complicitous-duplicitous mother was quite another matter. It seems so fitting that "Long Day's Journey" and "Moon" and "Iceman" should be, for O'Neill, what his last three symphonies were for Mozart: a closing down of shop ... the greatest of the goods are gone from the inventory ... and the absolute bottom is within easy reach. Just, simply, reach.

*

We make our choices, each of us. We are all dramatists of our own essential characters. Eugene O'Neill was actually a genius--which is to say that, of the expert playwrights to have walked about on this Planet Earth, Eugene O'Neill was one of the most expert.

All knowledge does indeed flow through the trunk of the tree. To know one thing completely is to know everything. Like Bach's Chaconne, there are some 29 variations to the essential theme... How many angels can dance on the head of a pin? 29.

How did O'Neill incite pity and terror among those of us looking at his life as well as his plays? Expertly... And how he threatens us still. "Treat these plays well or I will do worse than die! I am, after all, dead. You failed to protect me!"

And to me, O'Neill speaks and says, "Protect this holy thing, playwriting, with great dignity. Or else, I will die and I will die and I will die..." And I do protect this thing, playwriting. I do. I will. I swear it.

I would like to thank Professor Fred Wilkins for this assignment. Normally, I approach schoolwork with little enthusiasm. This was, for me, an assignment to cherish and to be remembered. And I thank you all.

--Israel Horovitz

A CRUTCH OF THE POET*

O'Neill used the phrase "a touch of the poet" a number of times: in his correspondence, in Beyond the Horizon, and with a variation ("the makings of a poet") in Long Day's Journey. It's generally taken to mean, approximately, an ambition to write like a poet without a poet's imagination, or the imagination to write like a poet without a poet's craft. But when he appropriated it for the title of the first completed play in his "Possessors Self-Dispossessed" cycle, he seemed to ask for a broader interpretation; so that it doesn't refer only to Simon Harford, who wants to unburden himself of poetic and society-chastising tracts--and who, after all, is a discussed, not an actual character, one who remains offstage throughout the action. Like the words "the wild duck," the words "a touch of the poet" invite us to receive them generously, rather than literally: with poetic licence, if you will. I would say then that they apply to all four principal characters who do feature in the action: Cornelius Melody, his wife Nora, his daughter Sara, and Sara's future mother-in-law, Deborah Harford; and that the phrase itself denotes a yearning on all their parts to be what they are not. In other words, it just about coincides with what O'Neill would later call a pipe dream.

We notice this wishfulness clearly in the protagonist, Con Melody--a name that sounds like a composer's direction to an instrumentalist, or the music that accompanies a television jingle. Con likes to quote from Canto III of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, less to savor its poetic defiance than to appreciate his reversed image as he poses while reciting before the dining-room mirror and feels himself the Byronic hero if not the Byron. Lord Byron. An aristocrat! Con despises the English but reveres the most popular British poet of the era, dead only four years before the play takes place, in 1828. He also reveres Wellington, the Duke of Wellington, under whose command he served in Spain. Perhaps, like James Tyrone, he knows that the Duke was born in Ireland. We can almost picture Con in the first three acts hoping that a title will somehow fall on him, as Byron's did from his great-uncle. Meanwhile, he will feel mollified if others look upon him as a gentleman.

Con Melody evokes reminiscences of earlier dramatic figures. No, not the Miles Gloriosus, for Con, rather than shrinking from a fight, goes into it eagerly; his cousin

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Jamie Cregan tells us more than once how tenacious a scrapper Con can be. I am thinking particularly of his resemblances to Molière's Monsieur Jourdain, the bourgeois gentleman with a similar, overpowering passion, snobbery. The dictionary defines a snob not as someone who believes himself or herself better than others--that is more like an elitist, although Con is an elitist too--but as someone who apes his or her social superiors. Snobbery means looking upward with longing rather than downward with disdain. It denotes a desire to exceed the Joneses, not merely to keep up with them; to ape the Rockefellers and Carnegies and others who have fought and bought their way to the top. Snobbery incurs the urge to self-gentrification.

Like Jourdain again, Con is a merchant and a big spender, although Jourdain has the wherewithal and Con doesn't. Both men behave despotically toward their families. Both are attracted to women above their station--Con to Deborah Harford, Jourdain to the marquise Dorimène. Both revel in the prose they utter, Con's being a stiff, if not stilted, language that harks back to certain of O'Neill's early writings, such as Servitude and Abortion.

Between the two characters and their dramatic situations there are also obvious contrasts. When A Touch of the Poet begins, Con is on the declining side of the hump-backed curve that traces his life's fortunes; whereas we meet Jourdain on his climb to the dizzying altitude of a Mamamouchi, where Molière will leave him ecstatically suspended. Jourdain's dream is a feasible one; he does pay his way into the ranks of gentlemen; and one still can. Con's pipe dream, however, carries him back in time, not forward. Like Harry Hope and his guests, he tries in vain to recover his past, which he gilds with nostalgia. Jourdain is an unrelenting buffoon, Con an arrogant prig who turns pathetic. Jourdain's wife opposes his ambition; Con's pipe dream or "poetic touch" is supported by Nora, a circumstance I'll return to. Despite these differences, they both ache to be gentlemen, or to be looked up to as such.

Con, a man of peasant stock, reminds us in another respect of Jean from Miss Julie, who displays only a few trappings of a gentleman and reverts in the final scene to a state of humility. Melody's trappings consist of his formal speech patterns, his high-quality Irish whiskey, his uniform, his mare, and the presence of apparent servants who happen to be his wife and child. In Act Four, having ruined the uniform and shot the mare, he rounds on the remnant of himself, slumps into the brogue he has despised, and completes his degradation by splitting his personality, sloughing off the major and leaving only the peasant for him to live in, as the author works one of the most astounding transformations in the modern theatre.

The coincidence between a touch of the poet and a pipe dream becomes most explicit during Deborah Harford's brief but striking appearances in Act Two. With one of his neat, ironic jabs, the playwright has her remark to Sara that her son's poetry is "but a crude imitation of Lord Byron's." As if to sustain or even deepen the irony, Sara answers, "I don't think Simon imitates Lord Byron. I hate Lord Byron's poetry. And I know there's a true poet in Simon." Sara, a sharp-witted young woman, is not offering a serious literary comparison here, only saying that she loves Simon and has come to hate that one stanza of Byron's with which her father appears to indulge in self-glorification but which he actually uses to stave off his sense of defeat:

I have not loved the World, nor the World me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bowed
To its idolatries a patient knee,
Nor coined my cheek to smiles...

... I stood

Among them, but not of them....

Deborah then picks up Sara's affirmation that there is a true poet in Simon by saying, "Oh, in feeling, of course." She has already mentioned that her husband, Simon, and she herself are "inveterate dreamers." She goes on to relate how that "feeling" or

dreaminess--that "quality," she calls it--has haunted the spirit of the Harford family, back to Jonathan Harford during the War of Independence, and his son Evan, who "would have liked to have gone to the guillotine" with Robespierre. Further on in the text, she speaks of how relieved she will be to get back to her replica of a French garden, inside her walls, with her books and meditations. Not until the next play in the cycle, More Stately Mansions, do we learn that she indulges in her own pipe dream in which she figures as the mistress of Louis XIV, Mme. de Maintenon reborn.

I have already suggested a distinction between a dream of an O'Neill character and a pipe dream. Let me formalize that distinction. A dream looks to the future, the attainable. A pipe dream, as the author uses the term in The Iceman Cometh, looks to the past, the irrecoverable. A dream is an ambition; it may or may not come to fruition. A pipe dream is a yearning to go back to an earlier point in one's life for a fresh start, to rebecome oneself, maybe, on a higher plane of achievement and prestige. For Harry Hope it means an enhanced resumption of his role as ward captain; for Willie Oban it means a career as a renowned trial lawyer; and for Con Melody, a return to a handsome, daring, woman-conquering field officer in dress uniform--without a wife. Nora Melody has her own pipe dream: to undo her premarital conception of Sara, or take her marriage back into a remoter past when she was still a virgin, and so win the tacit approval of God and the Church. Nothing less drastic would allow her to feel cleansed. Deborah's pipe dream reverts to a seventeenth-century France in which she did not exist; it verges on a psychosis, and in More Stately Mansions she will at times dream her waking self out of reality altogether.

The two representatives of the younger generation of Harfords and Melodys, however, do not "pipe dream": they dream. Simon could, in spite of his mother's doubts, go on to become a poet or a poetasting pamphleteer. As it turns out, in More Stately Mansions he will renege on that dream and, instead, outdo his father as a businessman by showing himself to be more rapacious. Divided in his love for his mother, on whom he is more or less fixated, and his wife, Sara, whom he insists on treating as a mercenary concubine, he will only then reveal another desire--a pipe dream, no less: to escape back to his childhood, his mother's devotion, and her fairy tales, like the one about the king who ended up a beggar.

If Simon's dream is possible but not plausible, Sara's, to wed Simon and become a great lady, is not merely plausible; it comes true. Not, though, in A Touch of the Poet. There we catch only glimpses of Sara's potential. A telling one occurs during one of Deborah's speeches. In thinking over her "walk alone in the woods" in search of Simon's Thoreauvian retreat, she recalls having had "a strangely overpowering experience," which she describes as being frightening, intoxicating, and wild. "I had forgotten," she adds, "how compelling the brutal power of primitive, possessive Nature can be--when suddenly one is attacked by it." These sentiments are generally taken to allude to the episode in which Con attempted to charm and kiss her. Perhaps they do. But she speaks them to Sara, after her son has told her of his determination to marry that young woman; and I would speculate that O'Neill is laying "plants" for the further encounters between these two contenders for Simon that he will engineer in More Stately Mansions.

Deborah's awareness of Nature's raw power, accompanied by a dismissive smile, has alerted her to the yeastiness of the peasant class, or, as a careless Marxist might say, of the proletariat. Miss Julie has to reckon similarly with a climbing Jean, and the Captain with a Laura he has forced onto the offensive; Engstrand will set fire to the Alving memorial orphanage and send Mrs. Alving's ten-year plan to glorify her husband's name up in smoke; and Lopakhin will buy out Ranevskaya's estate and orchard from under her. Is Sara a peasant? She can adopt a lush brogue and rough manner when she needs to, but she will learn readily how to slip into the role of chatelaine of a grand house or a corporation. Deborah apprehends this power, this force of Nature that Sara embodies.

The popular critical summation of O'Neill's female characters is that they are each a combined mother, nature girl, and whore; a bit--but not much--of a sidestep from Tarzan's

Jane. Why doesn't anyone suggest that a male character by O'Neill could be viewed along the same lines as an amalgam of father, poet, and pimp? There is more to the women than that formula, or he would not have advanced far in characterization beyond the pitiful streetwalker who is also a doting mother in The Web, which he wrote in 1913. Sara's personality has subtle inflections; we hear echoes in her speeches of her father and her mother, but she has moved up the evolutionary scale and is fitter than either of them for survival on the new frontiers of greed discerned by her creator in this land of promise.

At the end of the play, Sara seems to have forsworn the ding-dong trading of insults and threats she engaged in with Con during the first three acts. She breaks down and weeps, mourning for the Major exorcized like a demon by her father and now in effect "dead." But her sympathy serves only as compensation for a brutal wish she almost gave voice to a few moments earlier. At that point Con had seized his dueling pistols and gone outside to shoot his thoroughbred mare. She cries out, "As if he hadn't done enough to destroy --" Breaking off the thought, she embarks on another, "distractedly": "Oh, the mad fool! I wish he was--" Again she stops, this time because of a pistol shot from outside. Clearly she meant to say something like, "I wish he was going to shoot himself," because almost immediately she is stricken with remorse and "babbles": "I didn't mean it, Mother! I didn't." She repeats almost the same line, evidently fearing that her wish was father to his thought. Sara has undergone a great deal of provocation. Con has treated her like a skivvy, tried to prevent her marriage to Simon, spoken to her woundingly, and added injury to insult by slapping her to the ground. In speaking to his wife he has referred to Sara as "your daughter." And now he has returned from making an enemy of Simon's father. She has reason to hate him.

And her mother? Nora looks like a personification of love undeterred. She accepts her husband now for what he once may have been and what he still purports to be. She has not managed to lift herself above her peasant background, or perhaps she never tried to, suspecting that Con sees in her a constant and iconic recollection of his parents' origins that enables him to gloat over the social distance he supposes he has traveled. Together with his retinue of courtiers, Patch Riley, Paddy O'Dowd, Dan Roche, and the hangers-out in the shebeen, who will flatter him into infinity for the sake of a shot of whiskey, Nora confirms his impression of himself as the Major still. She has caught the virus of his pipe dream. She fervently plays the part of dutiful, obedient spouse, even when he responds with indifference or contempt or outright cruelty.

But there is more to Nora than meets the icon. While she waits, distraught with worry, for him to come back from his assault on the Harford home or at least for a word of news, O'Neill, for the first time, uses the stage direction "bitterly" to describe the delivery of her lines:

Has he ever cared for anyone except himself and his pride? Sure, he'd never stoop to think of me, the grand gentleman in his red livery av bloody England! His pride, indade! What is it but a lie? What's in his veins, God pity him, but the blood of thievin' auld Ned Melody who kept a dirty shebeen?

With a typically O'Neillian stroke of conscience, she immediately wants to retract her words. Then, several lines later, she is "working herself to rebellion again": "I won't stay here the rist of the night worryin' my heart out for a man who--" Who what? That uncompleted sentence is as far as she will go with her mini-rebellion. But it has divulged her resentment, much as she might now like to take it back. She will go on to shift the blame to herself for "the mortal sin I did with him unmarried...." But she cannot resist some refueling of the resentment as she remembers "the promise he made me make to leave the Church that's kept me from ever confessin' to a priest."

Nora has allowed Con to go on being what he is by her passivity. She understands that he remains in some ways a child, a brat spoiled by his father, then by her--his mother died when he was born; but instead of protesting his tantrums, she spoils him further by bottling up her rage, demeaning herself before him, and growing inert, ill with

unreleased rancor.

What does this relationship imply? With A Touch of the Poet O'Neill was embarking on his review of United States history. It deals, as he said repeatedly, with greed; and he called one play in the cycle "The Greed of the Meek," a paradoxical expression for those who have been taught and have accepted that the meek shall inherit the earth, but by waiting, not by greedy maneuvering. He burned the manuscript of an earlier story of the Harfords, perhaps because in 1944 he lacked the energy to unravel the excessive complications in that drama and others he had written out or plotted.

But greed constitutes only one motive behind our empire-building, which O'Neill blasted in The Fountain, Marco Millions, Mourning Becomes Electra, and A Moon for the Misbegotten. A second motive is aggression. Con Melody comes closest to realizing his pipe dream when he goes out in his uniform on a foray against the house of Harford, striking down servants with his whip and sputtering about the "man who has insulted my honor." After his defeat the pipe dream is dying and so he kills it off, although the play gives us no sign that now, as a peasant rather than a gentleman, he will abate his aggression. Sara, having witnessed the rewards of aggression, will in the next play join her husband Simon and let her behavior be governed by greed, a more efficacious motive.

Con wants to feel innately superior to others. To some he possibly is--physically, at any rate. He believes that his superiority, real or imagined, gives him the right to avenge his honor whenever and however it is wounded. In Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension, Doris Falk has pointed out that the word pride recurs "in the text sixty-three times, usually followed by humiliation or shame" (p. 168). Honor and pride: buzz words. Can we read into this play a parable by making the jump from personal to national honor and pride? If so, O'Neill may well have in mind bullying demagogues, among them presidents, who used to send out a gunboat and more recently launch an abortive invasion from the Bay of Pigs or rain bombs on Libya or finance a band of mercenaries in Honduras, ennobling them with the name of freedom fighters and so making a mockery of American history; while the Noras, the rest of us, wring our hands and cool our heels as we anxiously wait for the news of destruction to come home. Such adventures and misadventures trace their origins back to--yes, a pipe dream--about an America once feared (and for that wildly improbable reason, loved and respected) by the rest of the world, when in truth they sully the name of America overseas and bring us into contempt. Certain parasites may cheer, as Roche and O'Dowd and Riley do at the prospect of spilt blood, but only for the sake of free handouts.

Greed and aggression, pipe dreams and snobbery are no more than a dark side of the American soul. The bright sides show up in our generosity, the welcoming hand, the charms of informality--and in gatherings like the O'Neill conferences. But regrettably, as dramatic fodder these admirable qualities seem to make for the Pollyanna-ish commercial theatre with a close on the maudlin upbeat against which O'Neill set his face and pen. He was in some respects a perfectionist in his ambitions for his fellow-Americans, though his own personal ways, like those of his hero Strindberg, provide no model for other citizens to emulate. He fastened on our faults as passionately as any reformer, but without any hope of reforming them, playing a disenchanting Larry Slade to the last. But in delineating the faults he assembled a drama that lives vigorously today and will live with as much vigor tomorrow. A Touch of the Poet has about it more than a touch of the prophet.

--Albert Bermel

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH: HUGHIE AND THE POWER OF FICTION*

In her book Dialogue in American Drama, Ruby Cohn criticizes Eugene O'Neill's skill as a writer of dialogue and a creator of character. Adopting Hofmannsthal's identification of O'Neill's "wet sponge" tendency as her central referent, Cohn presents a persuasive, specific, and complete analysis of O'Neill's weaknesses as a dramatist. She notices a lack of both humaneness and humanity in his characters (25). According to Cohn, this profoundly crippling dramaturgical problem stems from what she sees as O'Neill's propensity for "the discussion rather than the dramatization of emotion" (28). In other words, O'Neill uses dialogue for the verbalization of private thoughts rather than as an enactment of a specific and unique dramatic moment. He uses soliloquies to express the unspoken, releasing with explanation whatever dramatic tension the play's action had established earlier in the drama. Characters' lines become mere vehicles for the exposition of character (29). Silence is drained of meaning; nuance and subtlety give way to laborious speech laden with explicit associations and overt thematic significance. O'Neill's attempt to elevate his characters to mythic stature ironically results in their being stripped entirely of their human dimension. Or, in Eric Bentley's words, "the more he attempts, the less he succeeds" (Cohn 26).

Perhaps with Hughie O'Neill has subverted Bentley's claim, ostensibly attempting less while achieving much more. Cohn acknowledges that Hughie, along with The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey Into Night, are "three masterpieces among 46 published plays" (67). Travis Bogard calls Hughie "an epitome of O'Neill's mature theatrical style and statement ... a perfect dramatic poem" (419). In O'Neill, Son and Artist, Louis Sheaffer refers to the play as "a little gem" indicating that O'Neill "had now mastered his art" (521). To Laurin Roland Porter it is "a small gem of a play whose brilliance derives as much from its economy of characterization as from its poetic use of language" (179).

Porter's comments offer us initial access to the reasons for this universally effusive critical response. Hughie consistently avoids the excesses of characterization that plagued O'Neill's earlier works, such as Desire Under the Elms and Mourning Becomes Electra. Rather than weave a complex web of reciprocal and polar relationships among many characters spanning a considerable length of time, Hughie presents an hour in the lives of two people, one of whom rarely speaks. Yet the audience comes to know these characters more thoroughly and poignantly in a single act than those of O'Neill's earlier, more massive and multiplicitous plots. More remarkably, the character from whom the play derives its name never appears on stage. We learn of the conditions of his life, and of the details of its contact with Erie's, only through Erie's slangy remembrances. Yet Hughie's memory endures in us with vibrance and substance, exposing our experience of the lives of earlier O'Neill protagonists as abstract and objectified.

The language O'Neill employs in Hughie indicates that he had overcome what Cohn identifies as his tendency in the early work to mask shallowness and superficiality of diction and character in dialect (23-24). Erie's speech, though colloquial, is not wrought with a dialect phonetically enforced through a system of contraction, elision, ellipsis, and apostrophe, as is Yank's in The Hairy Ape and Eben's in Desire Under the Elms. Erie's hard-boiled diction creates in the reader's mind its own appropriate accents, emphases, and pronunciations. Similarly, the reader's imagination is no longer circumscribed by the cumbersome stage directions of the earlier plays. Instead of literally telling the reader, as well as the actor, what specific emotion or psychic response Charlie Hughes' face should be registering at a particular moment, O'Neill here renders the actual, living texture of Charlie's sensation and intellection, freeing both reader and actor to envision whatever expression or posture is accurate to the reality of Charlie's current condition. In Hughie, O'Neill's language has become an instrument of imagination rather than exposition.

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That Hughie marks the apogee of O'Neill's mastery of his medium is unmistakably evident. Cohn, in further praise of the play, affords it a significant position in the history of the development of modern drama as well. She associates Erie with the heroes of Camus, Sartre, Beckett, Ionesco, and Genet, and holds that "in Hughie O'Neill dramatizes the prototypical Absurdist situation--man's confrontation with mortality" (61). Thus Hughie, composed in 1941-2, is revealed as anticipating the existential concerns of the next generation of playwrights, despite its posthumous publication in 1959, some five years after Waiting for Godot.

In this connection, Cohn identifies the salient feature of the relationship between characters in Absurdist drama: "Only the Other can testify to the reality of the Self, but the identity of that Other is unimportant" (62). Accordingly, then, as characters whose relationship occurs within the parameters of "Absurdist situation," Erie and Hughie, as well as Erie and Charlie, ought to participate in this reciprocal disinterest in the "identity" of the Other suggested by Cohn. Yet, crucially to O'Neill's meaning, they do not.

The new night clerk's identity is of direct and telling importance to Erie. He insists upon learning the reluctant clerk's full name, Charlie Hughes, immediately upon meeting him (O'Neill 10); the fact that Charlie's last name matches that of Erie's recently departed friend initiates a series of similarities between the two clerks that at first provokes comparison and at last demands virtual identification. By the end of the play, Erie has established that Charlie is "forty-three ... Or maybe it is forty-four" (13), is married, has three children, and hails from Saginaw, Michigan. Erie's interest in the details of Charlie's identity is mirrored by his knowledge of those of Hughie: we learn that the former clerk was forty-three years old, married to a woman named Irma, had two children, and came to New York from "a hick burg upstate" (24).

Yet the importance of Hughie's identity to Erie, as well as Erie's to Hughie, goes beyond these superficial, biographical data. Their relationship exemplifies and chronicles the elemental human need to establish a living contact with an Other outside of one's Self; not only to "testify to the reality of the Self," but to enact a reciprocity of identity, a sharing of value, condition, and desire that at once affirms both the Self and the Self's meaning to an identity beyond it. Theirs is the story of the importance of feeling that you're somebody, and that you're important to somebody else.

Through Erie's poignant recherche of his friendship with the former night clerk, we learn with high precision and specificity exactly how Hughie maintained and restored Erie's sense of Self. Through his ingenuous, inquisitive interest in Erie's life on "the Big Stem," in the "dames" and the "bangtails" (16) of Erie's Broadway existence, he legitimized Erie's life as one worthy of attention, even as an object of admiration. These elements of risk, danger, and passion were missing from Hughie's life, and Hughie's persistent questioning indicated to Erie that his quotidian, casual contact with even their sleaziest manifestations bespoke a certain insouciant freedom not available to all men.

Hughie placed unconditional trust in Erie: in Erie's words, "that guy would believe anything!" (22). During their mock crap-shooting sessions at the desk, Hughie innocently used Erie's dice, "and he'd never ask to give 'em the once-over" (21). That integrity could exist "on the Big Stem" was made possible by Hughie's assumption of Erie's; the blind, uninformed faith Hughie placed in Erie created the necessity of ethical decision in a life otherwise void of ethical concern. As a consequence, ethical action was given a place in Erie's life, and he was given the opportunity to embrace it. He did: to Charlie he confides that he would never "ring in no phoneys on a pal. I'm no heel" (21).

Hughie's growing interest in gambling put Erie in a position of responsibility, again forcing a choice upon his sensibility which otherwise would never have been challenged in

that particular way. When Hughie asked him to place two dollars he had taken from his wife's purse on the horse of Erie's choice, Erie refused and got Hughie to return the money. Erie has seen himself become capable of brotherly authority and protection. This act of benign instruction catalyzed by Hughie's interest represents the only performance of any such act within memory: "Boy Scouts got nothin' on me, pal, when it comes to good deeds. That was one I done. Too bad I can't remember no others" (23). But he can remember one, and the memory informs his sense of Self.

During their friendship, Hughie restored Erie's confidence in himself. After an unsuccessful night at the races or with the women, when Erie would return home to the hotel "without a buck, feeling lower than a snake's belly" (31), the two would shoot their game of mock craps; Erie would amaze Hughie with his prowess: "You sure were born lucky" (21). He would regale the clerk with his inflated tales of the Broadway life. Between the gentleman's gambling, the stories, and Hughie's unequivocal wonder at Erie's role in both, Erie would "get to seein' myself like he seen me" (31). Hughie's unabashed, naive testimony to Erie's luck, skill, and underworld notoriety reinforced Erie's respect for his own flagging capacities. The strength of the Self was confirmed by the encouragement of an Other.

Yet in the contact forged between Hughie and Erie, much more was generated than a confirmation of "the reality of the Self." There was a sharing of identities, an emerging of the individual from within his discrete, solipsistic sphere of value and understanding, and an introduction into the world of the Other, in all of its foreignness, beauty, and incomprehensibility. Moreover, as it is described by Hughie, this engagement of the Self in an identity beyond it is an entirely reciprocal process necessarily involving an Other that is affected as deeply as is the protagonist Self.

Erie successfully removed Hughie from the stifling context of the hotel desk and projected him for a time into the world of the Broadway shark, which up to that point Hughie had been experiencing only vicariously through Erie's tales. Erie "kidnapped him one day and took him down to Belmont" to see the bangtails run (22). Hughie enjoyed "the track, the crowd and the horses" so completely that Erie was "scared he'd pass out with excitement." Yet Hughie's joy was not merely a result of the fact that it was his first glimpse of the frenetic energy of the track. He was able to cut through the distracting ceremony of the races to arrive at a simple, unadorned realization of the aesthetic quality of the horses, to which his friend Erie had devoted such time and from which he had derived such pleasure: "They're the most beautiful things in the world, I think" (22). Hughie's assessment reveals the depth of his appreciation of Erie's world, and, by association, the purity of his understanding of the identity of his friend, who would "rather sleep in the same stall with old Man o' War than make the whole damn Follies" (22).

Erie discloses that he entered Hughie's world for a brief time as well. Erie, although he says that he "would rather be shot" (26) than be subjected to the "family racket," took up Hughie's invitation to dine one evening with his wife Irma and his two children. He noticed that the couple seemed "resigned ... as if each was givin' the other a break by thinking, 'Well, what more could I expect?'" (25). Yet, just as Hughie came to have a sense of the beauty of the bangtails of Erie's world, so did Erie come to an appreciation of the children of Hughie's, in his own laconic, frank way: "They was quiet like Hughie. I kinda liked 'em" (27). Erie expresses wounded disappointment, couched, characteristically, in the cynical expressions of the Broadway sport, at Irma's disapproval of his influence: "I coulda liked her--a little--if she'd give me a chance.... Well, to hell with it. She had me tagged for a bum, and seein' me made her sure she was right" (27). The tone of Erie's words betrays his hurt feelings at having been deemed undesirable, as well as his resentment that Hughie's world proved to be less accessible to him than was his to Hughie. Yet he was there, and he witnessed the resignation that made him and his life so vitally meaningful to Hughie.

In hearing Erie's rendering of his friendship with Hughie, we understand the mutual humanization they effected for each other through this sharing of identities. However, as Erie expounds upon the details of their dependence upon each other and of his sincere grief at Hughie's death, Charlie, the current night clerk, presents us with a living embodiment of the desperate meaninglessness and absurdity in which Hughie's life must have been mired before he and Erie came to know each other. Charlie has "forgotten how it feels to be bored" (8): boredom would imply that at least a memory of human engagement persists. It does not. Charlie "long ago ... gave up caring whether questions were personal or not" (12). He is unable even to feel despair (18); the "memory of hope" exists only in the rumbling of the passing El trains, locked in their repetitive, remote patterns of approach and recession, never arriving (19).

O'Neill foregrounds the resemblance of the two clerks throughout the play. There are the biographical similarities: last name, age, marital status, job, and small-town origin. Erie is struck by something in Charlie's demeanor that evokes the memory of his deceased friend: "I notice, you don't look like Hughie, but you remind me of him somehow" (10-11), and later, "Say, you do remind me of Hughie somehow, pal. You got the same look on your map" (20). Erie remarks that "you're like Hughie" after commenting that, like Hughie, Charlie looks to be ten years older than he actually is (13). Furthermore, the association between the psychic conditions of the two clerks is made explicit as Erie expresses frustration at the lack of attention granted him by Charlie during his attempts at communication: "Hughie was as big a dope as you until I give him some interest in life" (26).

This "interest in life" is given its animating spark in both Hughie and Charlie by the stories of the life of a Broadway sport that Erie tells them. Those critics who have written on Hughie seem entirely to agree upon the thematic significance of these tales. Bogard sees Hughie as a reiteration of the theme of The Iceman Cometh, in which "O'Neill had shown the fostering of illusion bred a certain comfort that was a protection from despair" (418). Carol Bilman writes that Erie creates "the illusions necessary to sustain life in the midst of the enshrouding darkness of modern civilization" (Item 25). Robert Butler concurs: "Erie creates warmth and meaning by giving people illusions which have a positive, life-giving function" (6). The critical consensus is clear: Erie provides the illusions that the Self and the Others need to continue living in the face of meaninglessness.

This view of Erie as illusionist diminishes Hughie's potency and O'Neill's meaning. Erie readily admits that his tales are not fact: "I was wise I was kiddin' myself. I ain't a sap" (O'Neill 31). By calling attention to this fact during an attempted conversation with one of the two auditors of his stories, he necessarily destroys any possibility of illusion in his audience. A magician never explains his tricks before their performance: to do so would be to deny their illusory reality. Given this willing admission, O'Neill, through Erie, is careful to establish that Erie's tales, though not fact, are grounded in truth, are true at their core: "What I fed Hughie wasn't all lies. The tales about gambling wasn't. They was stories of big games and killings that really happened since I've been hangin' around" (31).

Erie, whom O'Neill identifies prominently in Hughie's list of characters as "a teller of tales," is an author of fictions. Although the terms "illusion" and "fiction" are at times used interchangeably in the criticism (Butler 5), their distinction in emphasis is crucial to Hughie's import. Illusion is severed from possibility; it will not abide what is real. Fiction was born in the real, is rooted there fundamentally. Fiction loves possibility. Erie's fictions do not merely enable him and Hughie to continue acting in the face of meaninglessness, but afford them the possibility of conquering meaninglessness by achieving meaning in each other's identities and each other's lives. Cohn proposes that in Hughie, Erie and Hughie "learn to kill the time of their lives by gambling together" (63). In reality, they have learned to fill the time of their lives with sure things. Erie's "big horseshoe of red roses" is not a testament to the illusion of friendship, but to friendship itself; nor is it a testament to the illusion of

meaning, but to meaning itself; nor is it a testament to illusion at all, but to what is true.

--James C. McKelly

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CARLOTTA TAKES CENTER-STAGE: A REVIEW OF MY GENE

[My Gene, by Barbara Gelb, with Colleen Dewhurst as Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, opened at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Martinson Hall on January 29, 1987, and closed on March 22. It was directed by Andre Ernotte, with scenery by William Barclay, costumes by Muriel Stockdale, lighting by Phil Monat, and music arranged by Rob Schwimmer.]

Barbara Gelb's new play, My Gene, is a chronicle of recollected images, more real than hallucinatory, that reflects the enigmatic relationship endured by the playwright, Eugene O'Neill, and his third wife, Carlotta Monterey. Gelb, the renowned co-author (with husband Arthur) of the 1962 biography O'Neill, exhumes the playwright through the half-crazed memories of his widow, now incarcerated in the violent ward of St. Luke's Hospital in New York City. Although the premise is a powerful one, the monodrama Gelb has fashioned falls short of its promised impact. As a tour de force commanded by actress Colleen Dewhurst, however, the audience bears witness to a confession it will not easily forget.

The time is November of 1968, some fifteen years after the playwright's death. Moments before the action begins, the audience observes a curtainless set at the center of which is a slightly elevated room, framed by skeletal beams to suggest the claustrophobic dimensions of Carlotta's world. A metal bed, a sink, and a simple dressing table clutter an atmosphere made even gloomier by the monotonous gray tones which predominate. A small apron of playing space, separating the audience from Carlotta's cell, is trimmed with a wooden ramp to suggest an ocean walkway. This borders both right and left sides of the stage, and leads to an elevated upstage deck which overlooks the hospital room. Both sides of the stage are highlighted with rocks and sea grass. The downstage apron is tinged with sand, while a wooden lounge chair, facing center stage, is prominently placed at the downstage right corner. A shadowy image of O'Neill's profile is projected on the center of a wide backdrop. With houselights still

up, the mood is enhanced by a soft melody that catches the attention of the audience. This is replaced by a sharp crescendo of crashing waves as the houselights fade. The crescendo ends abruptly in darkness, when the stage lights come up to reveal a tormented Carlotta poised stiffly on her bed.

One can only admire Gelb's daring to dramatize through language and memory the more traumatic highlights of this infamous couple's relationship, to assess O'Neill's life through the eyes of a woman who claimed to have inspired certain characters and events in her husband's plays, and who engineered a revival of his work shortly after his death. "I wanted your reputation restored in my lifetime," she yells at his ghostly presence, as if to seek forgiveness for having disobeyed his wishes by releasing prematurely his play, Long Day's Journey Into Night. But when she sneeringly announces, "I am your immortality," there can be no question that Gelb has uncovered a character as stageworthy as any Everywoman O'Neill created.

The monodrama format, often effectively used, reflects a consciousness befitting O'Neill's own dramatic style. Carlotta's reminiscences are directed to a doctor who has entered her room, although he too may be a mere hallucination. He motivates her need to psychodramatize, to settle scores with the past, to prove her sanity and, hopefully, regain her freedom. "Oh yes, he's here! He's always here," she reminds the doctor. Then with a sudden glance toward the downstage lounge chair, she steps out of the hospital frame, connects instantly with the past, and raves at an unseen spouse who seems painfully alive to her. At times the technique recalls O'Neill's early one-act monodrama, Before Breakfast, in which a nagging wife directs cruel outbursts against her off-stage artist husband, with fatal consequences. Above all, the moment conjures Strindberg, and sets a tone that Dewhurst admirably sustains through this solo dance of death.

Gelb has chosen to identify Carlotta with some of the more memorable women in O'Neill's plays. In reality, Carlotta did join the cast of The Hairy Ape, when the O'Neill play moved to Broadway to continue its successful run. Cast as the hypocritical socialite, Mildred Douglas, who insists on viewing the bowels of a cruise ship to see how the lower classes live, she faints at the sight of Yank, the brutish stoker. Apparently things were not much different off-stage, for Carlotta herself was not impressed by the play's unkempt author who practically ignored her at their first meeting and failed to thank her for stepping into the role at such short notice, but who, years later, would teasingly call her "Mildew" Douglas. "It was a love affair from the very beginning," she rapturously confides in us, like a lover who has found her reason to exist.

At this point, Gelb chooses to deconstruct Carlotta's dark night of the soul, through a careful incorporation of fragmentary excerpts from The Hairy Ape, Long Day's Journey Into Night, A Moon for the Misbegotten and More Stately Mansions, to clarify or embellish specific parallels between O'Neill's life and art. These often memorable lines are effortlessly woven into the fabric of Carlotta's confession to suggest a pathological merging of her own life with stage directions dictated by her spouse. A citation from Strange Interlude, for example, invokes the voracious and multi-dimensional protagonist, Nina Leeds, who plays different roles to the men in her life, as they unfulfillingly respond to her needs. Lest we overlook the explosive connection between stage and real life, Gelb carefully conjoins her Carlotta with Nina, as if it were Carlotta, not Nina, who cynically observes: "Say lie---L-i-i-e! Now say life. L-i-i-f-e! You see! Life is just a long drawn out lie with a sniffing sigh at the end!"

Mistress, wife, and mother to a powerful literary figure whose life was broken by physical debility and emotional turmoil, Carlotta insidiously reprimands, "You can't live without me." Did O'Neill consciously realize that he had resorted to his marriage with Carlotta to sketch out the characters of James and Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey, because he was too long separated from his parents to recall them accurately? Can we accept that Carlotta quietly coveted the pivotal role of Deborah Harford in A Touch of the Poet, recognizing its need for a great actress and thinking it could mark her return

to the professional stage? So Carlotta dives into the wreck, retrieving its ghostly casualties, and discovering what another kindred spirit, Mary Tyrone, once faced: "The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us."

While Gelb's play often succeeds in stirring up some powerful material and giving it chronological shape, the outcome is burdened with details too scrupulously assembled: titles, dates, characters, public and domestic events of a unique marriage, many of which tend to distract rather than inform the audience. What might have been a seamless unraveling of a woman's psyche instead becomes forced and weighed down by lackluster memorabilia. Although such material verifies the biographical content of the work, it often reduces Dewhurst to a mouthpiece. Fortunately, the second half of the two hour evening is less encumbered, and allows the actress some opportunity to build towards a moving finale.

Indeed, the success of this performance rests comfortably in the hands of Dewhurst, whose energy is relentless from start to finish. Fidgeting with shawl, earrings, nail file or hair clip, she darts between present and past events with an intensity and conviction that obscure the limitations of her script. She can find eloquence in the smallest harrowing detail, and turn awkward allusion into stunning revelation. In one uncomfortable piece of stage business, for example, she persuades us that a rag monkey named Esteban, a memento of her husband's seafaring days, is the single worthy offspring of their marriage. "Our own little hairy ape," she reflects matter-of-factly, hugging him tightly and setting him gently to sleep on her pillow. One only wishes that director Andre Ernotte had encouraged some reshaping of this actress's earthy vitality and throaty vocalism to create a more "elitist" protagonist who proudly admits, "I chose the name Carlotta Monterey because it was exotic and suited my looks." Nevertheless, Dewhurst offers us a genuine demystification of this legendary lady, that is both a tribute and a workout.

Still, she has not always been helped by a director whose choices are frequently arbitrary. Carlotta's meandering strolls to the upstage deck become predictable in their repetition, as if to explore less trodden stage space rather than escape the imprisonment of a hospital cell to return to the past. On other occasions, it becomes difficult to determine whether Carlotta is addressing husband, doctor, audience, or all three. The need for such clarification seems blatantly ignored. When Carlotta, sitting serenely on her bed, suddenly transforms herself into Josie Hogan and declares her boundless love for Jim Tyrone in A Moon for the Misbegotten, however, the audience is privy to a kind of stage magic that requires no fussing with gestures or props. Finally there is Dewhurst, as Carlotta Monterey, alone at center stage, assuring her husband that the laurel she has planted on his grave will have to do for both of them, as no one will bother to remember her. Perhaps Ernotte should have allowed more moments like these simply to happen.

--Gary Vena

NOTES ON A WORK IN PROGRESS: AN INTERVIEW WITH BARBARA GELB

Barbara Gelb's My Gene, a two-act, one-character play about Eugene O'Neill's widow Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, opened at the New York Shakespeare Festival's Martinson Hall on January 29, 1987. It would be an understatement to say that the reviews of the production were "mixed": many were tastelessly, painfully negative, especially in their reactions to the script. "Mundane phrases that ... seem unedited by art" (Clive Barnes in the New York Post), "inept words ... numbing your ears" (Michel Feingold in The Village Voice), and "journalism, not theatre" (Howard Kissel in The Daily News): harsh words indeed, especially when coupled with the often-voiced inference that Joseph Papp would never have produced the play if its author were not the wife of the powerful managing editor of the New York Times. In short, there was more evidence of envy and the

settling of old scores than of responsible or objective criticism.

Fortunately, Gelb and her star, Colleen Dewhurst, ignored the critics' venomous jabs and carried on with the more important job of honing the quality of script and performance. And public response corroborated their decision: the show played to large and frequently sold-out houses, concluding its more than respectable run on Sunday, March 22. The critics lost their almost unanimous battle to kill My Gene.

Before attending the performance on Tuesday, March 3, I had been primed by the reviewers to expect an amateurishly structured play, awkwardly written, and riddled with illogical transitions and ill conceived notions of character development--a "bravura performance" (John Beaufort in the Christian Science Monitor) imperiled by but miraculously surviving its author's ineptitude. What I saw, however, was something quite different. A full six weeks into the run, a very nervous and pressured Colleen Dewhurst was still clearly struggling to capture and convey the mercurial nature of Carlotta Monterey O'Neill. There was no question but that Dewhurst's stage presence was imposing. But it was my observation that she was relying on years of refined technique to cover gaps in her performance. It was apparent that she had not yet come to terms with Carlotta, a problem which the critics may have attributed to the wrong artist. The performance was certainly competent, but it lacked a clear, definable core characterization. And such a flaw can as easily be the fault of performer and director as of the playwright.

I should mention that the March 3 performance was exceptional in a way unanticipated by any of its participants but illustrative of a lesson the actress had learned before My Gene opened. In a pre-show article in the Times ("Colleen Dewhurst Portrays O'Neill's Haunted Widow," Sunday, January 25, 1987, Sec. 2, pp. 3-4), Helen Dudar told how Dewhurst, jittery about doing a play all alone, had called on a friend, one-person-show veteran Zoe Caldwell, for advice, and how Caldwell replied that she'd hate it "until she found the companionship of an audience." That night it was very clear that Dewhurst had taken Caldwell's advice to heart. About halfway through, an elderly attender became ill and an ambulance had to be called. The audience remained very quiet, out of respect for the actress, who, they knew, was continuing because she was unaware of the situation occurring in the house. Becoming conscious of the growing undercurrent in the audience, she hesitated a few times, sensing that something was wrong but unsure what to do. She finally stopped and gently asked, "Are we looking for a doctor?" Softly and in one voice, the audience replied, "Yes." "Shall we stop for a while?" Again the communal whisper, "Yes." It was a moment in theatre as compelling as the play being performed. Dewhurst had included us in the process of performance. It was clear that she depended on us and needed us to start and finish the work at hand. We were her partners. That was foremost in her thinking as she tried to deal with the unknown threat in the darkness. At that moment the raw power of the actress's dependence on the audience was breathtaking. In terms of the immediate emergency, it was gratifying and heartwarming. But it also heightened the sense I had had earlier--that she was grasping outside of herself for support. Because she had not internalized the sources of her character's motivations, Dewhurst's characterization was vulnerable to any interference that might present itself.

Barbara Gelb was in the audience that night, so our discussion two days later included reference to the event's effect on the performance.

It was not a good performance. She was aware of that. It was inevitable, of course. It was very dismaying, what happened. Act Two is usually much better even than Act One. But Colleen didn't get her rhythm back. She was really thrown by what happened.

That Gelb was not herself "thrown" by the critics' attacks was also clear; indeed, she had expected them.

Joe Papp was aware of the possibilities. I think it was very brave of him to put on a play by me. Whatever I wrote was destined to be attacked. There was just no way that was not going to happen. Both Colleen and Joe were aware of it and they were very brave to take the play on.... It was painful and unpleasant to have to go through this--for all of us.... I think we sailed through with flying colors. We were all very considerate of each other, and we all tried to be extremely obliging.

The phrase "extremely obliging" begged for explanation. Perhaps the team had been too "obliging." Since I had observed weaknesses in the acting and directing, I decided to pursue questions about My Gene's rehearsals. Problems during that period could have a permanent effect on the outcome of the production. Gelb reluctantly described Dewhurst's behavior:

She had a great deal of difficulty memorizing the script. She would be the first to admit it took her a long time. It was difficult. She could not really be directed. We could not make changes that we wanted until we were well into the previews. She was stumbling over lines. But that was a question of its being a terribly long script and having no other actor on stage to give her any help, any cues. So we couldn't really begin to do business. Colleen couldn't really feel what the character should do because she wasn't free enough; she was concentrating so hard on remembering lines.

As Gelb and I discussed the origins of the project which eventually became My Gene, it became clear that some of the problems entailed in the production might have arisen from the differing expectations of the actress and the playwright. Dewhurst had asked Gelb to write her a monodrama to be used in touring colleges. She was thinking of scripts Gelb had written for private presentations by the Theater Committee for Eugene O'Neill. The format for those programs had been documentary: readings from O'Neill's plays--by Dewhurst, Jason Robards, Geraldine Fitzgerald and others--interspersed with slides and discussions of O'Neill's life. In making her request, the actress had in mind a tourable, one-person equivalent of those earlier evenings. When Gelb presented her, instead, with a full play with Carlotta O'Neill as its heroine, she didn't know how to react.

We had been talking about doing it since 1979. I showed her a script about three years ago, and I said, "This is not exactly what you asked me for. It's getting to be more like a real play. What do you think?" I think she was a little taken aback because it was not what she was looking for. She was interested, though. But then it took a year or so before I had a manuscript anybody thought they could go into production with.

But why had Gelb's hopes for the script become so lofty? It was because she had never had the opportunity to tell the whole truth about Carlotta, and this play was to be her chance. When the Gelbs had set out to write the first major biography of O'Neill, there had been restrictions:

Everyone advised us that we should only do the first forty years of O'Neill's life because O'Neill's widow was still alive and she was very quick on the trigger to sue people. She had tremendously volatile likes and dislikes. So we said all right. We felt that that was quite enough of a job to take on. As we started doing the research, it got more fascinating and more and more involved. One thing led to another, and we decided we had to interview everybody and get the whole story before we could attempt even the first forty years. Then we realized: how could you interpret the first forty years unless you knew how he spent his entire life? We couldn't analyze the early plays unless we were doing it in light of the later plays.

In order to write the book in the way they felt it must be written, the Gelbs decided

they had to take their chances with lawsuits:

We were going to be careful. But we just had to write the whole story.... We had to balance very carefully what we could say about Carlotta with what we could say about O'Neill.... We couldn't make O'Neill the total villain and have Carlotta come out smelling like roses.... It was very tricky getting the balance.

On the suggestion of lawyers, the Gelbs were advised to ask Carlotta for a taped interview which would state for posterity her side of the relationship with O'Neill. Since Mrs. Gelb was "out of favor" with Mrs. O'Neill at the time, it was her husband Arthur who recorded the crucial interview. Much of it was later used in My Gene.

After Carlotta's death in 1970, the biographers were able to make some revisions in their 1962 volume. They added further information about the O'Neills' tempestuous marriage into the body of the text, and they appended an epilogue about Carlotta's final years. Still, Mrs. Gelb was irked by required limitations:

There were restraints by our publisher [about] going beyond too much because it's such a big book, and there were mechanical problems with doing too many revisions.

The dissatisfaction with never having been able to tell the complete story remained with Barbara Gelb. When Dewhurst asked her for a manuscript, the idea of writing a play with Carlotta as heroine was born.

The scope of the project which finally became My Gene needed the guidance of a playwriting expert. Gelb took her script to Joseph Papp.

I thought Joe was the perfect person to do it. I knew it was not a Broadway play. I wanted it done in New York for a limited run before Colleen took it on tour. I thought that would be the best way to launch it. Joe was interested when I showed it to him. He said, "I think you should work on it more." I started consulting with Gail Merrifield [the Shakespeare Festival's play doctor] on how and what they thought should be done. It was much too long. I cut fifty pages out of it before it even started rehearsing. That I worked on with the director [Andre Ernotte].

Gelb described the play's evolution as being "very much a collaborative process." For instance, director Mike Nichols had suggested the superstructure which was finally used. According to Gelb, Nichols said that it would be interesting to have the audience confronted with the question, "is she crazy, or isn't she crazy?" The result of this discussion with Nichols led Gelb to set the play in Carlotta's room in the psychiatric unit of St. Luke's Hospital during the last two years of her life. The aging widow is discovered, at the start, pleading with an unseen physician and trying to convince him that she is sane. The audience is drawn into the argument as bits and pieces of Carlotta's behavior in the hospital are juxtaposed with her recollections of her life with O'Neill. These are parts of the puzzle the audience is left to complete: the final decision as to Carlotta's sanity rests with them--with us.

I wondered whether the decision to show Carlotta in her last days, locked in a hospital ward and presumed insane, didn't absolve the viewers from having to participate in the decisions Gelb wanted them to make. Showing her earlier could also have afforded us more of the regal grandeur that Carlotta Monterey had adopted along with her name--the queenly aura that Zoe Caldwell conveyed in "Eugene O'Neill--A Glory of Ghosts." Dewhurst's Carlotta appeared defeated from the start, and there was no apparent attempt to make her look like the real Mrs. O'Neill. The playwright bristled at the last observation:

It's just that she doesn't look like Carlotta, and it doesn't matter. I felt that what was important was that she have the majesty and the carriage of a Carlotta and that you could imagine her to have been a great beauty. I think Colleen embodies

all those aspects.

Some reviewers had criticized Gelb for incorporating speeches from O'Neill's plays into her script: Mildred Douglas, Nina Leeds, Mary Tyrone, Josie Hogan and Deborah Harford are all briefly represented. The playwright made the purpose and value of those interpolations very clear: she saw the speeches as integral in developing Carlotta's persona. To Gelb, Carlotta was the model for many of O'Neill's heroines. Mary Tyrone, for instance: while she was clearly modeled on Ella O'Neill, there was also a good deal of Carlotta in her composition.

Either Carlotta was like Mary Tyrone, or O'Neill created Mary Tyrone to resemble her, which I think is perfectly likely. I think that [Carlotta] lived out all of O'Neill's fantasies and all of his passions for theatrics. I think she was a very integral part of most of the female characters that he wrote in his later years from the time he was with her. Even Nina Leeds in Strange Interlude, which he was writing when he first fell in love with her. It was a kind of circular thing. He had his mother in his mind, but then he also had Carlotta in mind. He would talk to Carlotta about his mother, and then she would take on some of his mother's characteristics and qualities and sort of absorb them because she was an instinctive actress. Even though she wasn't a very good [actress] professionally, emotionally and personally she had all the instincts of high drama. So she began taking on those characteristics, and O'Neill in turn recognized them and wrote them into his characters. So I think Mary Tyrone is very much a combination of what he remembered of his mother--not perhaps very accurately or objectively--and what Carlotta had become.

Gelb's portrait of Carlotta revealed an individual so complex that it conjured images of a Tennessee Williams courtesan, a Blanche DuBois. It is no wonder that Dewhurst, despite her triumphant portrayals of many baffling Eugene O'Neill heroines, had such difficulties sustaining a characterization of Carlotta O'Neill. She had been presented with one of the most intricate and challenging roles of her entire career, and one whose challenge was intensified by setting the play so late in Carlotta's life.

The challenge to the audience--to decide the question about Carlotta's sanity--was integral to Gelb's purpose, which was to present neither the villainess limned by Mrs. O'Neill's detractors nor the apotheosized idol of her admirers, but the real woman in all her enigmatic complexity.

She had many enemies. People hated her guts. People loathed her. We interviewed people like that. It's all in our biography. I tried ... to convey it ... all through her eyes, that there were people who thought that she was a bitch and a virago and jealous and over-possessive. I tried to convey that, even though she has to say [it] herself. And I certainly hope it works. But I did not want to give a one-sided portrait of her.... I wanted it to be compassionate. I think any very one-sided view either for or against is boring.

One thing that My Gene definitely is not, is boring. The performance I saw, two nights before my interview with its author, revealed an interesting work that admittedly had flaws but was certainly stageworthy, an event to witness from an historical as well as a theatrical perspective. Happily, there are plans for My Gene to tour colleges and universities during the next few years. Gelb and Dewhurst will have plenty of time to perfect the final shape of the work and the presentation of its fascinating heroine--a luxury unavailable amid the imposed restrictions surrounding the New York production. They will be sharing their wealth of knowledge of O'Neill's life, and wife, and work with an eager and unbiased audience. My Gene is a work in progress. Its outcome can only serve to benefit the fortunate recipients of Gelb's and Dewhurst's courageous partnership.

--Sheila Hickey Garvey

TAASINGE OR THARSING?

As John Simon noted in his review of Barbara Gelb's monodrama My Gene, there's some confusion among O'Neill's chroniclers and critics as to the original name of his third and final wife, Carlotta Monterey. Some writers give it as Taasinge, others as Tharsing. The confusion is understandable, as the lady herself gave one or the other of the two names at different times, for the simple reason that both are essentially correct, and yet one is a little more right than the other.

Carlotta's father, Christian Nielsen Taasinge, left his home in Denmark at the age of sixteen and knocked about the world for several years as a seaman and ship's officer before he settled down in California to fruit farming and managing other people's farms. By the time he married his second wife, Nellie Gotchett, he had Americanized his name to Tharsing.

When Hazel, their only child, was about four, Nellie Tharsing left her husband, deposited her daughter with a sister who had several children, and proceeded to make her own way in vital, lusty San Francisco of the 1890s. Throughout childhood and in school Hazel was known as Tharsing, but later in life she at times said she was originally named Taasinge. Perhaps she thought it sounded more elegant than Tharsing, and it's also possible that she favored it in hopes that O'Neill's researchers would have a harder time in picking up and following her early trail. As her stage name suggests, Carlotta Monterey, in spite of her Danish, German and Dutch forbears, appeared more Latin than anything else.

Her closest living relative, a grandson named Gerald Eugene Stram, says: "There was a family-owned island off Copenhagen named Taasinge. I found it on a map once."

--Louis Sheaffer



Carlotta Monterey (née Hazel Tharsing), as played by Colleen Dewhurst in the 1987 New York Shakespeare Festival production of My Gene by Barbara Gelb. Locked in St. Luke's, she recalls and relives the trials and joys of life with O'Neill. Photo: Martha Swope.

Christian N. Tharsing (né Taasinge), father of Carlotta, in a photo from Sacramento Union Makers of Northern California (1917). The Roman-senatorial similarity of James O'Neill, Sr. at the same age (67) can be seen on p. 7 of Louis Sheaffer's O'Neill, Son and Playwright. --Ed.

A DECADE'S RICHES: ARTICLES IN THE NEWSLETTER, 1977-1986

[Here, as promised in the last issue, is an alphabetical list of the authors and titles of articles that appeared in the Eugene O'Neill Newsletter during its first decade. It is designed both as an aid for researchers and as a celebration of the many who made the editor's first ten years such a rewarding experience. His only regret is that the many others who contributed reviews and shorter news notes are not included. They, too, deserve a salute, and a future issue may provide a list of their contributions. Also omitted are the contents of the "preview issue" (January 1977)--comments by Frederick C. Wilkins, John Henry Raleigh, Doris Falk, Virginia Floyd and Esther Jackson on "The Enduring O'Neill: Which Plays Will Survive?"--and the recorders' reports of sessions at the 1986 Boston conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Later Years." (The last appear in the Summer-Fall and Winter 1986 issues--pp. 3-25 and 24-28, respectively.) Each article is followed (in this order) by volume number, issue number, and pages. The dates of individual issues are available on request. --Ed.]

Adler, Thomas P. "A Cabin in the Woods, A Summerhouse in the Garden: Closure and Enclosure in O'Neill's More Stately Mansions." 9:2, 23-27.

Ben-Zvi, Linda. "Eugene O'Neill and Film." 7:1, 3-10.

---. "Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill." 6:2, 21-29.

---. "Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill: The Imagery of Gender." 10:1, 22-27.

Black, Stephen A. "Ella O'Neill's Addiction." 9:1, 24-26.

Bloom, Steven F. "Drinking and Drunkenness in The Iceman Cometh: A Response to Mary McCarthy." 9:1, 3-12.

---. "The Role of Drinking and Alcoholism in O'Neill's Late Plays." 8:1, 22-27.

Bogard, Travis. "C. W. D's at Tao House." 1:1, 3-5.

---. "Eugene O'Neill in the West." 9:2, 11-16.

---. "'My Yosephine': The Music for Anna Christie." 8:3, 12-13.

Bower, Martha. "The Cycle Women and Carlotta Monterey O'Neill." 10:2, 29-33.

Bowles, Patrick. "Another Biblical Parallel in Desire Under the Elms." 2:3, 10-12.

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KARL RAGNAR GIEROW ON O'NEILL, OCTOBER 6, 1970

In the summer of 1970 I wrote to Karl Ragnar Gierow to request an interview in Stockholm where I planned to spend a few days in the fall. My letter was forwarded to him at the Rotisserie de la Residence in Normandy. "I'll be in Stockholm in October, from beginning to end," he replied. "Just ring me up when you arrive. Of course you know already, that in Germany you should, maybe first of all, contact Dr. [Oscar] Fritz Schuh in Hamburg, whose presentations have, I believe, been almost decisive for the appreciation of O'Neill in that country."

On the morning of October sixth I telephoned Dr. Gierow's office. His secretary expressed regrets that it would be impossible to see Dr. Gierow because he was confined with a very sore throat and his doctor had ordered him not to talk. When I said that my time in the city was short and that I had come to Sweden especially to meet the man who had done so much for Eugene O'Neill, the secretary promised to convey my message. In a few hours I was told to meet Dr. Gierow at his office in the Swedish Academy at two o'clock. He would not be able to speak but, if I had written questions, he would answer them.

Dr. Gierow was expecting me and ushered me into his roomy office with a choice décor of antiques, mostly presents from his admirers--one piece was a gift from the Queen, he whispered proudly. Then he pointed to a seat beside his desk in the center of the room and sat down himself, armed with slips of paper and a pen with red ink. Like a schoolboy doing a written test, Dr. Gierow wrote out the answers to my questions. I offer the full conversation of October 6, 1970, on the assumption that the reactions of the theater manager who put O'Neill on the map of the theatrical world--and kept him there despite Eric Bentley's critical acumen--may be of interest to many students of O'Neill.

--James P. Pettegrove

Q. Is it true that Stockholm (i.e., the Royal Dramatic Theater) has produced more O'Neill plays than New York?

A. It depends on--at what period. I suppose that in the late 20's and in the 30's O'Neill was just as well received in New York as over here; the difference is, that in Stockholm Dramaten [the Royal Dramatic Theater] continued producing his plays, (when he was ill and, I think, partly forgotten or neglected at home).

Q. Do you attribute the success of O'Neill productions in Stockholm to the systematic attention to O'Neill on the part of the Dramaten ensemble?

A. It might be true; if so maybe partly due to their "Strindberg-training." I didn't see Quintero's Moon [for the Misbegotten]; the production over here (the spring of '53) was, I believe, a bit of a miracle.

Q. Has Dramaten produced more plays of O'Neill than New York?

A. I don't think so. Dramaten has produced, if my memory is correct, Anna Christie, Days Without End, Strange Interlude, Desire Under the Elms, Mourning Becomes Electra, Ah, Wilderness!, The Iceman Cometh, [All] God's Chillun Got Wings, A Moon for the Misbegotten, Long Day's Journey, A Touch of the Poet, Emperor Jones, Hughie, and More Stately Mansions, approximately in this order.

Q. Would you say that O'Neill's best work is in his late plays?

A. I wouldn't say that; Desire Under the Elms is, I think, one of his strongest realistic plays, and Mourning Becomes Electra certainly is one of his masterpieces.

Q. Have you ever considered producing Lazarus Laughed?

A. Of course I did, but the play is exceedingly difficult--and the "new" plays were more urgent, I found.

Q. Do you think translation into Swedish has weakened O'Neill's plays?

A. Dialects always are very difficult, but most of O'Neill's plays have been translated by a very good man, an excellent writer in his own right, and I don't think he [Sven Barthel] has missed much.

Q. Do you agree with Frederic Fleisher* that O'Neill is now a dead issue in Stockholm?

A. As far as I know Fleisher is usually wrong. There have been several O'Neill revivals in Sweden in the last decade, amongst others Mourning Becomes Electra a couple of years ago. But Dramaten might be a little shy just now, to put itself in the shadow

*See Frederic Fleisher, "Eugene O'Neill and the Royal Dramatic Theatre of Stockholm: The Later Phase," Modern Drama, X (1967), pp. 300-311.

of its recent achievements (above all, Long Day's Journey)

Q. Did you correspond with O'Neill regarding his plays?

A. No, I haven't. I never met him. (But Carlotta O'Neill has become one of my dearest friends.) [Breaking his doctor's orders. Dr. Gierow told me orally that his introduction to Carlotta was facilitated by Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary General of the UN.] I know that Donald Gallup in the Foreword of More Stately Mansions says that I knew O'Neill, but that is a distortion, or just an error.

Q. Did you see the Viennese Burg Theater production of More Stately Mansions with Paula Wessely and Attila Hörbiger?

A. I saw the production here, a couple of weeks ago.

Q. Who is the outstanding O'Neill scholar in Sweden?

A. There is a fine O'Neill specialist at Dramaten, Stig Torsslow by name. But of course you can always write to me, if I can be of any help.

ELECTRA'S FIRST HAZEL: AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY ARBENZ

A graduate of Smith College where she first cultivated her love for the theatre in a number of extracurricular productions, Mary Arbenz arrived in New York City in 1927 with the aim of establishing herself as a professional actress. Through the aid of a former classmate, she began working for the Theatre Guild, serving as understudy and playing a number of minor roles. Her first great opportunity came in 1931 when Philip Moeller cast her as Hazel Niles in the original production of Mourning Becomes Electra. She also appeared in S.N. Behrman's Biography and, following her association with the Guild, played leading roles with such luminaries as Otis Skinner, Frances Starr and Katherine Alexander.

In 1939 she left the professional theatre and returned to school, eventually completing her doctorate at the University of Illinois. Her dissertation, "The Plays of Eugene O'Neill as Presented by the Theatre Guild," although never published, stands as one of the most important historical accounts of that phase of the playwright's career. Professor Arbenz stayed on and joined the faculty at Illinois and taught a variety of courses in Speech and Theatre until her retirement. Now, at the age of eighty-one, she travels widely, attends the theatre, and generally leads a very busy life.

A modest and rather private woman, Professor Arbenz graciously agreed to share with me, in July of 1986, some of her memories of Mourning Becomes Electra. While the interview yielded no earth-shattering revelations, her unique perspective on the work and personalities of Alla Nazimova, Alice Brady, Philip Moeller, and O'Neill himself brings us into close contact with the actual experience. It is a contact which is becoming, at this late date, very rare indeed.

---Jeffrey Sands

JS. After graduating from Smith College, did you go straight to New York City?

MA. I went to New York, and the Theatre Guild, of course, was very important in those days. I met a woman from Smith College--I didn't really know her, since she was in a class somewhat ahead of me--who was recruiting for the Guild, and she saw to it that I was hired as an extra and understudy and those kinds of things.

JS. You had an initial audition with the Guild?

MA. No. As a matter of fact, I didn't really audition when I got the part in Mourning Becomes Electra, either. I just read a little bit from the script.

JS. Who was present at that reading?

MA. Just the director, Philip Moeller. He liked the way I read, and I replaced another actress who wasn't doing very well with the role.

JS. So rehearsals had already begun by the time you came on board?

MA. Oh, yes. I had only three weeks. Rehearsals were more than half over.

JS. That must have been difficult. It would have been trying enough to have started from the beginning with O'Neill and these famous actors, but to come in halfway through! Were you frightened?

MA. No, it wasn't frightening at all. Everyone was helpful. Also, I felt that I understood the role. I could be sympathetic to the characters who needed that sympathy--Nazimova's character, Christine, especially. So it wasn't difficult at all.

JS. Getting back to your reading for the role of Hazel. Was O'Neill present?

MA. No, just Moeller. I didn't have to wait long to hear from the Guild. I may have waited one day, but I don't think so. I think he just told me to report to rehearsals. Of course, I was delighted. I didn't know at the time exactly what the role was, though. I had read only a few pages.

JS. It wasn't as though you could stop by the bookstore and pick up a copy of the play.

MA. No, certainly not. It hadn't been published. Nobody really knew what it was.

JS. I seem to recall that the details of the play were a rather tightly held secret.

MA. They were. There was always the problem of the length, with a dinner break and all. They weren't sure whether the play would draw audiences the way Strange Interlude had done, and I recall that O'Neill and Moeller and the rest of them were a little bit worried about the reception. We did very well, though. The show opened in late October, and I think it went on until April or May. Then we played on tour in a few cities.

JS. This was with the original cast? I know that, later, a new cast was assembled for an extended tour.

MA. The original cast, yes. We went to Philadelphia and Washington. Then maybe one other city. I don't quite remember. But I DO remember Alice Brady and one of the things she used to do [laughs]. It was very hot, and of course the theatres didn't have air conditioning. She would open her dress backstage--we wore those heavy clothes that had been designed for the show--and she would open the top. And here were these bosoms all hanging out! It didn't make any difference who was there, who was coming in from the outside to visit with her.

She was very nice to work with. I remember one night--it was the scene where Lavinia and Orin are returning from their trip and my character was supposed to open up the house and get things ready for them. One night, for some reason, I got a feeling of fear about the house. I, myself, but also as the character. So I stopped, and then pulled myself together to open the door and enter. And this pause drew a laugh from the audience. I didn't intend for it to be funny and I don't know

why they laughed, but they did. Well, Brady was in the wings, talking as usual. She would always stand there and talk about everything under the shining sun with the stage hands and the assistant stage manager, and anyone else who happened to be there. Never had her mind on the role. But then she would come on to the stage--wham! Right in the middle of all this talk, with the complete characterization. The point is, she was right there in the wings when I got this laugh, and it bothered her. She didn't think it was appropriate. She got Moeller to come to a performance one evening, and afterward he said that he didn't think there was anything wrong with my character's reaction, that he kind of liked it, and that I should leave it in.

JS. How did it feel to be a part of the production? After all, it was 1931, and here was O'Neill, the Guild, these fine actors and actresses--really the center of the American theatre at the time. Did you have a sense of the historic aspect to the occasion?

MA. I didn't have much time to think about it. Maybe if I had come in at the beginning of rehearsals. But, as it was, I had my hands full. I had to learn the role, attend rehearsals. And we rehearsed! We started at ten-thirty or eleven in the morning and would go all day, and then work all evening. I don't mean that I was always called, but almost always. Because by this time they were having run-throughs. We had only three weeks left, and no tryouts. The show opened cold in New York.

JS. You had said that Nazimova spent some time trying to give you directions about how to play your scenes with her. Was that because you had come late into the rehearsals?

MA. I never knew why. She was the only one who did this. Maybe it was because--you see, she would play the role differently every night. She would be scared some nights. On others, she would be haunted, in a different way. Not scared of the situation, but fate. Or, at other times, she would be despondent. I would have to adjust my reactions to her. I don't know, in rehearsals, if she felt I was imitating her tone--in the sense that, if she was fearful, I would play Hazel that way--or just what. But Moeller came back to rehearsals--he had been gone for some reason--and I don't know if someone said something to him or if he just didn't like what he saw, but he must have spoken to Nazimova, because she stopped fussing. After that there were no more suggestions [laughs].

JS. Was she good about taking direction herself?

MA. As far as I knew. But the leading actors always left the stage and went down into the auditorium to discuss things with the director and O'Neill. But Moeller was very relaxed in his direction. He was very easygoing with his actors. If he didn't like what they were doing, he said so. But ordinarily he let them work it out for themselves.

JS. And O'Neill? He was there most of the time?

MA. Yes. Did I mention that you could always feel his presence? It was most interesting.

JS. How so?

MA. I don't know. He would come in and you wouldn't necessarily even see him, because you were busy. But you would always feel his presence somehow. At least I would.

JS. You also mentioned that one time he came and sat beside you on the stage after a rehearsal, and that he didn't say a word.

MA. Not a word! [laughs] But I don't think he would have sat beside me if he didn't like what I was doing. I think it was his way of telling me that he liked it.

JS. Then he just got up and left?

MA. No, I think what happened was that his wife came over to us and--THEREFORE--he then got up and left.

JS. Did O'Neill sit near the director during rehearsals?

MA. Very rarely. Mostly he sat in the back of the house. Sometimes on the side. Only when they had these consultations did they sit together.

JS. You were also the understudy for Margalo Gillmore, in the role of Princess Kukachin in Marco Millions. Did you ever get the chance to play the role?

MA. No, but I did play that role in the opening scene when the slaves pull her dead body across the stage. She let me do that! [laughs] There was a long time, you see, between that opening scene and her next entrance--almost half the play. She didn't like arriving early and then having to wait this long time before she went out again. I wore a wig, of course. Nobody would have been able to tell by looking at me that it was another actress. And the tone of the speech she has to deliver is so ethereal--beyond the grave--that they couldn't tell by listening.

JS. I don't suppose that your performance was acknowledged in the program, that Mary Arbenz played "The Corpse."

MA. [laughs]

JS. Getting back to Mourning Becomes Electra. Brooks Atkinson had some very nice things to say about your performance as Hazel. As I recall the review, you were the only member of the supporting cast that he mentioned by name.

MA. Yes, that was very nice. But the woman who replaced me in the touring company--one of the critics--I can't remember which one, but it was for one of the New York papers--said he liked her in the role better than he liked me. I don't remember who it was, but it wasn't Brooks Atkinson.

JS. Well, I would go with Atkinson.

MA. So would I!

COUNTDOWN TO CENTENNIAL: REPORTS OF MEETINGS WEST AND EAST

[As we approach the centennial of O'Neill's birth on Sunday, October 16, 1988, many plans are being formulated to see that America's greatest dramatist gets a celebration commensurate with his genius. As the news items in this issue will reveal, the plans are many and extremely varied. And not just in the playwright's homeland but around the world: 1988 O'Neill productions and conferences are already scheduled in Belgium, Japan, Sweden and the People's Republic of China. The problem confronting the various celebrants is some way of coordinating their efforts to avoid unnecessary duplication, unfortunate scheduling, and gaps in communication. What follows are the reports of two conferences that sought, last fall, to pool ideas and achieve some degree of coordination among them. The first, at Tao House on September 20, was chaired by Travis Bogard. The second, at Monte Cristo College, was directed by George C. White. Both reports suggest the enthusiasm that is growing as the centennial nears, and the obstacles that must be

met and overcome. It is hoped that reading them will inspire many other individuals and organizations to join in future planning. For further information, contact George White at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, 305 Great Neck Road, Waterford, CT (tel. 203-443-5378), or Travis Bogard, Department of Dramatic Art, University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720 (tel. 415-642-1677). --Ed.]

I. The Tao House Conference, 9/20/86.

After a tour of Tao House, Chairman Bogard thanked the L.C. Scaggs and Mary Scaggs Foundation for its generous grant which made the conference possible, and the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House for additional funding and logistical support. He also acknowledged the assistance of the National Park Service in readying the conference rooms. He stressed that the meeting was "agenda-less" with open discussion, centering on the ways that West Coast professional theatres might celebrate Eugene O'Neill during the centennial year of his birth on October 16, 1888. The following matters were raised for discussion throughout the day.

1. Eric Bauersfeld, of Bay Area Radio Drama in Berkeley, set forth the project he heads to record on audiotapes for radio and individual use all the plays of Eugene O'Neill. The project has been developed with José Quintero, who will direct the plays; Travis Bogard, who will serve as artistic director; and Randy Thom of Lucasfilm, who will design and record the sound. Funding sufficient to complete the initial planning, submit major grant requests and record the voice track but not complete the final production of the "S.S. Glencairn" series has been received.

2. Discussion centered next on what appear to be exorbitant royalties and sharply restricted release privileges set by the William Morris Agency, which controls professional rights to the O'Neill corpus. If a professional New York production of a major play means that it cannot be presented in another remote area, the restriction will make a fitting celebration of O'Neill all but impossible in the country at large. George White offered to take the matter in hand and consult with the lawyers of the O'Neill estate, the Yale Committee and the Morris Agency, and will report back to the group on his findings. Travis Bogard will accompany White on his initial visit to the controlling persons.

3. The possibility of developing conferences within regions on the West Coast was raised by Elizabeth Huddle of the Intiman Theatre in Seattle, who felt it would be profitable to discuss the question of O'Neill presentations with theatre managers in the Seattle region.

4. It was decided that for the West Coast, the O'Neill centennial year would run from July 1987 to the end of the season in 1988. But see the next item.

5. George White, President of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, mentioned a plan developed on the East Coast whereby, within a region, the resident theatres and schools would undertake to present all of O'Neill's plays as concert readings in a period close to the birthday, October 16. The idea was received with interest, but it was felt that one person should serve as the center of a network to coordinate such an event. Mary Henderson, former curator of the Theatre Collection of the Museum of the City of New York, might be available if funding could be found to provide her with a salary.

6. Bogard described the uncertain future of the major exhibit planned for opening in 1987, concerned with O'Neill and his times. Turned down for funding by NEH, the application has been re-submitted.

7. John Schwab and Jerry Turner, of Seattle's Empty Space Theatre and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival respectively, taking into account the considerations of funding and rights, spoke forcibly about the importance of the celebration. Turner said that what the group was discussing was more than a "theatrical" event. It was one which had

"national" importance. O'Neill as an American artist was worthy of more than a superficial honoring. The stress on the American images created by O'Neill was repeated frequently. In this connection, Bogard suggested that O'Neill was not generally known in the middle western states, despite worthy productions of his plays by regional theatres.

8. There was a general discussion of ways in which the West Coast O'Neill year could be publicized. Although it was recognized that at this juncture no definite planning could be done, the following suggestions had consideration:

Public relations through such magazines as Sunset and the magazine sections of major newspapers.

Contact to be established with Visitors Bureaus and Convention Centers.

Sharing productions.

Organizing tours from theatre to theatre.

Developing educational materials that will relate productions to school curricula; developing master classes with such persons as Jason Robards and Colleen Dewhurst for advanced theatre students; providing dramaturgical expertise for schools and for professional theatres that may request such services.

Using the present group as an informal "collective" to work on fund-raising projects together.

9. George White spoke of a conference similar to this one which he has organized for October 9 at Monte Cristo Cottage in New London. The need of organizing a similar conference in the mid-west--perhaps through the Goodman Theatre in Chicago--was suggested.

10. Representatives of the theatres present described such plans as they have already formulated to present O'Neill works in 1987-8:

Mark Taper Forum, Los Angeles:

A Moon for the Misbegotten in 1987 -- to be taken to Japan.

To develop symposia and workshops to help educate the Los Angeles community about the playwright.

To serve as a networking center of scholars and performers.

Intiman Theatre, Seattle:

To present Long Day's Journey Into Night and A Moon for the Misbegotten.

To develop cooperative projects in the Seattle area, such as a production by three theatres, each doing one play of the trilogy, Mourning Becomes Electra.

Los Angeles Theatreworks:

No production plans as yet, but desirous of developing educational programs to enhance school curricula.

La Jolla Playhouse:

Plans not yet formulated. Interested in less well-known plays.

Berkeley Repertory Theatre:

To produce Long Day's Journey Into Night and Ah, Wilderness! in repertory. Considering also The Hairy Ape.

Jason Robards and José Quintero:

A production of Ah, Wilderness! with Colleen Dewhurst for New York City and subsequent tour; and participation in the celebration planned by the Theater

Committee for Eugene O'Neill on the birthday in 1988.

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center:

Expect to receive \$100,000 from the Connecticut State Legislature to support a variety of projects during the centennial, including the reading of the canon, an exhibition, and the installation of a statue of the boy O'Neill on a rock at the mouth of the Thames River, near Monte Cristo Cottage.

Eugene O'Neill Theatre Festival, Los Angeles:

Regularly producing O'Neill in repertory. Hughie and A Touch of the Poet available for touring.

One-Act Theatre Company, San Francisco:

To produce a play based on the short story Tomorrow, and to stage the one-act sea plays, S.S. Glencairn.

Civic Arts Repertory (Walnut Creek, CA):

A Touch of the Poet, Diff'rent, and James O'Neill's Monte Cristo; and the development of O'Neill-related educational activities throughout Contra Costa County.

Empty Space Theatre, Seattle:

Hughie paired with another short play.

CitiArts (Concord, CA):

Days Without End and some of the sea plays.

Diablo Valley College:

Participate in the readings of the canon; productions of The Emperor Jones and possibly Take Me Along, the musical version of Ah, Wilderness!

American Conservatory Theatre, San Francisco:

Strange Interlude, The Iceman Cometh, and if there is a second stage developed some short plays to aid in their out-reach program.

Oregon Shakespeare Festival:

The Iceman Cometh, Ah, Wilderness!, Long Day's Journey Into Night, and A Moon for the Misbegotten all under consideration.

The development of an American season of O'Neill and his contemporaries, plus programs of O'Neill scenes on "dark" nights to bring in young audiences.

II. The Conference at Monte Cristo Cottage, 10/9/86.

I. Plans and Funding.

George White began the day with a summary of the September 20th Conference at Tao House. He opened discussion of the need for a committee for the Centennial year, October 16, 1987 - October 16, 1988. It was decided that there should be a National Eugene O'Neill Centennial Committee with an Executive Director whose job it is to coordinate committee plans, to "traffic cop," and to serve as a "central clearing house"--includes knowing who has O'Neill on film (and where), making information available to community theaters and high schools among others. Also, the committee is to serve as a clearing house for grant applications to avoid duplication and overlapping. There is a need for seed money for salaries, office space, and mailings.

Funding for the Centennial year should come from such sources as: The National Endowment for the Arts and The National Endowment for the Humanities. George White plans to ask

the Connecticut State Legislature for a \$250,000 appropriation for a Eugene O'Neill Centennial Fund which would be allocated for projects, programs and productions throughout the state. (Realistically it was thought that an appropriation of \$100,000 might be granted.) Also to be approached are the Connecticut Humanities Council and the Connecticut Commission on the Arts. Corporations to be contacted include: American Express, Pepsi Cola, Hitachi. Foundations to be contacted include: Mellon, Billy Rose, Shubert.

II. Professional Rights.

There was an indepth discussion of royalties and restricted release privileges. Yale University has transferred the administration of rights to the O'Neill plays that it controls to the William Morris Agency in New York City. The Agency has been demanding unrealistically large fees for productions. Yale University, Oona O'Neill Chaplin, and the Estate of Shane O'Neill are to be asked to consider setting realistic guidelines for royalties and rights. Cadwalader, Wickersham and Taft, lawyers for the O'Neill Estate, and Yale University have been approached and seem supportive of the idea of establishing special guidelines for the Centennial year. George White and Lloyd Richards will continue the dialogue with Yale University and the Estate.

III. Plans of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center and Connecticut College.

The Eugene O'Neill Theater Center has commissioned a bronze statue of Eugene O'Neill sitting on the rocks near the Thames River sketching (based on an 1893 photograph). The statue is to be placed somewhere on the New London waterfront. The unveiling is to be on October 16th, 1988, with a New London celebration.

Collaborations III - Connecticut College with the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center and the United States Coast Guard Academy. Linda Herr director, chairperson of Connecticut College Theater Department. Collaborations III plans include: performances by college theater departments, community players, readings at the Monte Cristo Cottage, combined exhibition with Monte Cristo Cottage and Palmer Library, lecture series by scholars from Connecticut College and guest lecturers; dance department planning an experimental piece based on O'Neill's Ancient Mariner. Also demonstrations to coincide with the dance film Emperor Jones, and a possible program with the José Limon Company doing its Emperor Jones. The Collaboration would like to sponsor, as well, the world premiere of Desire Under the Elms, which was first workshopped at the Eugene O'Neill Center's Opera Music Conference.

IV. Plans of Regional Theaters and Scholars.

Jason Robards. Colleen Dewhurst, José Quintero to tour with Ah, Wilderness throughout the Centennial year.

Hartman Theater (Stamford, CT)--considering The Hairy Ape; also humanist lecture series to supplement the production.

Yale Repertory Theater--interested in joint subscription series on O'Neill; i.e., for an additional fee a subscriber could see another O'Neill play at another regional theater. Or possible special subscription series to all O'Neill plays being produced in one region.

Hartford (CT) Stage--possibly Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, Ah, Wilderness!, or the Robards production of Ah, Wilderness!--interested in ancillary projects involving area scholars.

Portland (ME) Stage--Long Days Journey Into Night in February 1987 with accompanying humanities scholar series. May consider another O'Neill play for 1988.

O'Neill scholars to provide background materials for productions, also panels to speak on the productions, provide dramaturgs for certain theatrical productions.

O'Neill Centennial Exhibition--grant submitted to the National Endowment for the Humanities and turned down. To be resubmitted by Mary Henderson, Curator/Coordinator, December 1986. Exhibit to be designed by Robin Wagner with a guide for teachers and a catalogue to be printed by Harry Abrams. Exhibition planning to travel to China, London, Austria, Sweden. Exhibition to use film clips, interviews, tapes, photo stills. To be visually "stunning" and appeal to a younger audience. Budgeted at \$300,000.

International Festival, Lincoln Center and other New York sites. Plans to include the O'Neill Centennial Exhibition and the Jason Robards production of Ah Wilderness! The festival will have dance and concert components of which the O'Neill Centennial plans are a part.

THE EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY SECTION

I. Minutes of the Eighth Annual Meeting.

The Eighth Annual Meeting of the Eugene O'Neill Society was held at 12:00 noon, December 30, 1986, in the Gotham Room of the Marriott Marquis Hotel in New York City. President Fred Wilkins presided. The minutes of the Seventh Annual Meeting were approved as distributed in the Spring 1986 Newsletter (pp. 37-39). Reports from the Secretary and Treasurer were presented and accepted. (See Sections II and III below.)

Fred Wilkins reported on actions of the Board of Directors. (1) He will write a New Year's letter to Virginia Floyd expressing regrets at her resignation as Treasurer and offering her a permanent honorary membership on the Board of Directors. (2) Jordan Miller will remain as Acting Treasurer until the next Society elections. (3) For an additional \$10 over and above Society annual dues and over and above joint membership in Tao House, Society members may become Friends of Monte Cristo Cottage. He reminded attenders that taking the joint membership is one-way: i.e., there is as yet no reduced rate on Society membership for Tao House members or Friends of the Cottage.

1988 Centennial Plans. Fred Wilkins will lead the Special Session in New Orleans. No definite subject except "Centenary Essays on Eugene O'Neill" has been chosen. Mention was made of the possibility of a special double session with the MLA Drama Division in order to operate within the existing MLA rules for number of permitted sections.

The Society has received various requests for financial assistance in Centennial activities. It will entertain such requests, but contributions will have to remain small. The Society will contribute to organizations and individuals planning centennial projects in amounts of \$50 to \$100 with the approval of the President and Secretary.

Marc Maufort announced plans of the Belgian American Studies Association to devote its 1988 annual conference (May 20-22) to O'Neill. Because O'Neill is not especially well-known in Belgium, this is a good opportunity to increase the awareness. The conference will include a series of lectures by American and European scholars, and there is a possibility that some scenes from O'Neill will be presented in French and Dutch.

Ouyang Ji from Shandong University, People's Republic of China, reported on the popularity of O'Neill in China. A center for the study of O'Neill was established in China in 1985, and presently has more than 40 professors and students from around the country in its membership. There will be a meeting presenting papers about O'Neill in Beijing on February 20-23, 1987. 37 O'Neill plays are being translated into Chinese and will be published in four volumes, possibly by 1988. Desire Under the Elms was presented during the last year in four cities including Shanghai and Shandong. Beyond the Horizon

and Marco Millions will be done in the near future. Professor Ji extended a welcome to all members to the China center.

Gene Hanson reported on O'Neill activities on the West Coast. The O'Neill Theater Festival mounted its first productions at the Melrose Theatre in Hollywood last year, opening on O'Neill's birthday (October 16, which Mayor Tom Bradley declared Eugene O'Neill Day in Los Angeles) with a production of A Touch of the Poet, followed by a double-bill of Before Breakfast and Hughie. They ran in repertory until the 8th of December. The Festival is the brainchild of Society members Tom McDermott and Stan and Judith Weston. It is planned as an annual festival in the Hollywood area. The initial productions were an artistic success--critically acclaimed but weak at the box office. But it was a fine first step that bodes well for the future. They are doing school performances and hope to come to the 1987 Annual Meeting in San Francisco this December.

The next item of business was the formal presentation for adoption of the amendment to the by-laws given tentative approval at the 1985 meeting in Chicago:

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 (All further portions of this section remain as before in the by-laws.)

The amendment was unanimously approved. Normand Berlin moved that Haiping Liu, current Acting International Secretary for the Orient, be made permanent. So voted.

Normand Berlin announced a series of productions of O'Neill plays at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst beginning on October 16, 1988, the centennial of the playwright's birth.

Paul Shyre, who wrote the O'Neill film Eugene O'Neill - A Glory of Ghosts, was introduced to his fellow members, whose applause expressed their congratulations for the success of his project. Jordan Pecile announced that the film on which he has been working, concerning O'Neill's early life at the Hell Hole and elsewhere, will be put into production this coming spring, and it is hoped that it will be available in 1988. It is in the form of "reality theatre" with actors portraying the various characters in O'Neill's life between 1904 and 1920. Calvin Skaggs is the producer.

The editor of Studies in American Drama, 1945-Present is looking for manuscripts. Desired are careful, documented studies of the influence of O'Neill on subsequent American playwrights. Anyone interested should write to the editor, Philip C. Kolin, or contact Fred Wilkins. The Society was also reminded that UMI Research Press is doing a series of O'Neill monographs and welcomes submissions, especially those of monograph length.

It was announced that on Friday, April 3, 1987, at the Northeast Modern Language Association Convention in Boston, there will be a session on "Games People Play: Family Relationships in O'Neill's Plays." The speakers, all Society members, will be Paul Voelker, Bette Mandl, Marc Maufort and Stephen Black. Fred Wilkins will chair the session.

Sally Pavetti reported on some of the accomplishments of the October meeting at Monte Cristo Cottage under the leadership of George White, President of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, CT. George was unable to attend today's meeting, but had hoped to do so. Plans are under way for a coordinating committee to keep tabs on what is going on during the O'Neill Centennial. Mary Henderson has resubmitted her proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities for funding for a centennial exhibit. It is a major undertaking, but results of the resubmission are presently unknown. It is hoped

that the entire canon will be presented in actual productions or readings in Connecticut during the centennial year, with participating groups from the area, particularly Connecticut College and the Coast Guard Academy, both in the New London area. George White will be part of the Lincoln Center International Festival in New York, which will involve more than just O'Neill, but O'Neill will be an important part of it in 1988. Sally also announced plans for an O'Neill Centennial Medal, something along the lines of the Franklin Mint sort of thing, and all Society members will be informed later. There will also be a dedication of the one-and-one-half life-size statue of young O'Neill at the shore in New London on the centennial of O'Neill's birth, October 16, 1988.

Jackson Bryer reported on the reluctance of theatre professionals to do O'Neill plays, something that was revealed at the October meeting in New London. One way of addressing the problem, and of increasing public awareness of and interest in O'Neill, is to seek cooperative ventures by groups of theatres near to each other. If each agreed to do a different O'Neill play in 1988, they could arrange a multi-theatre package deal for their subscribers. In that way, a subscriber to one of the theatres could, for an additional payment, attend three, four, or more O'Neill productions in the course of the year. Each theatre's O'Neill houses would be fuller, and the O'Neill cause in general would be aided immeasurably.

Jackson was asked about the proposed Centennial volume. He responded that several people have sent in ideas and manuscripts and work will be undertaken soon. It is hoped that articles can be of a scholarly nature as well as from the viewpoint of theatre practice. Fred Wilkins expressed interest in the possibility of some sort of Society-sponsored booklet that would contain a biographical sketch, brief summaries of all the plays in the canon, illustrations from productions, and a reading list. He also reported that two publishers are interested in the volume of selected essays from the two Boston O'Neill conferences. He is currently working with Yvonne Shafer to assemble the volume.

Allan Wood of the American Society for Theatre Research will be presenting O'Neill material at the ASTR meetings in Columbus, OH. Interested individuals should contact him, although O'Neill will not be the only emphasis.

The question was raised about how various theatre groups throughout the country could be encouraged to do O'Neill plays during the Centennial. Suggestion was made that Society money could be devoted to this good cause. Modern Drama and Theatre Survey both plan 1988 issues devoted to O'Neill.

Gene Hanson inquired as to whether the Newsletter might consider another name. Fred replied that changes in format and title have been under discussion. Perhaps it is something to think about for 1988, but the Newsletter will probably remain as at present for another year.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jordan Y. Miller, Secretary.

II. Secretary's Report for 1986.

The Society closed the 1986 year with 180 members, a net gain of 32 or about 20% over the 1985 membership. In the seven years of our existence we have gained 118% over our initial charter membership of 82. Renewal rate was exceptionally high; we lost only 9 members from 1985. With ten foreign countries represented, our international reputation, particularly in the Orient, where we are establishing a second International Secretary, continues to grow, and Japan has contributed our first lifetime member. We have had an inquiry from a theatre group in Costa Rica named for O'Neill expressing eagerness to join.

During 1986 29 members chose the joint membership with Tao House. So far, 18 members who have sent in 1987 renewals have taken joint membership.

The Secretary frequently receives inquiries about O'Neill's life and works, including verification of quotations. The most startling inquiry came from the White House, asking about an O'Neill statement on tragedy and life for possible inclusion in a Presidential speech. With the quick aid of Virginia Floyd the statement, quoted by Doris Falk in her Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension (pp. 112-113), was located and telephoned back within minutes--but so far no further word as to its ultimate fate.

For the first time, the Society placed advertisements in two major publications: three appeared in The Chronicle of Higher Education, from which at least three inquiries have already resulted; and two will appear, one in spring and one in summer 1987, in The Drama Review.

The Society supported the highly successful Boston conference on O'Neill's later years at Suffolk University in late May with cash and high membership attendance and participation.

We continue in good shape, constantly growing, financially sound. It would be nice to reach 200 members in 1987.

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Y. Miller, Secretary.

III. Financial Report, 1/1/86-12/31/86.

DEBIT		CREDIT	
Publication - <u>E. O. Newsletter</u>	\$1,710.00	Balance Savings 1/1/86	\$3,877.84
Suffolk Univ. O'Neill Conference	2,200.00	Balance Checking 1/1/86	634.81
Filing Fee for Non-profit Corp.	10.00	Dues payments 1986	3,840.00
Secretary for expenses	200.00	Late 86 dues, 1987 dues	
Disbursement: Tao House dues	290.00	+ misc. income	1,407.56
Printing and Advertising	600.75	Interest	197.74
Office expenses (stamps, secretary)	164.90		
	<u>\$5,175.65</u>		
Balance Savings 12/31/86	3,775.58		
Balance Checking 12/31/86	1,006.72		
	<u>\$9,957.95</u>		<u>\$9,957.95</u>

Respectfully submitted by Jordan Y. Miller, Acting Treasurer

IV. Looking Ahead.

Jordan Miller will chair the special session on O'Neill at the 1987 Modern Language Association Convention in San Francisco at the end of December. The subject is "Eugene O'Neill and the Orient," and the speakers are expected to include Frederic I. Carpenter, Ouyang Ji, Frank R. Cunningham, James A. Robinson and Normand Berlin. In addition to that session and the Ninth Annual Meeting, whose dates and times should be available by the next issue of the Newsletter, there will be a special, members-only visit to Tao House, hosted by Travis Bogard and the members of the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao

House. Members who joined in the last visit will attest that the word "special" is truly appropriate, and much additional renovation has gone on in the intervening years. The chance to tour the birthplace of O'Neill's late masterworks is sufficient reason alone to join the Society in 1987--or to rejoin if you haven't done so already.

At the following MLA Convention, to be held in New Orleans in late December 1988, the O'Neill session subject--if it can be called that--will be "Centenary Essays on Eugene O'Neill." Its chair, Fred Wilkins, welcomes suggestions for a happier title--something that smacks as much of the celebratory as the cerebral--and hopes that the program will be fairly evenly divided between scholarly and theatrical emphases. If pressed, he would confess an eagerness to solicit the work of "new voices" in O'Neill studies; but naturally all submissions and suggestions will be greeted with equal cordiality. --FCW.

REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

1. DEN LUDNA GORILLAN (THE HAIRY APE), directed by Peter Oscarson. Folkteatern (The People's Theatre), Gävle, Sweden. Opened on November 15, 1986.

It was a significant tribute to O'Neill's early, more experimental drama when Den Ludna Gorillan (The Hairy Ape) premiered at the radical People's Theatre in Gävle, a city north of Stockholm, on Saturday, November 15, 1986. This was the first presentation of the play in the Scandinavian countries. After its premiere in New York at the Playwright's Theatre on March 9, 1922, it was produced in a number of capitals all over Europe, but never in Scandinavia. (Sweden had its first taste of O'Neill when the Royal Dramatic in Stockholm opened a production of Anna Christie on October 25, 1923, followed six weeks later by a production of the same play in Helsingborg in the south of Sweden.)

The director of The Hairy Ape, Peter Oscarson, and his set designer, Peter Holm, fenced the audience off in the amphitheatre with a grating, symbolizing the steel of the ocean liner, the fence around Central Park on New York's Fifth Avenue, the bars of the prison, and the cages in the zoo. The effective set, impressively lighted, added much to the production. The stage was divided between a background acting area and a platform that jutted into the audience, and a similar fence-like grating was provided for spectators in the balcony.

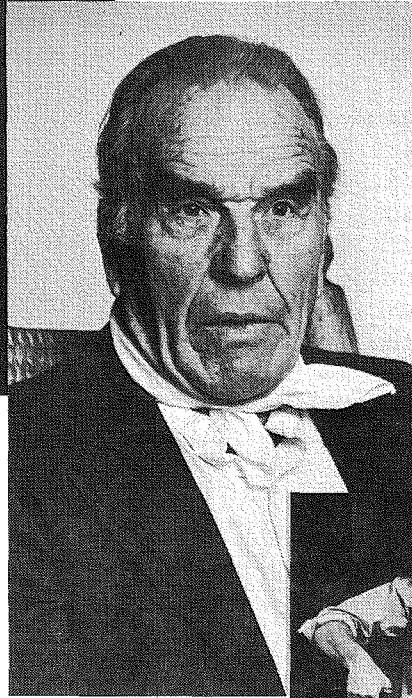
The play opened in the firemen's forecabin on the platform. The naked torsos of the stokers were greasy and sweaty, and they were all drinking and shouting. Out of this collective group of humanity three individual characters emerged: Yank, the slow thinker, who envisions a future of steel and steam; Paddy, the Irishman, with poetry on his tongue and memories of the old clippers; and Long, O'Neill's anti-capitalist, class-conscious spokesman. An intermission followed the scenes on the liner (1-4), and both the instructions and the intent of the playwright were effectively realized throughout. Particularly effective was the emphasis on Yank's separateness from a variety of collectives--the other stokers; the Fifth Avenue millionaires, who pass him by on a revolving floor; the other prisoners, who respond to his attempt to "belong" with scornful laughter; the I.W.W. members, who oust him as a provocateur; and finally the apes in the zoo.

Yank was effectively played by Rolf Lassgård (in the front of the accompanying photograph), who made agonizingly clear the desperation in Yank's repeated attempts to belong somewhere. Peter Haber had the true touch of the poet as Paddy, providing a vivid contrast to Yank, as did Ole Ränge as Long, whose ego was well anchored to the ideas and ideals of Marx. Anne-Li Norberg and Pia Arnell caught to the full the heartlessness of Mildred and her aunt, and the various group-collectives were skillfully choreographed and trained by the director. One example of that skill was the stylized ballet of Scene Three, as the stokers shoveled coal into the engines.

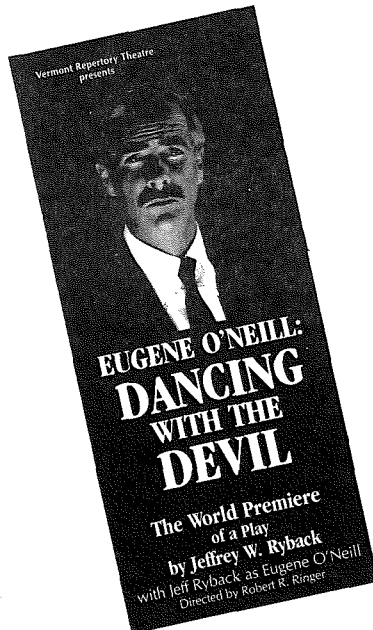
VIEWS OF THE REVIEWED--



Mary (Helen Stenborg) fends off the solicitations of Edmund (Paul McCrane) in the PSC Long Day's Journey. Photo: Stephen Nichols.



Ford Rainey waxes introspective as James Tyrone ("What the hell was it I wanted to buy, I wonder, that was worth--") in the Portland Stage Company production of Long Day's Journey. (Photo: Stephen Nichols.)



Flyer for the subsequent Vermont production of the play whose NYC mounting is co-reviewed herein.



Jamie (W. T. Martin) pours an appetite-enhancing pre-dinner tonic for his consumptive kid brother Edmund (Paul McCrane) in the Portland Stage production of Long Day's Journey. (Nichols photo.)



Yank (Rolf Lassgård, in foreground) and his fellow stokers in the production of The Hairy Ape at the Folkteatern, Gävle, Sweden, in 1986. Photo by David Skoog.

The whole production was full of vitality, with living personalities in the solid collective contrasted with the lonesome Yank, who belongs nowhere. It was, on the whole, a victory for the People's Theatre, its ensemble, and the director.

The program contained a number of hints suggesting Dante's Divine Comedy, but here everything starts in Paradiso, goes to the Inferno, and ends in some sort of Marxian Purgatorio, typical of Peter Oscarson's view of life. Featured in the program were a number of woodcuts of proletarian life by Frans Masereel. What was missing was something about O'Neill himself--his life, his work, and the impetus behind and history of the play being presented. The program answered no such questions, which was unfortunate for the first Swedish production of The Hairy Ape.

However, the production itself was something to admire. By coincidence, the same play also opened a week earlier at Schaubühne in West Berlin, directed by Peter Stein. There the set design was more spectacular, but the performance lacked the poetical magic of the Swedish production.

--Tom J. A. Olsson

2. LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, directed by Barbara Rosoff. Portland Stage Company, Portland, Maine, February 7 - March 1, 1987.

How gratifying, particularly after the recent Broadway speed-reading of the play, to see a sensitive, unrushed, full-length performance of Long Day's Journey--one that was faithful to the author's intentions and revealed all the strands of the complex web that holds the Tyrone family together in its bittersweet dance of love and hate. Barbara Rosoff, Artistic Director of the Portland Stage Company, provided a touching and gimmick-free reading that went at least partway toward supporting her contention in the PSC newsletter, Prelude, that that particular day marks a turning point in the Tyrones' lives; that the instances of forgiveness wrought by self-revelation justify the belief that "the Tyrones will never again inflict the same kind of pain on each other."

One must note that, of the four, only Edmund, for all his consumption, has a chance for full recovery. James will never escape his parsimony and artistic failure; nor Mary her religious guilts, nostalgic illusions and morphine; nor Jamie his acidic self-loathing and alcoholism. O'Neill was too true a determinist, and knew the family too well (having been a part of its real-life model) to offer many hopes untinged with hopelessness. But Ms. Rosoff may be right; even without melodramatic transformations, it is possible that the combatants' talons may be less brutally wielded next time. I certainly prefer her view to that of Jonathan Miller, who said that the day of the play is just one of an endless string of such days--past and future--and that, since no one listens to anyone else and no advance at all is effected, why not have everybody speak at once!

The set, by Arden Fingerhut (who also designed the lighting), made effective use of the PSC's high, wide but shallow stage: a busy, rich mélange of colors and textures--woods, wool and wicker. There were two entrances at the audience's left (to the dining room and the front hall-with-staircase) and a third upstage-center (onto a porch that extended the length of the room's lace-curtained windows). Effective use was made by the director of both porch and windows. Two glass-fronted bookcases, oriental area rugs over a shiny mahogany floor: in general, a very faithful response to O'Neill's instructions. Just one touch defied the realistic decor: we could see, not only the base of the staircase in the entrance hall, but its extension above the sitting room wall. So when Mary, for instance, climbed to the spare room, she seemed, in effect, to be ascending above the house. An effective reminder that we were facing a theatre stage, not a New London cottage. The costumes, by Susan Tsu, were faithful to period and character. Particularly fine were Mary's floor-length, lace-trimmed summer dress in the first two acts, and James's scarlet robe and pince-nez in the

fourth. Fingerhut, Tsu, and composer Louis Rosen (who provided an unobtrusive score for flute and piano) aided immeasurably in creating a memorable evening.

Of course any production of Long Day's Journey stands or falls on the basis of its actors, who, along with the director, tip the seesaw of guilt and innocence, and of audience sympathy, this way or that. And the PSC's cast was fully capable of the assignment, especially the older generation.

Helen Stenborg was the bitterest Mary I have ever seen. (I missed the Geraldine Fitzgerald performance, which, according to reports, may have been its equal in that area.) Oh, there were moments when Stenborg's Mary aroused our sympathy: she seemed sincerely, even fiercely protective of her "baby" whenever physicians or state farms were discussed; and at moments like the end of Act One, when she was seated alone at the central table, her left hand grasping the lace of her bodice, her right hand frantically kneading the tablecloth as the darkness enveloped her, she revealed an inner vulnerability that evoked abundant pity. But through the evening, as her roving eyes grew more and more roving, the most telling moments were the bitter ones--frequently a sudden shift from tearful candor to gelid façade, as the mask clicked back into place. This Mary, being the toughest, thickest-skinned battler of the four, and seeming quite content with her lot, ultimately earned less pity than any of her three men.

Ford Rainey, true to the nice-guy image nurtured in decades of work in television and regional theatre, was a nice-guy James, put upon by a wife and sons who had let him down all too often. Like Stenborg, he seemed a little old for his role, and his periodic stumbling around did little to suggest either parental authority or theatrical command (James's, that is). And he sometimes reached too hard for pity (ours, that is), especially in his scenes with Mary. But he had splendid vocal power and range, with just enough brogue to reveal James's origins; and in the last act, in the confession duo with Edmund, when declaring his love of Shakespeare and extending the "dreeeeams" in Prospero's line, we caught, for just a moment or two, the stance and voice of the towering, promising star James Tyrone once had been. Ford Rainey showed clearly why he is one of the best and most respected actors in the American theatre.

As the sons, Paul McCrane (Edmund) and W. T. Martin (Jamie) looked plausibly fraternal. Martin was too neatly clean-cut and proto-preppy for someone supposedly ravaged by intemperate consumption. He succeeded in conveying the aura of the Broadway sport, and was touching in his warmer moments (e.g., the "we're all so proud of you" scene with Mary in Act One); but he failed to catch the diabolic and self-laceratingly sardonic sides of Jamie's character, so his fourth-act monologue had no visceral impact. Paul McCrane shared with Martin a tendency to shout too loud at accusatory moments (usually followed, on McCrane's part, by brooding stares at the floor). But he demonstrated again the extreme sensitivity to language and ideas that he had revealed as Don Parritt in last season's Iceman Cometh on Broadway. Edmund may be the most difficult role of the four to render believable, since his eccentricities are more of the mind than the body, and it's harder to "play" a mystic, intellectual and creative artist than a ham, an alcoholic or a dope fiend. But McCrane brought Edmund's words and feelings to palpable life, making his scene of shared confessions with his father in the last act the highlight of the evening.

Sarah Bedner, a PSC acting intern, completed the cast competently as an unobtrusive Cathleen, representative of that simpler world where the only threats are the hands of the chauffeur and the tongue of the cook, and in which snoring is a sign of sanity, fog is beneficial to the complexion, and drink is just "a good man's failing"! The Portland Stage Company deserves congratulations for providing its subscribers with a moving, faithful and virtually uncut production of O'Neill's masterwork.

--Frederick C. Wilkins

3. WAITING FOR TERRY. By curious if not mystical coincidence, Carlotta Monterey was not the only O'Neill haunting New York City's east side in the early months of 1987. (See the review of Barbara Gelb's My Gene earlier in this issue.) Eugene himself also materialized, in the person of Jeffrey W. Ryback, who performed his own one-man show, Eugene O'Neill: Dancing with the Devil, for nine performances (March 1-15) at the Church of Our Lady of the Scapular of Carmel, prior to its official "world premiere" (retitled Dancing with the Devil: Eugene O'Neill at the Golden Swan Cafe) at the Vermont Repertory Theatre in Winooski (March 20 - April 4), where it had previously won an award for playwriting. The director was Robert R. Ringer, and the New York tryout was sponsored by the American Ensemble Company. GARY VENA, who attended one of the New York performances, offers the following assessment. The editor, who took in the production as well, seconds his views and has added, in brackets, asides of his own.

The action takes place, according to a program note, in "the Golden Swan Cafe (better known as the 'Hell Hole') ... presumably 1915, Greenwich Village, New York City, but actually the time is beyond time in a place unknown to the living. Some would call it heaven, others hell." In an antiseptic microset suggesting an Iceman Cometh for one, O'Neill confronts us, his audience, with assurances that his friend Terry Carlin--"the man who would become my bright light," "the man most responsible for my success as a writer--he gave me a soul"--will be arriving shortly. While waiting in vain for a drinking companion who never does appear, O'Neill swats flies, sweeps a spotless floor, downs endless shots from a bottle of Glenlivet, and offers us a meticulous outline of the course of his life, with handy references to letters, news clippings and reviews collected in a shoe box that sits comfortably on an adjacent table. [Evidently the playwright is plagued by guilt because he had failed to attend a scheduled reunion with Carlin in Boston, December 1933, during the tryout of Days Without End at the Plymouth Theatre, and Carlin had died a few days later. A touching premise, but one that makes the program's "presumably 1915" especially troublesome.]

Ryback is an attractive and assured performer whose impersonation captures the suave, slightly preppy façade of the playwright. He has also assembled a generally accurate, although tedious, chronology of event upon event, the details of which occasionally move and entertain his listeners, such as the hype which surrounded the premiere of All God's Chillun or the press conference O'Neill held just before the opening of Iceman. For the most part, however, Ryback skates on the surface, rarely allowing his protagonist to dive into the deep and confront the devil of his play's title. [Nor, aside from the broomwork, is there any dancing, literal or figurative.] Even the briefest acquaintance with O'Neill's work, aside from his personal life, more than suggests the presence of a demon worth engaging. But Ryback's Beckettian premise of waiting--and existing--for an answer from outside should have resulted in a more powerful and convincing journey into self.

[This O'Neill seemed more often a guest lecturer than an obsessed wraith. Desire Under the Elms was "kind of a Greek tragedy." Dynamo was "a real dud." Mourning Becomes Electra "was to become one of my masterpieces." One expected more than such out-of-character phrases and, one after another, the exact dates of opening nights. Surely the spectral O'Neill would have deeper thoughts than Ryback's on such subjects as paternity ("I was never very good with kinds") and the divorce from Agnes Boulton ("Time inevitably destroys all things of beauty"). We sense the excitement of radical ideas in the Greenwich Village circa 1915--the "good old days" that Carlin symbolizes; and we sense the alienation O'Neill felt when he returned to Broadway with Iceman in 1946, after a twelve year hiatus. But there was little else beyond potted biography and a casualness of attitude best epitomized in the speaker's exit line at the end of the first act: "Well, nature calls. I'll be back in ten."]

Perhaps if Terry Carlin had kept his appointment, their boozy interaction would have led to certain truths which might transcend familiar biographical data that, in

the present context, provide limited dramatic appeal. [Bibliophiles may wish to know that the posthumous O'Neill makes use of the paperback editions of the Gelbs' biography and Long Day's Journey. He also sports an electronic watch that beeps on the hour.]

4. WILLIAM BREVDA, HARRY KEMP, THE LAST BOHEMIAN. Cranbury, NJ: Bucknell University Press, 1986. 278 pp. \$37.50, cloth. ISBN 0-8387-5086-9.

Like driftwood or cork at sea, Harry Kemp, boxcar poet, "tramp" autobiographer and dunemaster, always seems to turn up, never to disappear. In literary anecdotes and asides, footnotes, bibliographies and even in an occasional conversation or two, there he is! Now, remarkably, he is the subject of a full blown critical biography.

Perhaps the best single point that the book makes, and the one of most interest to O'Neillians, is Brevda's observation that "In his declining years, Kemp could have been a character in The Iceman Cometh, a kind of Harry Hope, or one of the others in the play who wait for their dream ship to come in, with a glass of cheer in hand to drown away the knowledge that it isn't coming in." Harry Kemp's story definitely brings a weird historical perspective to the Harry Hope bar universe. But unfortunately, as for Kemp's and O'Neill's actual relationship with one another--touch and go, at best--there is just as much, or more, to be found in Louis Sheaffer's O'Neill, Son and Playwright, in a brief passage or two, than in Professor Brevda's book.



For those curious about Harry Kemp--and he was a curious man, indeed--the handful of photographs certainly make looking at this intensively researched book worthwhile. But whether or not this kind of biography is appropriate for such a randy character as Kemp is another question altogether. Perhaps Kemp himself best dealt with the situation by writing his still readable, autobiographical Tramping on Life, a bestseller in 1922. In many ways, it appears difficult to improve on Kemp's own telling of his story. Perhaps that is why he keeps surfacing, time and again. Salut, Harry! Till the next time.

--Marshall Brooks

5. "O'NEILL IN MOURNING" RECAP: a letter from Stephen A. Black.

Allow me to offer the following abstract of the paper I gave at the 1986 conference (all in one sentence!)

Following the deaths in a 39 month period of all the other members of his parental family, Eugene O'Neill entered a period of prolonged mourning which lasted the rest of his working life and which determined the forms and meanings of the plays he wrote between 1920 and 1943; to which mourning he responded by compulsively repeating, in his dramatic characters and situations, fragmented or otherwise distorted perceptions of his father, mother and brother, and the relations he perceived he had had with them; and which repeating gave way, beginning in the late 1920s, and culminating in the late 1930s, to remembering, more fully and with less distortion, his parents and brother and his relations with them, and to representing as dramatic characters his new, less distorted understanding of his parents and brother; and which remembering enabled him to begin working through both the old losses, and the even earlier deficiencies which had made the losses so intolerable that their mourning occupied most of O'Neill's adult life; and which working through he represented dramatically in his last completed play within the character of Josie Hogan; and which working through of mourning enabled O'Neill to realize in the late plays the tragic potential that had

appeared in such early plays as Beyond the Horizon, The Hairy Ape, and Desire Under the Elms.

6. Stephen A. Black, "Letting the Dead Be Dead: A Reinterpretation of A Moon for the Misbegotten." Modern Drama, 29 (December 1986), 544-555.

The play is about loss and mourning from beginning to end. O'Neill contrasts Jim Tyrone's unending mourning for his mother to Josie's mourning for her lost idealization and love of Jim. Jim's inability to accept the loss of his mother leaves him helpless to do anything but drink himself to death. Josie, who has also lost her mother, must now mourn Jim, whom she has idealized and loved since childhood. She must let herself accept that rather than being the lovable and reformable drunk he seems to her, Jim is "dead"--as he repeatedly tells her. Unlike Jim, and unlike any previous O'Neill character, Josie can mourn and allow grief to run its course to a resolution. In Jim, loss and grief are fatal processes that inexorably lead him to his own death. So it seemed to O'Neill himself, who spent twenty years trying to complete his mourning for his father, mother and brother, who all died between 1920 and 1923. But in A Moon for the Misbegotten, O'Neill, for the first time, can imagine a character who can survive and even grow from the experience of loss. In Josie, the process of mourning leads to marked change and growth. The play's tragedy works itself out, like that in Oedipus the King, through a character's resistance to becoming aware of something well known but unconsciously known. Josie repeatedly uses words or images referring to the dead to describe Jim, yet, until the end of Act Three, she consciously means them only as figures of speech: "If I was his wife, I'd cure him of drinking himself to death if I had to kill him," she tells her father. By the end of Act Three she knows him to be a different person than she had previously believed and can accept him for himself. Josie, not Jim, is the central figure in the play. She is O'Neill. Through her, the playwright completes the mourning for his brother begun with Jamie O'Neill's actual death in 1923, two decades before O'Neill completed his final play. --S.A.B.]

7. Stephen A. Black, "O'Neill's Dramatic Process," American Literature (March 1987), pp. 58-70.

The author distinguishes between the "process," rhetoric and content of a dramatic work and claims that O'Neill achieves "poetic" or "musical" qualities by expressing his most important meanings through the process rather than through either rhetoric or content. Taking a quiet moment from the opening scene of Long Day's Journey, he shows how the dramatic process expresses meanings not otherwise emphasized in the play. In the chosen example several changes occur in alliances among the Tyrones (e.g., Mary invites Jamie and Edmund to support her complaint against Tyrone's snoring, but even before that alliance is formed she excludes Jamie; but Jamie finds a way to bind himself to his mother, excluding Edmund and Tyrone.) At least half a dozen such changes occur in the two-page fragment examined. One meaning arising from the process is that the Tyrones cannot tolerate stable alliances among each other. The intolerance of alliances implies the magnitude and intensity of the dread all of them feel about the loss, abandonment and rejection that threaten to overwhelm all of them, especially in moments of gentle intimacy. So intense is the dread that they prefer the constancy of terrible quarreling to changes which might lead to separations. --S.A.B.]

NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. "BEGINNINGS 1915: THE CULTURAL MOMENT" is the title and focus of a major international conference to be held in Provincetown from 14 to 17 June 1987. The conference, which will explore the artistic, social and cultural movements and issues that led to the birth of modern American drama, is sponsored by the Provincetown Playhouse in conjunction with the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and is supported in part by

grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Massachusetts Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy. Highlights include two art exhibits ("Against Broadway: The Rise of the Art Theatre in America," and "Provincetown Painters, 1915"); Provincetown Playhouse productions of four one-acts staged by the original Players in the summer of 1915 (followed by discussions with Provincetown-theatre historian Robert K. Sarló); addresses by Daniel Aaron, C.W.E. Bigsby, Barbara Gelb, Theodore Mann and Rebecca Zurier; panel discussions of "The New Woman," "The New Psychology," "The New Politics" and "The New Art: The Armory Show and After"; a guided walking tour of literary and historic Provincetown; and a very special evening of family slides and reminiscences by the descendants of the original players.

Of particular interest to readers of this journal are the talks by Theodore Mann ("Twentieth Century American Theater," at 9 a.m. on the 15th), C.W.E. Bigsby ("Susan Glaspell and Her Plays," during the banquet that evening), and Barbara Gelb ("Heading Towards O'Neill," at 10:30 a.m. on the 17th). Mrs. Gelb will share some of her tape-recorded interviews with the playwright's widow, Carlotta Monterey O'Neill. In all, a fitting kick-off for the O'Neill centennial year!

The conference will be held at the Provincetown Inn, whose special three-night conference rate is \$167 per person for a double, \$257 for a single. More than a bargain, since the fee also covers the opening reception, three breakfasts, a banquet, a lobsterbake (Uncle Sid notwithstanding, don't eat the shells!), and all taxes and gratuities. The registration fee for the conference is \$45 (daily rate \$15). For information about accommodations, call toll-free 1-800-352-3137 from Massachusetts or 1-800-343-4444 from elsewhere. For additional information about the conference itself, write to Adele Heller, Producing Director of the Provincetown Playhouse (Box 477, Provincetown, MA 02657)--or call her at (617) 487-0955.

2. "EUGENE O'NEILL AND THE EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN DRAMA" is the subject of an international conference, organized by the BELGIAN LUXEMBOURG AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION, that will be held from 20 to 22 May 1988 in Han-sur-Lesse, Belgium. The conference, meant to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the playwright's birth, will take place a few days before the Stockholm O'Neill-Strindberg Symposium (24-27 May), enabling international visitors to attend both events. The Belgian conference will consist of a series of lectures by invited American and European scholars: John Henry Raleigh (University of California-Berkeley), Travis Bogard (University of California-Berkeley), Jackson Bryer (University of Maryland), Frederick C. Wilkins (Suffolk University), Esther M. Jackson (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Michael Manheim (University of Toledo), Judith E. Barlow (State University of New York at Albany), Paul D. Voelker (University of Wisconsin Center-Richland), C.W.E. Bigsby (University of East Anglia), Jean Chothia (Cambridge University), Marie-Claire Pasquier (University of Paris X), Egil Törnqvist (University of Amsterdam), Ulrich Halfmann (University of Mannheim), and Marc Maufort (University of Brussels).

The conference will also feature scenes from Long Day's Journey Into Night, in both Dutch and French. The actors who will appear in these theatrical presentations are Julien Schoenaerts, Reinhilde Decler, Norbert Kaart, Carl Ridders, Yvonne Garden, and Jean-Michel Thibault.

In order to obtain further information and registration forms, please write to Mrs. G. Lercangée, Secretary, Belgian Luxembourg American Studies Association, Center for American Studies, Boulevard de l'Empereur, Keizerslaan, 1000 Brussels, Belgium.

3. O'NEILL CONFERENCES IN CHINA: THE RECENT PAST AND THE EXCITING FUTURE. As is noted by Professor Ouyang Ji in the minutes of the Eugene O'Neill Society's 1986 annual meeting that are printed in this issue, the first-ever O'Neill conference in China took place last February. Thirty papers were delivered to an audience of 60, the proceedings were widely covered by the press, and Mr. Cao Yu, Chairman of the All-China Playwrights' Association and himself a playwright significantly influenced by O'Neill, opened the ceremonies with remarks very complimentary about O'Neill and his contributions to world drama.

And now that a precedent has been successfully set, it is gratifying to note that exciting plans are under way for a second Chinese conference, this one international

in scope and participation, in Nanjing, under the leadership of Haiping Liu, the Eugene O'Neill Society's International Secretary for the Orient. A lot depends on the securing of the necessary funds to bring it off, so plans are still tentative for the event, which is scheduled for 6-9 June 1988, shortly after the O'Neill conference in Belgium and the O'Neill-Strindberg Symposium in Sweden. (O'Neillians will log a record number of air miles in the summer of '88!) And the Nanjing plans are enough to boost the spirits of even the most jet-lagged! Three professional theatres have offered to present O'Neill productions during the conference; a Beijing producer may provide a production of The Emperor Jones "in Peking opera form"; plus a massive book and photo exhibit, a 20-minute TV documentary on O'Neill in China (not the disastrous Shanghai visit but more recent events!); in Beijing, a Quintero-directed production of Marco Millions; and, in Professor Liu's words, "an excursion to Yangchow, a nearby city where, according to Mr. O'Neill, Marco Polo once ruled as Mayor." More information will be offered in future issues, but the interested can write for the latest news directly. Address inquiries to Haiping Liu, Department of Foreign Languages, Nanjing University, Nanjing, People's Republic of China.

4. **BOGARD READIES NEW EDITIONS OF O'NEILL.** Travis Bogard is editing the three-volume edition of O'Neill's plays that will be published as part of the Library of America series in 1988. (The first volume ends with The First Man, the second with Mourning Becomes Electra.) He is also preparing a volume of previously-unpublished O'Neill plays that will be brought out by Yale University Press. (It will include The Personal Equation and the eight-act version of Marco Millions.) And Oxford University Press will soon print a revised, paperback edition of his Contour in Time: The Plays of Eugene O'Neill. Triple--nay, quintuple--cause for centennial rejoicing!
5. **FLOYD READIES FOURTH VOLUME.** Virginia Floyd is earnestly at work on a fourth O'Neill volume. Its title: "Eugene O'Neill: The Unfinished Plays." Subtitle: "O'Neill's Notes for The Visit of Malatesta, The Last Conquest, and Blind Alley Guy." As editor, she will provide introductions and annotations. Like its three predecessors, the volume will be published by Ungar, who are also preparing a paperback edition of the third book, The Plays of Eugene O'Neill: A New Assessment.
6. **BOWER TO EDIT COMPLETE MANSIONS.** Good news from Martha Bower of the University of New Hampshire. She will edit the first publication of the complete text of More Stately Mansions. The book will be published during the centennial year by Oxford University Press.
7. **CENTENNIAL SEASON PLANNED IN AMHERST.** When some regional and educational theatres are resisting the thought of doing even one O'Neill play during the O'Neill centennial year of 1988, it is heartening to note that some realize the importance of the event and the dramatist it honors. Certainly high among the latter is the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, which plans an entire semester of O'Neill plays that fall, with the first (mainstage) production scheduled to open on the exact date of the centennial, Sunday, October 16. Fuller information will be provided in a future issue, when specific titles have been chosen and dates announced.
8. **MODERN DRAMA SEEKS O'NEILL ESSAYS.** Modern Drama has resumed its policy of having a special issue annually. For 1988, the topic is O'NEILL AND THE AMERICAN THEATRE, to mark the centenary of the playwright's birth. Submissions on this theme should reach the editor by August 1st, 1987, and preferably earlier. Contributors should follow the style and layout of articles previously published in the journal; the usual maximum is 4,000 words. Submissions should be sent to John H. Astington, Department of English, Erindale College, University of Toronto, Mississauga, ONT, Canada L5L 1C6.
9. **MANUSCRIPTS SOUGHT ON O'NEILL LEGACY.** Philip C. Kolin, coeditor of Studies in American Drama, 1945-Present, is seeking carefully documented studies of how O'Neill has influenced a playwright of our period (excluding Albee). Anyone working on such a project should write to Professor Kolin at the Department of English, University of

Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39406-8395. "We cannot make any promises," writes Professor Kolin, "except to give the manuscript extra careful and speedy attention."

10. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS ON O'NEILL. (Some will be abstracted in future issues.)

Adler, Thomas P. "'Daddy Spoke to Me!': Gods Lost and Found in Long Day's Journey Into Night and Through a Glass Darkly." Comparative Drama, 20 (Winter 1986-87), 341-348. [Professor Adler's comparison of the O'Neill play and the Bergman film was first presented at the 1986 conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Later Years" at Suffolk University in Boston.]

Brown, Carolyn T. "Creative Imitation: Hung Shen's Cultural Translation [in Chao] of Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones." Comparative Literature Studies, 22 (Spring 1985), 147-155.

Egri, Péter. "Epic Retardation and Diversion: Hemingway, Strindberg and O'Neill." Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik (Leipzig), 33 (1985), 324-330. [For Whom the Bell Tolls, Dance of Death, Strange Interlude.]

Gálik, Marián. "O'Neill, Baker, and Hung Shen." 381-385 in Proceedings of the 8th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, II, ed. B Köpeczi and G. M. Vajda. Stuttgart: Bieber, 1980. [Mourning Becomes Electra, George Pierce Baker, and O'Neill's influence on Hung Shen.]

Grimm, Reinhold. "O'Neill's Aufhebung der europäischen Moderne: Naturalismus und Nietzscheanismus in Long Day's Journey Into Night." 252-258 in Drama und Theater im 20. Jahrhundert: Gestschrift für Walter Hinck, ed. H.D. Irscher and W. Keller. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983.

Hinden, Michael. Review of Critical Essays on Eugene O'Neill, ed. James J. Martine. Modern Drama, 29 (Sept. 1986), 490-492. [Book reviews are not usually cited here, but Professor Hinden's detailed and affirmative survey of the volume in question ends with some appropriate words for centennialists: "So long as we confine ourselves to biographical speculation, we tend to remain mired in anecdote.... O'Neill's intimate life, his 'foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart,' has been open to the public for two decades now. As we approach the playwright's centennial year (1988), perhaps it is time once again to turn our attention from ground level to spires, from life materials to art."]

Lewis, Ward B. "O'Neill and Hauptmann: A Study in Mutual Admiration," Comparative Literature Studies, 22 (Summer 1985), 231-243. [Professor Lewis first delivered this paper at the 1984 conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Early Years" at Suffolk University in Boston.]

Moleski, Joseph J. and John H. Stroupe. "Jean Anouilh and Eugene O'Neill: Reptition as Negativity." Comparative Drama, 20 (Winter 1986-87), 315-326. [A's Antigone, Becket and Eurydice, and O's Hairy Ape, Strange Interlude and Iceman Cometh, examined in a "Derridian framework."]

Mounier, Catherine. "L'Expressionnisme dans l'oeuvre d'Eugène O'Neill." 329-340 in L'Expressionnisme dans le Théâtre Européen, ed. D. Bablet and J. Jacquot. Paris: Centre Nat. de la Recherche Scientifique, 1984.

Shim, Jung Soon. "Self vs. Tradition: Images of Women in Modern American and Korean Drama." Dissertation Abstracts International, 45 (March 1985), 419A. [Self-realization vs. stereotyped sex roles in works by O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, Megan Terry, Wu-chin Kim, Ch'i-jin Yu, and Cha-rim Kim.]

Simon, John. "Brothers Under the Skin: O'Neill and Williams." Hudson Review, Winter 1987, pp. 553-565.

Stroupe, John H., ed. Critical Approaches to Eugene O'Neill. New York: AMS Press, 1987. A collection of essays on O'Neill from the pages of Comparative Drama; and an especially interesting one since each essay takes a different approach to O'Neill's plays, making the book as appropriate to courses on criticism as to courses on O'Neill per se. Here are the authors and titles gathered in this eagerly awaited volume:

Emil Roy, "The Archetypal Unity of Eugene O'Neill's Drama."

Stephen M. Watt, "O'Neill and Otto Rank: Doubles, 'Death Instincts,' and the Trauma of Birth."

Joseph J. Moleski, "Eugene O'Neill and the Cruelty of Theater."

John Chioles, "Aeschylus and O'Neill: A Phenomenological View."

Louis Sheaffer, "Correcting Some Errors in Annals of O'Neill."

John H. Stroupe, "O'Neill and the Creative Process: A Road to Xanadu."

James A. Robinson, "Taoism and O'Neill's Marco Millions."

Michael Manheim, "O'Neill's Transcendence of Melodrama in A Touch of the Poet and A Moon for the Misbegotten."

Thomas P. Adler, "'Daddy Spoke to Me!': Gods Lost and Found in Long Day's Journey Into Night and Through a Glass Darkly."

Albert Rothenberg and Eugene D. Shapiro, "A Defense of Psychoanalysis in Literature: Long Day's Journey Into Night and A View From The Bridge."

Joseph J. Moleski and John H. Stroupe, "Jean Anouilh and Eugene O'Neill: Repetition as Negativity."

Michael Hinden, "When Playwrights Talk to God: Peter Shaffer and the Legacy of O'Neill."

Wainwright, Ronald H. "Exploring the Religion of the Dead: Philip Moeller Directs O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra." Theatre History Studies, 7 (1987). ISSN 0733-2033.

11. RECENT BOOKS INCLUDING O'NEILL. [Five recently published books on broader subjects include extended coverage of or reference to Eugene O'Neill. All will be reviewed in future issues of the Newsletter. --Ed.]

Adler, Thomas P. Mirror on the Stage: The Pulitzer Plays as an Approach to American Drama. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue UP, 1987. 171 pp., \$17.50 cloth. ISBN 0-911198-84-9.

Burkman, Katherine H. The Arrival of Godot: Ritual Patterns in Modern Drama. Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1987. 176 pp., \$24.50 cloth. ISBN 0-8386-3264-5. (Includes analysis of The Iceman Cometh.)

Gilmore, Thomas B. Alcoholism and Drinking in Twentieth-Century Literature. Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1987. \$22.50 cloth (ISBN 0-8078-1726-0), \$9.95 Tr paper (ISBN 0-8078-4174-9), 260 pp.

Henderson, Mary C. Theater in America: 200 Years of Plays, Players, and Productions. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986. 328 pp., \$45.00 cloth. ISBN 0-8109-1084-5.

Wellwarth, George. Modern Drama and the Death of God. Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1987. 192 pp., \$25.75 cloth. ISBN 0-299-10850-3.

12. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING O'NEILL PRODUCTIONS.

Ah, Wilderness!, dir. Karen Barton. Winchester [MA] Unitarian Players, Michelsen Room, Winchester Unitarian Church, May 1-9, 1987. (To be reviewed in the next

issue.)

Désir sous les Ormes (Desire Under the Elms, translated by Ginette Herry and Claude Lacassagne), dir. Claudia Morin. Théâtre de l'Athénée-Louis Jovet, Paris. Opened January 9, 1987.

Desire Under the Elms, dir. Patrick Mason. Greenwich Theatre, Crooms Hill, Greenwich, England, May 6 - June 20, 1987. (Heralded by the London Theatre Record as "another farming epic"--evidently a specialty of Mr. Mason's.)

The Hairy Ape, dir. Nathan Criman. Nelke Theatre, Brigham Young Univ., Provo, Utah, March 19-21, 1987. [The director, a student of Jean Anne Waterstradt, received considerable praise and many requests for "more O'Neill"--words we like to hear! --Ed.]

The Hairy Ape, dir. Peter Stein. National Theatre (Lyttleton), London, May 11-16, 1987. Performed by the Schaubühne Theatre Company of West Berlin. (To be reviewed in the next issue.)

Den Ludna Gorillan (The Hairy Ape), dir. Peter Oskarson. Folkteatern, Gävle, Sweden. Opened on November 15, 1986. (Reviewed in this issue.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night, dir. Julien Schoenaerts. Korrekelder Theatre Company, Bruges, Belgium, November 14, 1986 - January 10, 1987. (To be reviewed in the next issue.)

Long Day's Journey Into Night, dir. Barbara Rosoff. Portland [Maine] Stage Company, February 7 - March 1, 1987. (Reviewed in this issue.)

A Moon for the Misbegotten, dir. David Head. Theatrical Outfit, Atlanta, Georgia, March 11 - April 12, 1987. (To be reviewed in the next issue.)

A Touch of the Poet. Gateway Players, Wareham, MA, May 1987.

13. HOPELESSNESS AT THE LYTTLETON. The scheduled transplantaion of the Quintero-Robards Broadway production of The Iceman Cometh to London's National Theatre as part of a series of international productions had to be cancelled because Barnard Hughes, who had played Harry Hope, was prevented by prior commitments from rejoining the company.
14. WELDED IN PARIS? INFORMATION, PLEASE. Thomas Quinn Curtis, surveying the 1986-87 theatrical season in Paris in the Sunday, January 18 issue of the New York Times (Sec. 2, pp. 3, 10), notes, in addition to the production of Desire Under the Elms that is listed in this issue's roster of recent and forthcoming productions, an imminent Parisian mounting of Welded. Word on site, company, etc. would be welcomed if anyone has that information. A review, with or without pictures, would be even more gleefully received. --Ed.
15. ONE-ACTS READ AT MONTE CRISTO COTTAGE. Thanks in part to a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center presented a series of free public readings and discussions of short works by O'Neill during the month of April. The readings by members of the community were held at Monte Cristo Cottage, and each was followed by a chat led by an O'Neill scholar. Jordan Pecile of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy led the discussions of The Dreamy Kid (April 2) and Before Breakfast and other soliloquies (April 23), and Adam Versenyi of the Yale School of Drama and Linda Herr of Connecticut College guided participants through, respectively, Hughie (April 9) and Abortion (April 30).

16. O'NEILL ON THE CONFERENCE CIRCUIT.

The O'Neill session at the 1987 Modern Language Association convention in New York City (10:15-11:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 30 in the Gotham Room of the Marriott Marquis) had as its subject "O'Neill: The Composition Process." Jackson R. Bryer of the University of Maryland chaired the session, which included papers by Paul D. Voelker of the University of Wisconsin Center-Richland ("The Evolution of Bound East for Cardiff: From Conrad's Novel to the Theater on the Wharf"), Martha Bower of the University of New Hampshire ("The Great Unravel'd Knot of O'Neill's Composition Process: The Calms of Capricorn, A Case Study"), and Judith E. Barlow of the State University of New York at Albany ("O'Neill's Scenarios: The Beginning of the Journey").

The four speakers at the session on "Games People Play: Family Relationships in O'Neill," chaired by Frederick C. Wilkins of Suffolk University at the 1987 Northeast Modern Language Association convention in Boston (4:00-5:30 p.m. on Friday, April 3 in the Sheraton Boston Hotel), were Paul D. Voelker of the University of Wisconsin Center-Richland ("O'Neill's First Families: Warnings through The Personal Equation"), Bette Mandl of Suffolk University ("Family Ties: Landscape and Gender in Desire Under the Elms"), Marc Maufort of the University of Brussels ("The Legacy of Melville's Pierre: Family Relationships in Mourning Becomes Electra"), and Stephen A. Black of Simon Fraser University ("The War Among the Tyrones"). Special guests at the session were Dr. and Mrs. Harry Kozol. As all O'Neillians know, Dr. Kozol was the O'Neill's' personal physician during their last years in Boston. At least two of the papers presented at the session will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.

O'Neill was also represented at another session of the NEMLA convention. At the Faulkner meeting (8:30-10:00 a.m. on the same day), Donald Duclos of William Paterson College delivered a paper entitled "O'Neill and Faulkner: Ritual Flight and Pursuit," in which parallels were traced in Light in August and The Emperor Jones. That paper may also be included in the next issue of the Newsletter.

O'Neill was represented as well at the 1987 convention of the College English Association in Charleston, South Carolina, at the start of April. At a session on "New Departures in the Classroom Presentation of Literature," Larry Roderer of J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, discussed "How Literature Students Practice the Art of Acting With Their Reading of Eugene O'Neill's Sea Plays," (3:30-5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 3).

Nor was O'Neill forgotten at the Twelfth Annual Convention of the International Society of Phenomenology and Literature, held in April in Cambridge, MA. At the evening session on Saturday, April 11, William S. Haney, II of Maharishi International College in Fairfield, Iowa, spoke on "The Semiotics of Self-Revelation in Eugene O'Neill's The Emperor Jones."

Edward L. Shaughnessy will chair an O'Neill "centennial seminar" entitled "Dispelling the Fog" at the annual convention of the Midwest Modern Language Association next fall in Columbus, Ohio (November 12-14 at the Hyatt Regency). In calling for papers, Professor Shaughnessy requested "new (and short) essays that challenge questionable assumptions about O'Neill--e.g., that he lacked a sense of humor, that he was bereft of poetic gifts, etc." A worthy endeavor, deserving of note even though the April 13 deadline for submissions has passed. The editor hopes to provide a summary of the session in a future issue.

Finally, here's the tentative lineup for the Jordan Miller-led special session on "Eugene O'Neill and the Orient" at the MLA convention in San Francisco next December:

"O'Neill's Orientalism: A Backward Glance," by Frederick I. Carpenter, University of California, Berkeley, Emeritus.

"Eugene O'Neill's Marco Millions and the Tao," by Ouyang Ji, Shandong University,

People's Republic of China.

"O'Neill's Indian Elms," by James A. Robinson, University of Maryland.

"Authentic Tidings of Invisible Things: Beyond James Robinson's O'Neill and Oriental Thought," by Frank R. Cunningham, University of South Dakota.

"A Visit to the People's Republic," by Normand Berlin, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Looking still further ahead, the topic for the O'Neill session at the 1988 Northeast Modern Language Association convention, to be held March 24-26, in Providence, will be "'Theatricality' and Experiment in O'Neill's Middle Period." Its chair, Martha Bower of the University of New Hampshire, welcomes papers and proposals. She must receive them before October 1, 1987.

17. EGRI BRINGS O'NEILL TO DUBROVNIK. Budapest's premier O'Neillian, Péter Egri, presented two papers on O'Neill this March at the international course on "Sentimentality in Modern Literature and Popular Culture," held at the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. The subjects were "Sentiment and Sentimentality in Twentieth-Century American Drama: O'Neill, Williams, Miller and Albee" (March 25) and "Sentiment and Sentimentality in O'Neill's Strange Interlude" (March 26). Incidentally, his next book, "The Birth of American Tragedy," is scheduled for publication, in the O'Neill-centennial year of 1988, by the Textbook Publishing House (Tankönyvkiadó) in Budapest.

18. COMMENTS SOUGHT FOR DOCTORAL PROJECT. Jeffrey E. Sands, who is at work on a dissertation on O'Neill at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, has narrowed his focus beyond the one announced in the Summer-Fall 1986 issue of the Newsletter (p. 48). Here is his description of the current project, for which he solicits the comments and insights of fellow O'Neillians:

I have long been fascinated by the stage directions which appear throughout the canon. Many scholars have used them in their analyses of the plays and, in a few cases, concentrated upon them and integrated their content into a broader consideration of O'Neill's "theatrical" side. I speak, in the latter instance, of Tiusanen and Törnqvist. Taking the cue from them, I began to ask myself questions about the practical utility and value of the stage directions in performance. In other words, I embarked upon an examination of O'Neill as a sort of long-distance director of his own plays.

In short, my concern lies in the communication nexus which operates between the text of an O'Neill play and the artists who bring that play to the stage. How does the playwright convey his ideas about staging to the actors, designers and directors? What do the stage directions indicate regarding O'Neill's ideas, for example, about acting? That is, how do actors do what they do? How may the stage directions be most usefully and valuably interpreted in production? These are very tough questions, believe me!

Tough, indeed, but definitely worth the asking. And here is a chance to help in reaching the answers. If you have either directed O'Neill's plays or given some thought to the role of stage directions in performance, Mr. Sands would be most grateful if you would share your insights with him. His address is 1207 W. Springfield Avenue, Champaign, IL 61821. Tel. (217) 352-9331.

19. "QUINTERO MAY DO O'NEILL PLAY IN CHINA": thus read the headline of an article by Richard F. Shepard in the New York Times (December 29, 1986, p. C17). And the good news is that, if United States funding is located to match a contribution by the Chinese Government, Mr. Quintero may direct a production of Marco Millions, in a translation by Haiping Liu, in China in 1988. (He directed a most successful production of the play in 1964 with the Repertory Theater of Lincoln Center.) Negotiations have begun between Mr. Quintero and Sha Yexin, a playwright and the

director of the Shanghai People's Art Theater, after initial talks between Mr. Quintero and Professor Liu at the Boston O'Neill conference last May. More information will be provided as soon as it is available.

20. IN MEMORIAM. Lovers of O'Neill were saddened by the recent deaths of actor Walter Abel (on March 26, at the age of 88) and producer Catherine Huntington (on February 27, at the age of 100). Mr. Abel, an early member of the Provincetown Players, who appeared in last year's television documentary Eugene O'Neill - A Glory of Ghosts, had his most energetic O'Neill season during November of 1924, when he appeared, virtually simultaneously, as Olson in the Glencairn quartet at the Provincetown Playhouse and as the show-ending sheriff in Desire Under the Elms at the Greenwich Village Theater. He would deliver his last line as Olson, sprint to the second playhouse, and grab his rifle just in time to escort Abbie and Eben to their ecstatic doom and deliver the play's last line: "It's a jim-dandy farm, no denyin'. Wish I owned it!" Miss Huntington, for more than thirty years the owner and producer of the Provincetown Playhouse on Cape Cod, kept O'Neill's plays alive when few other producers would consider them. (At least one O'Neill work was faithfully, even religiously included in every summer season.) In addition to the Provincetown, which she operated from its founding in 1940 until 1972, she helped found the Boston Stage Society in 1922, the New England Repertory Theater in 1938, and the Poet's Theater in Cambridge in the 1950s. A close friend of O'Neill, Edna St. Vincent Millay and John Singer Sargent, Miss Huntington was honored by the Boston City Council on March 28, 1983 (her 97th birthday) for "a life which nourished and inspired generations of theater artists."
21. OF HOOPS AND THE AESCHYLEAN. Playwright Terrrace McNally, tracing the path a new play must traverse en route to completion and performance ("From Page to Stage: How a Playwright Guards His Vision," New York Times, Sunday, December 7, 1986, Sec. II, pp. 1, 26), discussed the current, ubiquitous presence of the dramaturg--"a critic who is on the playwright's side" (p. 26)--and wondered how such practitioners of (theatrical) preventive medicine would have handled a script by O'Neill (p. 26):

Unfortunately, I have seen plays so rewritten and improved at the behest of a well-intentioned dramaturg that the actual life force that caused them is stifled. One shudders to think what hoops a structurally minded dramaturg would have wanted Eugene O'Neill to jump through. O'Neill's plays are unwieldy. It would be a literary manager of equal genius who could reshape O'Neill's vision more in line with the dictates of Scribe's notion of a well-made play without diluting his Aeschylean grandeur.

22. SHEAFFER ON SONS AND PUNDITS: a note from Louis Sheaffer. "The recent telecast of All My Sons reminded me that the Arthur Miller drama, which today looks dated, preachy and contrived, won the New York Drama Critics Circle award as the best play of the 1946-47 season. At the same time the Pulitzer pundits, after earnest cogitation, decided that no play was good enough to be singled out. That season, nevertheless, saw the curtain rise on one of O'Neill's masterpieces, The Iceman Cometh."

PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

ALBERT BERMEL, Professor of Theatre at Lehman College and Acting Executive Officer of the Ph.D. Program in Theatre at the Graduate Center of C.U.N.Y., is the author of Contradictory Characters, Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, One-Act Comedies of Molière, several recent translations of longer works by Molière, and Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen.

STEPHEN A. BLACK, Professor of English at Simon Fraser University, spoke on "O'Neill in Mourning" at the conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Later Years" at Suffolk University in Boston in May 1986, and on "The War Among the Tyrones" at the convention of the

Northeast Modern Language Association in the same city this April.

MARSHALL BROOKS is associate editor of the Newsletter and editor of the literary magazine Nostoc. The latest publication of Arts End Books, which he operates, is Blackness of a White Night: Stories and Poems, his own edition of the work of American writer Sherry Mangan (1904-1961). \$13.00 Cloth (ISBN 0-933292-16-3), \$6.50 Paper (ISBN 0-933292-17-1). For copies, write to Arts End Books, Box 162, Newton, MA 02168.

SHEILA HICKEY GARVEY, who teaches acting, directing and theatre history at Dickinson College, where she also directs productions in the performance program, led two sessions at the 1986 O'Neill conference in Boston. She is revising for publication her doctoral dissertation--a history of the Circle in the Square Theatre in New York.

ISRAEL HOROVITZ, Artistic Director of the Gloucester Stage Company in Massachusetts, is one of America's most prolific and respected playwrights. In the last three decades, more than 50 Horovitz plays have been translated and produced in more than 20 languages worldwide. Among his best known plays are The Indian Wants the Bronx, Line, The Wakefield Plays (a seven-play cycle), The Primary English Class (the longest running play in Canadian theatre history), The Widow's Blind Date, a "growing up Jewish" trilogy (Today I Am A Fountain Pen, A Rosen By Any Other Name, and The Chopin Playoffs) that was produced in 1986 by the American Jewish Theatre in New York City, North Shore Fish, and The Year of the Duck, which had its world premiere at the Portland (ME) Stage Company last March.

JAMES C. McKELLY is an Associate Instructor of English at Indiana University, where he is completing a doctorate in 20th century American literature and drama. The Newsletter is proud to sponsor, in this issue, his first publication--an auspicious start, we feel, for a most promising scholarly career.

TOM J. A. OLSSON, Curator of the Archives and Library of the Royal Dramatic Theatre in Stockholm, is the author of O'Neill och Dramaten (O'Neill and the Royal Dramatic), a study of that theatre's pioneering premieres of O'Neill's last plays and of the playwright's relations with Sweden in general. Dr. Olsson is organizing, with the Royal Dramatic, an international O'Neill-Strindberg symposium that will be held in Stockholm on May 24-27, 1988.

JAMES P. PETTEGROVE has written extensively about O'Neill and German-language productions of his plays. His "Eugene O'Neill as Thinker" appeared in Maske und Kothurn, 10 (1964), 617-624; and his "O'Neill on the German-Language Stage" appeared in the Spring 1985 issue of the Newsletter (pp. 36-39).

JEFFREY E. SANDS is a doctoral candidate in theatre history and criticism at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. He will present a paper, "O'Neill in Revival During the 'Silent Years,' 1934-1946," as part of the O'Neill Centennial Lecture Program series at Connecticut College in 1988.

LOUIS SHEAFFER is the author of the two-volume biography, O'Neill: Son and Playwright (1968), which won the George Freedly Award of the Theater Library Association as the best theater book of its year, and O'Neill: Son and Artist, winner of the 1974 Pulitzer Prize for biography. He is presently at work on a study of publications about O'Neill, and an illustrated volume surveying O'Neill's life and career.

GARY VENA is Assistant Professor of Speech at Manhattan College. His doctoral dissertation (NYU, 1984) was on the 1946 Theatre Guild production of The Iceman Cometh, also the subject of an essay in the Winter 1985 issue of the Newsletter (pp. 11-17) and a paper in the "production history" session at the 1986 conference on "Eugene O'Neill--the Later Years" at Suffolk University in Boston.

FREDERICK C. WILKINS is Chair and Professor of English at Suffolk University, editor of the Newsletter, and current President of the Eugene O'Neill Society. After organizing the 1984 and 1986 Boston conferences on O'Neill, he plans to spend the O'Neill centennial year going to other people's conferences.

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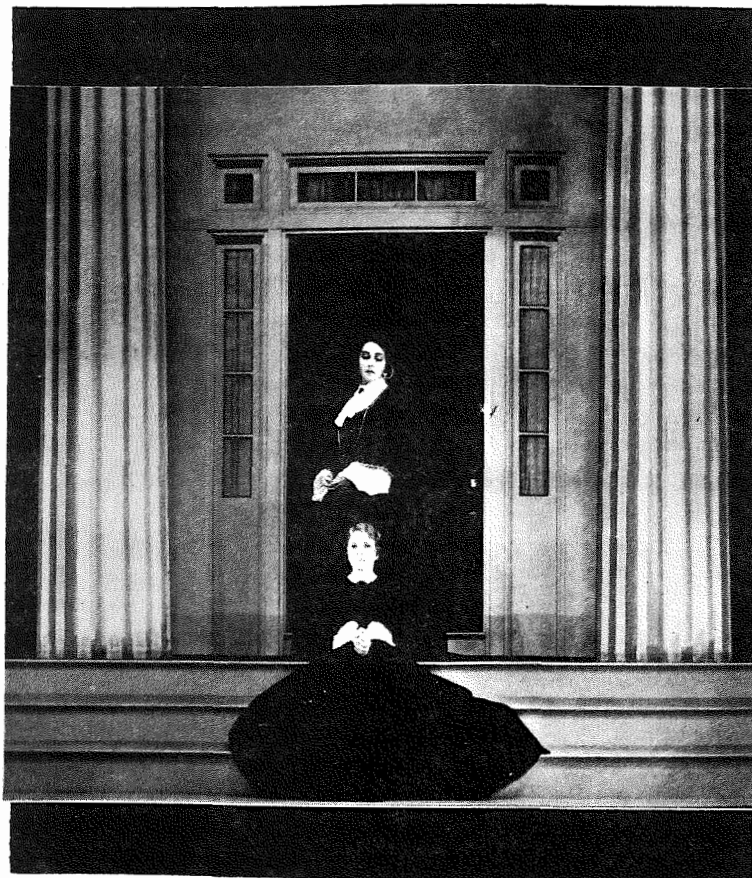
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The contents of Volume 2, to be published in mid-1987, are as follows:

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ATTENTION, PLAYWRIGHTS!!

ATTENTION, O'NEILLIANS!!

The EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY is proud to announce its sponsorship of
A CONTEST

to commemorate the 1988 centennial of the playwright's birth!

What is sought is a play about O'Neill, his friends, family and associates. There are no restrictions on specific subject, choice of events, length of play, or size of cast. Nor is there any proscription on the introduction of fictional episodes, or on the slight tampering with biographical facts, if such devices serve dramatic or thematic ends. (The play's artistic quality is at least the equal in importance to its documentary accuracy.) Nor, indeed, need the play be new; *but it can not have been previously performed.*

The winning script will be given a special staged reading at the **CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE THEATRE** in New York City, and will be subsequently published (if the victor permits) in the **EUGENE O'NEILL NEWSLETTER**.

All entries will be evaluated by a panel of three distinguished judges: playwrights **ROMULUS LINNEY** and **MILAN STITT** and Pulitzer Prize-winning O'Neill biographer **LOUIS SHEAFFER**. There will be one winner, and the decision of the judges will be final.

The deadline for submissions is **MONDAY, MAY 2, 1988**. (Entries postmarked later than May 2 will be ineligible.) A Contestant should send four copies of his/her script (a typed original and three clear photocopies) to

Frederick C. Wilkins
The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter
Suffolk University
Boston, MA 02114

Copies will be forwarded to the judges, whose decision will be announced on or before Monday, July 4, 1988. The staged reading at the **CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE** will take place at a pre-announced date and hour in October 1988.

Before sending scripts, entrants should (1) have them copyrighted and (2) secure any necessary permissions to quote from the writings of O'Neill or others, if such quotations are used. (Notice of both should be included with scripts in a cover letter.) Contestants should also retain copies of their plays: submitted material will not be returned.

The **EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY** offers its warmest gratitude to **THEODORE MANN**, Artistic Director of the **CIRCLE IN THE SQUARE**, for suggesting the contest and promising a reading for the winning entry. The event promises to be a major part of the 1988 O'Neill Centennial celebrations.

PLAYWRIGHTS: TO WORK!!