IN THIS ISSUE:

* A SPECIAL CENTENNIAL SALUTE TO EUGENE O'NEILL, PART III: PAPERS FROM THE 1984 AND 1986 O'NEILL CONFERENCES AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY IN BOSTON

* Normand Berlin on comic tradition and The Iceman Cometh  
  p. 3
* Yvonne Shafer on parallels in Iceman and Ibsen's Wild Duck  
  p. 8
* James A. Robinson on Iceman's absent women and Mary Tyrone  
  p. 14
* Bette Mandl on the maternal portrait in Long Day's Journey  
  p. 19
* Jean Chothia on the linguistic polyphony of the four Tyrones  
  p. 24
* Steven F. Bloom on contrasts between Waiting for Godot and Hughie  
  p. 28
* Esther M. Jackson on dramatic form in The Calms of Capricorn  
  p. 35

* Richard F. Moorton on the family surname in Mourning Becomes Electra  
  p. 42

* Reviews of books and productions

* Frederick C. Wilkins on O'Neill's Complete Plays and Selected Letters  
  p. 45
* Frederick C. Wilkins on three sea one-acts in Amherst, MA  
  p. 47
* Frederick C. Wilkins on Beyond the Horizon in the Berkshires  
  p. 48
* A. James Fisher on Long Day's Journey Into Night in Indianapolis  
  p. 50
* Stephen A. Black on The Iceman Cometh in Ashland, Oregon  
  p. 51

* News and comment

* Persons represented in this issue

* Index to Volume XII

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O'NEILL AND COMEDY: THE ICEMAN COMETH

Eugene O'Neill is so tragic a dramatist, offering so strong a sense of loss, so heavy a sense of death, so pervasive a sense of fate, that the subject "O'Neill and Comedy" could be viewed as merely tangential to O'Neill's main dramatic interests. Still, a prolonged look at O'Neill's development reveals that he made progressively greater and more important use of comedy. Some elements of comedy could be found in his early plays; and of course he wrote that one unequivocally successful comedy, Ah, Wilderness!, and such unsuccessful spiritual comedies as Lazarus Laughed and Days Without End. Only in his last play—Nina Leeds, who essentially dragged it through—does O'Neill seem to have naturally successfully incorporate comedy to produce works of the largest inclusiveness.

What prompted me to take a closer look at O'Neill's comedy were two recent, deservedly praised O'Neill productions performed on Broadway: Strange Interlude (directed by Peter Back and starring Glenda Jackson) and The Iceman Cometh (directed by José Quintero and starring Jason Robards). The audience response to Strange Interlude, which includes my own, was surprising. The play produced laughs that I never thought were there and that O'Neill did not put there consciously, it seems. The play contains many awkward and melodramatic moments which provoke what we can call illegitimate laughter. But I'm not referring to these moments. The import of the British production exuded an atmosphere of comedy. And it was not referring to these moments. The imported British production exuded an atmosphere of comedy. And it was not referring to these moments. The imported British production exuded an atmosphere of comedy. And it was not referring to these moments. The imported British production exuded an atmosphere of comedy. And it was not referring to these moments. The imported British production exuded an atmosphere of comedy. And it was not referring to these moments.

Then along came The Iceman Cometh, which I knew was comical in parts and which I knew O'Neill thought was comedy up to a point. Still, here too the audience laughed more frequently and louder than I had and any theater audience I've ever seen. It is a strange play, and should be understood as a comedy. The audience chose to see it as such, and when it chose to see it that way, it was comedy. As a result, a comic dimension was added to Strange Interlude. This was unexpected comedy, offering a kind of clarifying shock, and most welcome—although not what O'Neill would have approved, I think. He said he liked Charlie (next to Nina his favorite character in the play), but I do not believe he liked him so much to allow him to tilt the play toward comedy.

The quotation is important because it confronts head-on the question of the play's genre. O'Neill's words are especially interesting because of that well-placed "I think," as if O'Neill is not quite sure of the play's comic dimension or its effect. But "I think" presents a more tentative O'Neill than the one we are accustomed to. Is it that he didn't altogether trust the comic side of his own essentially tragic nature? Is it that the idea of comedy gave him problems throughout his career and he was protecting himself now? (Remember: O'Neill's last play, The Iceman Cometh, is called "A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life in Eight Scenes?"") Or do we even laugh, never seeing, Lazarus Laughed? What is the effect of the divinely happy ending of Days Without End? In any case, in The Iceman Cometh the comedy, O'Neill asserts, breaks up and tragedy takes over.
The nature of this tragedy is pinpointed by O'Neill in another important passage about the play: "there are moments in it that suddenly strip the soul of a man stark naked, stark naked, but with a certain sturdiness and moral force in him that seems him a victim of the ironies of life and of himself. Those moments are for me the depth of tragedy, with nothing more that can possibly be said." His tentativeness about the comedy in his play is not found in this statement. He knows these men, he knows the need for the pipe dream, and he states his position boldly and feelingly. This position, coupled with his statement on the play's comedy, prods closer discussion of the play's genre.

O'Neill need not have been tentative about the effect of his comedy. Certainly, the Quintero production fully exploited the play's comic possibilities. This dark play contains almost every characteristic of comedy. O'Neill opening up all the stops on his comic pipe. He offers jokes of all kinds, especially sexual jokes, including that big joke about the iceman. He presents a wide range of comic wordplay--bickering, insults, boasting matches, wisecracks, funny stories, semantic differences (tart vs. whore), bawdy songs (rap, rap, rap), dialectal humor. He creates comic characters whose attributes cling to traditional comic types--the parasite (McGloin and Mosher), the drunkard (all of the derelicts and the doctor of Mosher's story), the prostitute, the trickster, the braggart soldier, the newspaper cartoon character (the way Hugo is described). The play contains comic activity, like brawls and threatening gestures: the iceman, the hen-pecked husband, the cuckold.

Now, these various comic elements were used by O'Neill throughout his career, more or less--more in his late plays. But what I find most interesting, in this connection, are the large ideas of comedy that O'Neill's drama has absorbed, ideas that complicate our respon"
status—the status that traditionally depends on the isolation of a character, aloneness, uniqueness, and a kind of height because of this uniqueness—depends upon the social togetherness of the gang, coupled with their survival at play's end. Survival is an idea that concerns everyone; it is in everyone's best interest that it be achieved. A society, preservation, harmony, a condition of "happily ever after." We may wish to discuss what survival really means in connection with Harry Hope and his friends, whose weakness and constant inebriation may lead us to ask, "What price survival?" But if we do discuss them in these terms we come dangerously close to moralistic judgment, perhaps discovering a little touch of Hickey in ourselves.

We begin the play with the bums existing, merely existing, in their self-contained tavern world. We live with them for four hours, a long time to time is necessary because O'Neill wants us to feel the sheer survival quality of these creatures who have come to the "last harbor." They are always on stage; their presence is felt throughout. They survive through their drinking, and they will be there after the curtain descends. At play's end they are where they were at play's beginning, only more jovial, singing and laughing, whereas in the beginning they were asleep. Hickey has shaken them up; Hickey has "happened" and made them unhappy "for a line"—but now they are back to their old selves, and they are carrying on. They will live in that comedy world of "happily ever after," although the world "happily" comes strangely to our lips, of course, because death hangs heavily in the play's atmosphere. A literal death has come to Parritt (we hear the songs and laughter of the gang at Harry Hope's. "The End of the Line Cafe" it is, as Larry Slade says, "where the Fool philosophizes his way of hiding from himself his tragic pity. He wishes merely to observe the dance of death, but he is dancing with the rest. This is his important discovery at the end of the play, thanks to Hickey and Parritt. As he himself states, he's "the only real convert to death that Hickey made." Jaques, who wanted to be Touchstone, has become Hamlet, contemplating the skull. We, the audience, have actively participated in his private world and at the play's end we come to realize—where the Fool is placed traditionally—in the grandstand of philosophical detachment, where he observes a dance of death.

Throughout, he seems pleased with his own objective stance and his own ability to see the world more clearly than the others. There's something foolish about his smugness at times, and the others are right to mock "de old Foolosopher." In this respect Larry reminds us of Jaques, who is anxious to wear the motley of Touchstone in order to inveigh against philosophy. Larry has to learn that to philosophize is to be phony: "we ripe and ripe...we rot and rot." Larry's belief that the life of the pipe dream gives life to the bum proves true, and, in fact, touches the very nature of comedy, which is the lie that affirms life, that represses the terror of death, that allows for a kind of "happiness." (O'Neill, in a letter to Macgowan, December 1940, said that the bums at play's end "must tell these lies as a first step in taking up life again.")

Larry Slade, in short, functions as the Fool, looking at two sides of every question, the critical commentator sporting a sardonic grin. We know, however, as Hickey knows, as the others know, that Larry is not an outsider, that he is involved, that he cannot tune out. A static commentator, a detached spectator, from the side, a man who does not function as the Fool, is irrelevant and immaterial, as the lawyers say. The lie of the pipe dreams restored, sing and roar with laughter. An abundance of happenings within the frame of the play, all of which is going on, in short, not only because of his essential nature, but because of his essential nature, take a step closer to them. His comic stance, in other words, is not the way of hiding from himself his tragic pity. He wishes merely to observe the dance of death, but he is dancing with the rest. This is his important discovery at the end of the play, thanks to Hickey and Parritt. As he himself states, he's "the only real convert to death that Hickey made." Jaques, who wanted to be Touchstone, has become Hamlet, contemplating the skull. We, the audience, have actively participated in his private world and at the play's end we come to realize—where the Fool is placed traditionally—in the grandstand of philosophical detachment, where he observes a dance of death.

The end of The Iceman Cometh is emotionally charged, perhaps too charged for the recollecting closure we usually experience in witnessing tragedy or comedy. Too much happens, lasts too long, stays with us too long, that the play ends as it starts, with death. Hickey, in a sense, is the denouement, the character who brings the play home to us. The play ends as it started, both in time and in space, with death. Hickey calls his murdered wife a "darned bitch," catches himself, pleads insanity: Harry Hope pounces on that idea in order to survive; Hickey understands the premise and goes along with it. Harry Hope pounces on that idea in order to survive; Hickey understands the premise and goes along with it. Harry Hope pounces on that idea in order to survive; Hickey understands the premise and goes along with it. Harry Hope pounces on that idea in order to survive; Hickey understands the premise and goes along with it. Hickey declares his guilt, echoing Hickey's words: Larry sends Parritt to his death; Hope and the others are jubilant, the whisky now alone is gone; the thud of Parritt's body is heard; Larry realizes he's Hickey's only convert to death; and Hope and the chorus, pipe dreams restored, sing and roar with laughter. An abundance of happenings within twenty minutes of playing time, maintaining a rhythm, a speed, that makes the ending of the play more alive than any previous dramatic segment.

Certainly, Hope and company are more alive now than they were at the play's beginning. Larry, in contrast, is now the dead one. "oblivious to their racket," O'Neill tells us. He is looking directly at truth, at mortality, at existence; in fact, Larry, now a tragic figure, is looking at what the genre of tragedy traditionally looks at: the truth of our
existence, the terror of death, the vulnerability of mankind. The racket of the bums, their laughter, their togetherness, their survival, their ability to weather the storm and come to a safe harbor—last harbor though it is—all belong to a world of comedy. These two clashing ideas make the ending of The Iceman Cometh especially complex and troublesome. When O'Neill says that "the comedy breaks up and the tragedy comes on," he seems to be tracing the movement of Larry Slade, as I have attempted to describe it.

I believe, however, that some of the comedy remains to the very end, that Hope and his comrades are not as tragic as O'Neill maintains. He sees them as victims of life, and he treats them with "understanding compassion," as he states, but we leave them in the midst of life, poor life though it is, lacking the vivacity we associate with the soul of festive comedy, but carrying on, in illusion and drink. They live.

A survivor of the Belsen concentration camp said: "In my happier days I used to remark on the aptitude of the saying, 'When in life we are in the midst of death.' I have since learnt that it's more apt to say, 'When in death we are in the midst of life.'" This could apply to Harry Hope and company. Our last image before the curtain descends is an uneasy one. We look at the tragic Larry, alone, facing the truth of things; and we look at and hear Harry Hope and the gang carousing. We witness the death of illusion and the life of illusion, and we leave the theatre recognizing that O'Neill's vision of life, tragic though it is, contains the important dimension of comedy, thereby offering his audience the deepest sense of reality.

--- Normand Berlin

IN IBSEN'S BACK ROOM: RELATED PATTERNS IN THE ICMEN COMETH AND THE WILD DUCK

The impact of Henrik Ibsen on the mind and art of Eugene O'Neill is well known. After seeing Hedda Gabler in 1890, O'Neill was drawn to see it again on nine successive nights, later commenting that it had "discovered an entire new world of drama" for him and gave him his "first conception of a modern theater where truth might live." Nor has the specific influence of The Wild Duck escaped notice, especially in articles by Sverre Ibsen, a noted critic. Nevertheless, seeing the Ibsen play in production a few years previously, the effect on O'Neill that this influence on The Iceman Cometh, especially in terms of theatrical effectiveness, had not been fully analyzed. The author of this essay wishes to explore in this essay are three: the plays' settings, especially the effect achieved by O'Neill in moving from the front room to the back room—the "Bottom of the Sea"—between the Conventional Life and the Self-indulgent Life; and the architectonic similarities between the two plays in their mixture of comedy and tragedy.

In establishing the actual setting as well as its symbolic implications in The Iceman Cometh, O'Neill is openly referential. The set-up is a "back room and a section of the bar of Harry Hope's saloon..." The right wall of the back room is a dirty black curtain which separates it from the bar. In the Ekdal home Ibsen sets up a large attic with sliding doors in the rear wall which, when opened, reveals the bright lights that most of the things in it were left by a sea captain called "The Flying Dutchman" who never returned. Hedvig is fascinated by the books (one with the picture of "Death with an hourglass and a girl") and a clock with "figures that are supposed to come out. But the clock doesn't go any more." The author of this essay wishes to explore in this essay are three: the plays' settings, especially the effect achieved by O'Neill in moving from the front room to the back room—the "Bottom of the Sea"—between the Conventional Life and the Self-indulgent Life; and the architectonic similarities between the two plays in their mixture of comedy and tragedy.

Ibsen's back room is mysterious, and filled with echoes of past life. Gregers questions Hedvig regarding the room, learning that most of the things in it were left there by a sea captain called "The Flying Dutchman" who never returned. Hedvig is fascinated by the books (one with the picture of "Death with an hourglass and a girl") and a clock with "figures that are supposed to come out. But the clock doesn't go any more." The author of this essay wishes to explore in this essay are three: the plays' settings, especially the effect achieved by O'Neill in moving from the front room to the back room—the "Bottom of the Sea"—between the Conventional Life and the Self-indulgent Life; and the architectonic similarities between the two plays in their mixture of comedy and tragedy.

Although the major portion of Ibsen's play—all but the first of its five acts—is set in the Ekdal house, it is worth noting at least briefly the significance of the first setting, which reveals the bourgeois existence from which Hjalmar has been exiled and which he now fears. The front room is a study lined with books that will never be read by Old Werle. The green-shaded lamps are very low to protect his failing eyes. Mrs. Sorby allows smoking only in the brightly lit back room where the overfed capitalists who are Werle's guests drink punch, play the piano, and compete at blind man's buffet with the hostess. Of course it is clear that these elements are a shade off from respectability, as indeed is the whole Werle household. Nevertheless, it impresses Hjalmar and arouses in him a feeling of alienation that is reinforced by the embarrassing appearance of his father, shuffling through the room in his cheap wig. Both Ekdals want to get out of this household and retreat to the safety of their home.

The letter, as noted above, is similarly represented by two rooms. First, the large room where the family work and eat and Hedvig reads. When Gregers arrives, the drunken dreamer, Old Ekdal, can't resist opening the sliding doors at the rear to reveal the back attic and the treasure he and Hjalmar have created: an artificial forest with rabbits, pigeons, chickens, and the wild duck. The duck is the center of attention because catching one is so rare. Gregers assumes that after the duck was shot she "dived right for the bottom," and Ekdal responds.

You can bet on that. They always do. The wild ducks—streak for the bottom, deep as they can get, boy—bite right into the weeds and sea moss—and all that devil's beard that grows down there. And they never come up again (152-153).

O'Neill makes use of this symbolism in the description of Harry Hope's saloon, and in the characterizations of his derelicts.

HEDVIG. But it sounds so strange when someone else says "depths of the sea."

GREGERS. But why? Tell me why.

HEDVIG. I don't believe it. But why?

GREGERS. It couldn't be. Now tell me why you smiled.

HEDVIG. That was because always, when all of a sudden—in a flash—I happen to think of that in there, it always seems to me that the whole room and everything in it is called "the depths of the sea!" But that's all so stupid.

GREGERS. Don't you dare say that.

HEDVIG. Oh, yes, because it's only an attic.

GREGERS. But why?

HEDVIG. Because there's nothing in there but light, and air, and... that's all.

HEDVIG. (astonished). That it's an attic?

HEDVIG. Oh, yes, because it's only an attic.

GREGERS. Yes. Do you know that for certain?

(Hedvig, speechless, stares at his open-mouthed.) (164)
I think it is apparent that the entire Gregers-Hedvig discussion, with its implications of the tension between life and death, the stopping of time, and the mystery of the “bottom of the sea,” must have appealed to O’Neill and influenced his total conception of The Iceman Cometh. Consider simply the influence seen in the staging. As I remarked above, O’Neill takes the front and back rooms of the Ekdals, turns them sideways, and puts the focus on the back room. Here, as at the Ekdals’, there is a “front room”—the section of the bar which is open to the public and in which Rocky and Chuck do non-periodical chores. Here, selling sandwiches to workers. Through the window of this room can be faintly seen the outside world from which the inhabitants of the back room have retreated, just as the Ekdals had retreated from the world represented by the Werle home. Past a “dirty black curtain” is the saloon’s back room, which Larry Slade describes as

the No Chance Saloon. It’s Bedrock Bar, The End of the Line Café, The Bottom of the Sea Rathskeller! Don’t you notice the beautiful calm in the atmosphere? That’s because it’s the last harbor. No one here has to worry about where they’re going next, because there is no farther they can go (25).

Here, referentially, Larry establishes the same aura which prevailed in the attic. In one way that was just an attic; but it was also something much larger, with echoes of the hunting of former times, echoes of the “flying Dutchman” who never came home again, formidably of Death and the girl, and all of the inhabitants, including the wild duck who dived for the bottom. Relling’s line to Gregers about the household in The Wild Duck could as easily be applied to the inhabitants of Hope’s saloon: “There’s no one but fugitives here” (202). As the attic existed as an attic, this exists as the back room of a New York bar; but, again like the attic, it also has another level of existence as “the bottom of the sea.” Also present are the piano, smoking and drinking from the back room at the Werle house—the symbols of easygoing self-indulgence.

Another similarity between O’Neill’s back room and Ibsen’s attic room is that normally, in both, time has stopped. Years go by and Hope never leaves the saloon. Only Hickey comes and goes between this world, the haven at the bottom of the sea, and the other, outside world of capitalistic enterprise. But time takes on meaning in both plays because a birthday is about to occur, and in Hope’s saloon time becomes important to people who wait for that member of the outside world who brings them free liquor and laughs when he tells the life story of the put-down Hjalmar. While Hickey has arrived. Previously, “You could set your watch by his periodicals” (13). And so the question is repeated, “What time’s it?” (18). Time is again important at the end of the play, for the detectives will arrive at 2:00. But after Hickey’s departure, time again stops, and the booze has its kick again, because hope/pipes dreams have returned.

Hickey is the only habitué of Hope’s back room to venture voluntarily into the outside world. He epitomizes the person who is torn between two modes of existence that are markedly contrasted in Wild Duck and Iceman—conventional Life, and the Self-indulgent Life. O’Neill himself was drawn in both directions of this standard dichotomy of the time. O’Neill, according to both Frank and King Larnder, Hickey’s description of his “periodicals” and his returns home seems an apt description of Larnder’s life.

The elements of the Conventional Life, as it is mirrored in the plays of Ibsen and O’Neill, are capitalism, the family, order, thrift, cleanliness and self-control. In contrast, the Self-indulgent Life is characterized by drunkenness, sloth, sexuality, parasitism. Hickey’s条es The Iceman Cometh, but in fact he is not. The Fat Gentleman, the Bald-Headed Man and the other dinner guests at Werle’s represent those for whom conventionality is not only attractive, but essential if the society from which they make their profit is to continue. Hjalmar has never been suited to this life; he knows nothing of conventional, work is owed into silence by the prosperous men around him at Werle’s. He is happy to escape to his home, put on his old smoking jacket, loosen his tie and play his flute. He is at home in his front room because of his pipe dream that he is an inventor; but in reality his life exists in the back room with the animals. The tree has stopped work but is a lot of fun to have anyway because we can take it apart and clean it and put it together again” (166). He dreams of the tomorrow when his invention will bring him success, his father will be able to smoke his uniform in public again, and Hedvig will have money to live on after he is gone. In other words, he is just like the inhabitants of Hope’s back room, who live on both literally and figuratively, surviving on the idea that one day they will be able to take their places in the outside world and lead the Conventional Life. For Hickey, for Jimmy Tomorrow and the others: he cannot dive into the bottom of the sea as the others have, and so he is filled with hatred for himself, for his wife, and for these fugitives who have successfully removed themselves from the Conventional Life—accept the relief of the Self-indulgent Life.

Hickey stands, of course, in obvious contrast to Larry Slade, who, like the others, has withdrawn from the Conventional Life, and whose significance has many ramifications both within the play and beyond it. The character is based on Terry Carlin, who lived with O’Neill and was an influence on the young playwright’s outlook. A gifted, capable man of business who chose instead to live with a prostitute and do nothing, Carlin was once lured back into the Conventional Life, and was so successful that he was offered a large salary after discovering a defective process in a tannery factory. However, he rejected the Conventional Life, was cheated of his salary, and withdrew entirely into the process of drinking himself to death. (Since he lived to the age of 79, partially supported by O’Neill, this seems to have been a slow process.)

Of greatest importance here is the fact that Carlin was a great Ibsen enthusiast who wrote articles on the Norwegian for the Anarchist papers before giving up on mankind entirely. He is also said to have given O’Neill the idea for Iceman by (1) telling him about the informer (Judas) in the McNamara Anarchist bombings "out on the coast," and (2) providing the idea for the Larry/Parritt/Rosa segment of the plot. In short, O’Neill created a character (Larry) based on his friend and mentor in a play that reflects Carlin’s love of Ibsen and dedication to the Anarchist cause. Although Larry Slade seems successfully withdrawn from the Conventional Life—sitting objectively, he claims, in the grandstand and waiting only for death—he learns through Hickey’s visit that he still feels the pull toward—not the Conventional Life, but a participation within the framework of the Conventional Life in order to demolish it, and replace it with something better.

A major component of the Conventional Life is marriage, and while O’Neill is usually likened to the traditional views on marriage expressed in his plays, there is at least as strong a similarity to the views of Ibsen. The Wild Duck features a number of marriages, for instance, and the attitude they project is hardly hopeful. Besides the central marriage of Hjalmar and Gina, which is based on and maintained by deception, the play as a whole is about the past Mrs. Schmidt and her look alike, and the daughter and the marriage of Old Werle and Gregers’ mother, which sounds like Hickey’s marriage, in that the husband was continually aware of his “sins” and could not speak openly to his spouse. Throughout the play runs the idea that what Gregers posits, a true marriage, does not and cannot exist.

Parallels are both obvious and abundant in The Iceman Cometh: Hickey’s marriage to the ever-infected and his nightmares about his marriage to the unfaithful Marjory, and the preposterously unrealistic plan for marriage between Chuck and Cora. Although not a legal marriage, Larry’s failed relationship with Rosa Parritt should also be noted. In short, Ibsen and O’Neill share a view of marriage as one of the major alienating factors in the Conventional Life. It poisons the existence of both partners.
Closely related to the subject of marriage in the Conventional Life is the question of children. Illegitimacy figured in the backgrounds of both Ibsen and O'Neill, and it figures in several of their plays. In The Wild Duck the uncertainty of Hedvig's parentage leads to her death, as a result of the injury by Gregers, who may be her half-brother, that she receives her wild duck by shooting it. In The Iceman Cometh, Parritt, having spent his fortune in jail, alternately seeks forgiveness and punishment from the man who may be his father, Larry. Like Gregers, but more directly, Larry pushes a possible blood relative toward suicide. The key to the relationships in both plays is ambiguity. Is Hjalmar Hedvig's father? Is Larry Parritt's father? The playwrights never say. Lack of certainty about paternity is one of the many thorns in domestic life. O'Neill summed up his attitude to domestic life—to what we have here called the Conventional Life—very vividly in a letter to his colleague Kenneth Macgowan:

Seeing the "Glencairn" cycle of one-act plays ... makes me homesick for homelessness and irresponsibility and I believe—philosophically, at any rate—that I was a sucker ever to go in for playwriting, mating, and begettmg sons, houses and lots, and all similar nares of the "property game" for securing spots in the sun which become spots on the sun. Property, to improve upon Proudhon, is theft of the moon from oneself.

A third similarity between the two plays—one which has not been widely noted but may be at least as significant as the others—is their use of comedy. It is a commonplace of theatre criticism that neither Ibsen nor O'Neill had a sense of humor. Yet a closer examination reveals that both often spoke about comedy in their plays. Here, for instance, Ibsen writes to his friend William: "It's going to be humorous as the devil if the way it makes me guffaw as I write is any criterion." O'Neill, too, was known to chuckle at his creations, and anyone who has seen sensitive productions of Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, Reddah Gabler, Ah, Wilderness! or A Moon for the Misbegotten is aware of the intense comedy in both writers' plays. Yet the myths of the grim Norwegian and the somber American continue.

In a letter discussing a production of The Wild Duck, Ibsen described the precise comic quality that Hjalmar must have, and spoke also of a new method of playwriting in the play which might inspire young dramatists to explore new territories. He may have been indicating that the increased use of comedy, forming a strong pattern woven throughout the increasingly tragic events, was a new approach for him. In any event, the play does not merely have a few comic effects; it is constructed in waves of comedy alternating with and joining with the tragic elements, as is the case in Iceman. And in Hjalmar, Ibsen has created a classic comic figure—a "self-deceiver," to use Plato's term—and O'Neill correspondingly constructed his play with many self-deceivers, and another classic comic type—the parasite. Throughout both plays the intense tragic effect is matched by an intense comic effect.

As Timo Tiusanen says of Iceman, "Comedy is used to build up tragedy," the overall result being a "tragedy with comic overtones." One example from each play will perhaps suffice. Concerned about the possible loss of Hope's money, Mosher and McGloin have the following exchange:

MCGLOIN. He's sure to call on Bessie's relations to do a little cryin' over dear Bessie. And you know what that bitch and her all family thought of me.

MOSHER. Remember, Lieutenant, you are speaking of my sister! Dear Bessie wasn't a bitch. She was a God-dammed bitch! (132)

In The Wild Duck there is constant humor in Hjalmar's attitude about food and his claims that he is working on an invention. He is in clearly a tragic situation by the end of the play, but he never ceases to be a comic figure. Determined to pursue the Claims of the Ideal, he adopts a strong stance and refuses to accept old Werle's money, tears the deed of gift in half, and plans to move out of his house immediately. Yet he is slowly but irresistibly drawn back to the table [he had remarked earlier, "Yes, I really prize these hours around the table" (173)] to drink coffee, eat, and complain about the absence of butter. He then pastes the safety's "make safe" [he had remarked earlier, "The key to the relationships in both plays is ambiguity. Is Hjalmar Hedvig's father? Is Larry Parritt's father? The playwrights never say. Lack of certainty about paternity is one of the many thorns in domestic life. O'Neill summed up his attitude to domestic life—to what we have here called the Conventional Life—very vividly in a letter to his colleague Kenneth Macgowan:

Seeing the "Glencairn" cycle of one-act plays ... makes me homesick for homelessness and irresponsibility and I believe—philosophically, at any rate—that I was a sucker ever to go in for playwriting, mating, and begettmg sons, houses and lots, and all similar nares of the "property game" for securing spots in the sun which become spots on the sun. Property, to improve upon Proudhon, is theft of the moon from oneself.

A third similarity between the two plays—one which has not been widely noted but may be at least as significant as the others—is their use of comedy. It is a commonplace of theatre criticism that neither Ibsen nor O'Neill had a sense of humor. Yet a closer examination reveals that both often spoke about comedy in their plays. Here, for instance, Ibsen writes to his friend William: "It's going to be humorous as the devil if the way it makes me guffaw as I write is any criterion." O'Neill, too, was known to chuckle at his creations, and anyone who has seen sensitive productions of Ghosts, An Enemy of the People, Reddah Gabler, Ah, Wilderness! or A Moon for the Misbegotten is aware of the intense comedy in both writers' plays. Yet the myths of the grim Norwegian and the somber American continue.

In a letter discussing a production of The Wild Duck, Ibsen described the precise comic quality that Hjalmar must have, and spoke also of a new method of playwriting in the play which might inspire young dramatists to explore new territories. He may have been indicating that the increased use of comedy, forming a strong pattern woven throughout the increasingly tragic events, was a new approach for him. In any event, the play does not merely have a few comic effects; it is constructed in waves of comedy alternating with and joining with the tragic elements, as is the case in Iceman. And in Hjalmar, Ibsen has created a classic comic figure—a "self-deceiver," to use Plato's term—and O'Neill correspondingly constructed his play with many self-deceivers, and another classic comic type—the parasite. Throughout both plays the intense tragic effect is matched by an intense comic effect.

As Timo Tiusanen says of Iceman, "Comedy is used to build up tragedy," the overall result being a "tragedy with comic overtones." One example from each play will perhaps suffice. Concerned about the possible loss of Hope's money, Mosher and McGloin have the following exchange:

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Mandl's words) is, of course, hardly unique to these plays: Eben Cabot's mother exerts a ghostly power over her son in Desire Under the Elms, as does Orin Mannon's mother in Long Day's Journey. Tyrone, who becomes increasingly remote, "ghostly," throughout the first three acts, and his husband talking in June, 1939, about his family as "a thing that haunted him": 4 and the husband of the protagonist which symbolizes emotional distance from men--but also suggests women's sexual power over them. This power links them to two absent women who influence a pair of characters who reside immediately outside the central circles of the plot. Jimmy Tomorrow and Harry Hope, whose allegorical names underscore their status as major symbolic figures, also occupy leadership positions among the derelicts: Larry designates Jimmy the head of the Tomorrow movement (in which all members pipe-dream of regaining past jobs or status "tomorrow"); Harry provides the saloon setting and the birthday occasion where hope may flourish, and helps restore the derelicts' hopes at the end by declaring "insane" Hickey's dreadful gospel of self-honesty. Their personal pipe dreams apparently come together, one with Harry's focused on the past, Jimmy's on the future. But these illusions share the figure of a missing woman whose memory each erects in order both to elicit the sympathetic support of his fellows and to rationalize his inertia. The manner of these distortions, and the differing weights given to their pipe dreams by O'Neill, help explain certain features in the portrait of Mary Tyrone which would soon emerge in Long Day's Journey.

Harry Hope's pipe dream about his dead wife Bessie is more prominent than Jimmy's about Marjorie, partly because Bessie is related to Ed Mosher, who uses his sister's memory to manipulate Harry Mosher first brings Bessie up as an alibi for his failure to put Harry to bed, claiming Harry "said you couldn't bear the flat because it was one of those nights when memory brought poor old Bessie back to you." 5 Harry's face instantly turns "long and sad and sentimental," and "a suitable sentimental hush falls on the room" as he adorns Bessie's sweetness that greets him at the bar. Another twenty years ago he "didn't have the heart" to run for Alderman (602-603). Since that time, grief has kept him from even walking outside the bar. Larry, however, quickly establishes an ironic context for Harry's sentimental-non-journeys by confiding to Parritt that "by all accounts, Bessie nagged the hell out of him" (603); and in the second act, Mosher facetiously rebukes McGloin's criticism of Bessie by reminding him, "you are speaking of my sister! Dear Bessie wasn't a bitch. She was a God-damned bitch!" (651). Hickey's frontal assault on Harry's false memory in Act Three completes the process, and it becomes obvious that Harry's idealization of Bessie serves to justify his neurotic withdrawal from outside contact.

Instances of men sentimentally grieving over dead women are common in O'Neill, of course. Sheaffer cites the "legion of dead wives and mothers in O'Neill's writing," and Eben Cabot, Reuben Light and Orin Mannson spring immediately to mind as particular precursors of Harry in the neurotic nature of their grief. But these illusions share the figure of a missing woman whose memory each erects in order both to elicit the sympathetic support of his fellows and to rationalize his inertia. The manner of these distortions, and the differing weights given to their pipe dreams by O'Neill, help explain certain features in the portrait of Mary Tyrone which would soon emerge in Long Day's Journey.

GHOST STORIES: ICMAN'S ABSENT WOMEN AND MARY TYrone

Judith Barlow's Final Acts has reminded us (in impressive detail) of the intricate relationship among O'Neill's late autobiographical plays. The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey into Night are particularly close. Set in the same year (1912, the year of O'Neill's attempted suicide and the discovery of his tuberculosis), they were conceived in the same month (June, 1939); and their common themes and similar tragicomic tones bear out Louis Sheaffer's conclusion that Journey "was already taking shape in [O'Neill's] mind as he worked on The Iceman." One striking similarity is between Icmcan's female ghosts--the missing women who haunt the play's central figures--and Journey's Mary Tyrone, who becomes increasingly remote, "ghostly," throughout the first three acts, and spends the last act off-stage, where she continues to haunt the Tyrone men until her reappearance at play's end. O'Neill's strategy of female "absence as presence" (in Bette Tiusanen, O'Neill's Scenic Images (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 272, 283.

1 Quoted in Louis Sheaffer, O'Neill, Son and Artist (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), pp. 577-578.


4 Ibid., p. 579.

5 Yvonne Shafer

NOTES


3 Eugene O'Neill, The Iceman Cometh (New York: Random House, 1946), p. 3. Future citations refer to this edition and will be included in the text in parentheses.


6 "The Theatre ...," p. 51.


10 Ibid., p. 579.


however, the projection is more diffuse than in Journey, for the former play represents O'Neill's final attempt escaped from his familial ghosts before his direct confrontation with them in the latter. As a consequence, the absent women of Iceman--Bessie Hope, Marjorie Tomorrow, Evelyn Hickman and Rosa Parritt--represent, as Michael Manheim has demonstrated, various aspects of O'Neill's mother, Ella Quinlan O'Neill. But they can also be viewed as sketches for the character of Mary Tyrone. Taken together, they suggest (in their absence) his reluctance to create a character modeled so directly on his mother; but his handling of their relationships with men also points toward the particular strategies he will pursue, and the ambivalence he feels, in using his mother's ghost to make that character in his next play.

If one conceives Iceman's structure as interlocking circles, Hickey, Larry Slade and Don Parritt inhabit central circles, and all the other characters can be located on rings outside of theirs. On very peripheral circles are Maggie, Pearl and Cora, the three prostitutes. The only women on stage, they have virtually no impact on the major female influence in O'Neill's late plays. It is the specter or projection of a powerful woman--but also the projection is more diffuse than in Journey, for the former play represents O'Neill's final attempt escaped from his familial ghosts before his direct confrontation with them in the latter. As a consequence, the absent women of Iceman--Bessie Hope,Marjorie Tomorrow, Evelyn Hickman and Rosa Parritt--represent, as Michael Manheim has demonstrated, various aspects of O'Neill's mother, Ella Quinlan O'Neill. But they can also be viewed as sketches for the character of Mary Tyrone. Taken together, they suggest (in their absence) his reluctance to create a character modeled so directly on his mother; but his handling of their relationships with men also points toward the particular strategies he will pursue, and the ambivalence he feels, in using his mother's ghost to make that character in his next play.

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longing for the maternal nurturing which he never had. Preparing while he wrote *Iceman* to confront his mother's ghost in the subsequent *Journey*, O'Neill parodies Harry's sentimentalism, and thereby reveals his own subconscious decision to discard the sentimental mask. He succeeds: no one would argue that Mary Tyrone represents a sentimental idealization of Elia O'Neill.

Unable to confront the emotional pain caused by Edmund's illness, Mary withdraws into her room, into the spare room, into morphia--thus failing to provide her son with a mother's love and emotional support in time of crisis. She does the opposite to Edmund:Tyrones, as she relentlessly dredges up the past to blame Jamie, Tyrone and Edmund--and occasionally herself--for their present afflictions. However, victimized by life herself may be, her narcotic numbing of pain deepens the suffering of the other family members. There is sentimentality here, at least of a positive nature.

Indeed, the case of Jimmy Tomorrow suggests that O'Neill may have been a bit too sentimental in his *Journey*. His pipe dream of Mary Tyrone, his long-departed woman, then, seems far less acute than his awareness of the danger of false sentimentalism, for Marjorie remembers Mary-Judie as beautiful and speaks of her with "*nuzzy, self-pitying melancholy out of a sentimental dream*" when she tells Harry "there are more bitter sorrows than losing the woman one loves by the hand of death" (656-657). Hickey quickly repudiates his mother's sentimentalism, and the discrepancy between Marjorie in bed with an officer "started you on the booze and ruined your life," the truth is "you were pretty sick of her for hating you for getting drunk" (657). If Harry Hope's case symbolizes the false idealization of one departed woman, Jimmy Tomorrow's represents the false blame of another.

The play, then, would seem to suggest O'Neill's awareness of the dishonesty of attributing your unhappiness to victimization by a female ghost, rather than taking responsibility for your own condition. But the Jimmy-Marjorie relationship receives much less attention than that of Harry and Bessie. Bessie's name is invoked early and often--in fact: Marjorie is mentioned once in Act Two, once again in Act Four. Moreover, Jimmy himself plays a smaller role in the action than Harry, speaks far fewer lines, and thematically symbolizes illusions about the future, the past, O'Neill's recognition of the potential dishonesty of falsely blaming a long-departed woman, then, seems far less acute than his awareness of the danger of false idealization; and the subsequent *Journey* reflects this imbalance. Intriguingly, the Mary-Edward relationship obliquely resembles Jimmy's pipe dream about Marjorie, with the woman presented as prime betrayer in both. After all, Edmund's only "sins" toward Mary are the original one--being born--his sickness and sensitivity as a child, and his current contraction of tuberculosis. His verbal attacks on her are rare, and partially justified by her narcotic withdrawal. Considering the circumstances of his birth and life in a tormented family, one can hardly blame O'Neill for picturing himself in Edmund as one more sinned against than sinning. But it is interesting to note that the personal roots of Hickey's long-lasting resentment for the woman she herself--her narcotic numbing of pain deepens the suffering of the other family members. There is sentimentality here, at least of a positive nature.

**Minor ghosts from a distant past, Marjorie and Bessie foreshadow the recently deposed, long-departed woman, into the spare room, into morphine--thus failing to provide her son with a mother's love and emotional support in time of crisis. She does the opposite to Edmund:Tyrones, as she relentlessly dredges up the past to blame Jamie, Tyrone and Edmund--and occasionally herself--for their present afflictions. However, victimized by life herself may be, her narcotic numbing of pain deepens the suffering of the other family members. There is sentimentality here, at least of a positive nature.**

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18

elderly ages. As is well known, O'Neill's suicide attempt took place in 1912 in a similar setting (Professor Manheim suggests) to Parritt's betrayal of his mother may re-enact O'Neill's betrayal of Ella O'Neill following her death, when he could not bring himself to meet the train bearing her dead body back from California in 1923. 11 Parritt also, as Sheaffer has indicated, dramatizes O'Neill's connection of his self-hatred to its source: his mother, with a consequent matricidal impulse that finds expression in both Parritt and Hickey. 12 But most important for my purposes, the Parritt-Rosa relationship anticipates that of Edmund and Mary in Journey. Parritt confides to Larry in the third act that Rosa 'used to spoil me and made a pet of me. Once in a great while, I mean. When she remembered me. As if she wanted to make up for something. As if she felt guilty' (667). Victimized by neglect in his childhood, Parritt came second to Rosa's pipe dream, the Movement, and to her numerous lovers. Edmund is similarly, briefly spoiled by Mary--when she remembers him, before her true lover and her cross-morphine, comes to reclaim her. In times past and present. In Iceman, Rosa's emotional abandonment of her child is rationalized by her political, idealistic and sexual motives. But those motives are masked devised by O'Neill's imagination to shield him one last time from the truth proclaimed repeatedly in Journey, that Edmund's birth caused the addiction that caused his mother's neglect--a neglect wrenchingly re-enacted during the long day's journey of the play.

Finally, Parritt (like Larry) offers us another revelation of O'Neill in the process of journeying toward the painful truths of his next play. Parritt first informs Larry he betrayed his mother for patriarchic reasons, later claims he did it for money, and finally faces the reality that his betrayal stemmed from hatred of a mother who gave him neither attention nor freedom. Feeling the onion, Parritt proceeds through a process of disillusion--like O'Neill, preparing for Journey as he composes Iceman, subconsciously stripping away layers to get at the truth about his feelings toward his mother. Hickey, Larry and Parritt all endure similar ordeals of disillusion about their feelings toward an absent woman; and the play itself is, of course, the final illusory construction which must be created, then cast off, before O'Neill can "face [his] dead at last and write" Long Day's Journey Into Night (vii).

Obviously, a paper of this length cannot exhaustively treat the subject of the complicated connections between the relationships and strategies of Iceman and Journey. One might object in particular that the link I perceive between the (alleged) female betrayals of men in Iceman and the portrait of Mary as the prime betrayer of Edmund in Journey ignores the destructive role played by the other Tyrone men; for Journey's depiction of the aggression of brother against brother and father against son is clearly anticipated in Iceman's middle acts, when male camaraderie collapses under the weight of Hickey's systematic exposure of pipe dreams. But however hostile the men of both plays may be toward one another, they also offer emotional support in a way that the absent women of both play--by their very absence--cannot. As several recent articles have suggested, O'Neill (like many male American authors) was hardly fair or objective in his portraits of women. Journey points to the major source of this in his relationship with a mother whom (according to Louis Sheaffer) "he could never, on an emotional level, absolve." But Journey did, at least, permit Elia Quinlan O'Neill to enter fully into his speaking scenes, as she dreamed them, and to inhabit them. Without Iceman, however, that liberation might never have occurred; and the offstage sketches of women in that play thus shed light not only on both plays' themes, but on the complex processes of a creative mind which composed one masterpiece while preparing for another.

-- James A. Robinson

NOTES


4 Sheaffer, p. 505.


7 Sheaffer, p. 500.


9 Manheim, pp. 138-139.

10 Sheaffer, p. 505.


12 Sheaffer, p. 499.

13 In the same issue of The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter as the Mandi article cited above are two other feminist approaches to O'Neill: Doris Nelson, "O'Neill's Women," 3-7; and Trudy Drucker, "Sexuality as Destiny: The Shadow Lives of O'Neill's Women," 7-10. See also Sheaffer, pp. 500-501; and the O'Neill Newsletter 10, 2 (Summer-Fall 1986), 15-16, where Prof. Jean Anne Waterstradt summarizes the papers delivered at a panel on "Women in O'Neill's Plays," including Judith Barlow's "Mothers and Virgins: Mary Tyrone, Josie Hogan and Their Antecedents" and Bette Mandl's "Wrestling with the Angel in the House: Mary Tyrone's Long Journey."

14 Sheaffer, p. 499.

WRESTLING WITH THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE: MARY TYRONE'S LONG JOURNEY

Eugene O'Neill said that he wrote Long Day's Journey Into Night "with deep pity and understanding and forgiveness for all the four haunted Tyrones." We know, from the work done by Arthur and Barbara Gelb and by Louis Sheaffer, the extent to which O'Neill was indeed facing his own dead when he shaped this play "written in tears and blood." O'Neill's success in creating what is often called the greatest American play is a tribute to his genius as a dramatist as well as to a psychological lucidity remarkable for a beset son and brother. Louis Sheaffer defines O'Neill's concern in Long Day's Journey:

He was writing at once an indictment and a defense of his family. The need to justify and absolve himself rose above all their frailties and offenses, but at the same time he was saying that he had at last made peace with them; he was projecting both his original view of the family, as he remembered it, and his deeper insight, more compassionate attitude afterward (Playwright 241-2).
O'Neill undoubtedly faced his most difficult self-imposed task in creating the role of Mary Tyrone, based on his mother, Ella Quinlan O'Neill, who was addicted to morphine from the time of his birth. It is around Mary Tyrone that O'Neill creates his problematic character, the play, that the most ambivalent feelings of both family and audience swirl. Brendan Gill, for example, says in his review of the 1986 New York revival of Long Day's Journey, that while the plot might seem to evoke sympathy for Mary Tyrone, in fact, "the theme is that women are murderous destructive by nature and men are in constant peril of not surviving their machinations" (93).

I believe, with most critics, that O'Neill achieves a far more delicate balance than Gill's response would suggest. In his effort to work from a painful sense of grievance toward compassion. O'Neill created a richly complex portrait of Mary Tyrone as mother and mother. The drama and the play in its revision, such as Adrienne Rich describes: "the anguished mother with fresh eyes, in a new critical direction" (35). Inspired by the personal suffering he was courageously confronting, O'Neill manages to allow Mary/Ella to articulate her own. The result, I would suggest, is an authentic representation of a woman at odds, to use historian Carl Degler's term, with home and family as they were structured in her day. Mary Tyrone emerges in the play in uneasy relation to those virtues associated with what Barbara Welter has called the "Cult of True Womanhood": "pity, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (21).

Carol Smith-Rosenberg describes the role of woman as it was envisioned in Mary Tyrone's youth:

Nineteenth-century American society provided but one socially respectable, non-deviant role for women--that of loving wife and mother. Thus women who presumably came in assorted psychological and intellectual shapes and sizes, had to find adjustment in one prescribed role. They were supposed to demand continual self-abnegation and a desire to please others. Literature on child-rearing, genteel women's magazines, children's books all required women an altruistic denial of their own ambition and a displacement of their wishes and abilities onto the men in their lives" (213).

What historians, such as Smith-Rosenberg, as well as literary analysts, such as Elaine Showalter, have made increasingly clear in the last few years is that for some women the only escape from the rigorous imperatives that governed the private sphere to which women had been relegated, was a retreat into chronic illness or madness. Mary's addiction to morphine has its own specific features, including the particular stigma associated with drug addiction, that while the plot might seem to evoke sympathy for Mary Tyrone, in fact, "the theme is that women are murderous destructive by nature and men are in constant peril of not surviving their machinations" (93).

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When O'Neill introduces Mary, she has been free of drugs for the two months since her most recent treatment. In the early moments of the play, she seems indistinguishable from the traditional women of her day. As Tyrone and Mary enter, he compliments and teases her and she responds flirtatiously with affection and good humor. She shares in the vision, of the ideal being presented to Jamie when he was a boy in his story about Shawneegus's outsmarting the wealthy Harker. It is, however, that Mary will be tested to the limit and that her return to morphine is imminent. Edmund is clearly ill and his illness, a reminder of her father's death from consumption, serves as the catalyst. Increasingly anxious, Mary is especially vulnerable to memories of the most difficult events of her life. She recalls vividly, for example, the death of her baby, Eugene, which occurred when she had left the children with her mother to accompany James on tour, and Janie, who had been forewarned, infected the baby with measles. She had heightened awareness, as well, of the time after Edmund's birth, when morphine was first prescribed for her.

When O'Neill introduces Mary, she has been free of drugs for the two months since her most recent treatment. In the early moments of the play, she seems indistinguishable from the traditional women of her day. As Tyrone and Mary enter, he compliments and teases her and she responds flirtatiously with affection and good humor. She shares in the vision, of the ideal being presented to Jamie when he was a boy in his story about Shawneegus's outsmarting the wealthy Harker. It is, however, that Mary will be tested to the limit and that her return to morphine is imminent. Edmund is clearly ill and his illness, a reminder of her father's death from consumption, serves as the catalyst. Increasingly anxious, Mary is especially vulnerable to memories of the most difficult events of her life. She recalls vividly, for example, the death of her baby, Eugene, which occurred when she had left the children with her mother to accompany James on tour, and Janie, who had been forewarned, infected the baby with measles. She had heightened awareness, as well, of the time after Edmund's birth, when morphine was first prescribed for her.

...
Mary Tyrone less harsh as the play evolved. All the same, the design of the play itself poet” (154). As Travis Bogard says of Tyrone, “He remains a simple man, free of death’’ (153-4). Tyrone can appreciate the indications that Edmund has the “makings of a Moreover, O'Neill recovered from his bout of tuberculosis, but the prognosis for Edmund’s habit after twenty-five years, during a stay in a convent rather than a sanatorium. She reveals the telling discontinuity of her focus when she speaks of the past: “I had two dreams. To be a nun, that was the more beautiful one. To become a confessing penitent; that was the other” (104). As a pious young convent girl, she had had fantasies about two roles that were sanctioned for women, which would have permitted experience beyond the domestic. While Tyrone is persuasive in suggesting that Mary would probably not have been successful at either attempt, her dreams provide us with poignant clues to her desire for a life beyond what had been designated. Mary consistently acknowledges her love for her husband, but wonders why her devotion led so relentlessly to loss and diminution. In the extraordinary final scene, Mary, carrying her old wedding gown, more deeply into her past than she had ever been before, manages to suggest dark and troubling questions about the human condition. O'Neill's gift for illuminating the universal is matched, however, by his talent for representing the specific and the personal. In his fidelity to the truth of experience, O'Neill reveals the consequences of the reigning illusions of a particular time. He is no less accurate in his representation when he is himself susceptible to them.

The research of Virginia Floyd and of Judith Barlow on the versions of Long Day's Journey from the scenario to its final form, suggests that O'Neill made his portrait of Mary Tyrone less harsh as the play evolved. All the same, the design of the play itself suggests the validity of Edmund's outcry: “It's pretty hard to take at times, having a dope fiend for a mother” (120). O'Neill chose to make Mary's withdrawal from her family into her past seem final and hopeless even though Ella O'Neill did freely herself from her habit after twenty-five years, during a stay in a convent rather than a sanatorium. Moreover, O'Neill recovered from his bout of tuberculosis, but the prognosis for Edmund's illness remains in doubt. It is, then, at the time of Edmund's greatest need that his mother is unavailable to him, and it is his belief that her retreat is intentional. He says to Tyrone: “You know something in her does it deliberately—to get beyond our reach, to be rid of us, to forget we're alive! It's as if, in spite of loving us, she hated us!” (383). He identifies her illness as metaphor, as a manifestation of a profound reluctance to live the life of the true woman, but no conception of alternatives presents itself.

In Long Day's Journey, it is only Mary who truly fails Edmund. He gets the response he needs from his father. When he calls Tyrone "a stinking old miser" (145). Tyrone defends himself eloquently with the story of his impoverished youth and offers to send Edmund to a sanatorium at least somewhat better than the “state farm.” Edmund is clearly moved by Tyrone's admission of regret that his boy's failure is the result of more challenging roles. He and Tyrone become sufficiently companionable that Edmund talks to his father about his great love for the sea and knows he is understood when he says that "he will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never be in love with death’’ (153-4). Tyrone can appreciate the indications that Edmund has the "makings of a poet” (154). As Travis Bogard says of Tyrone, "He remains a simple man, free of cynicism, incapable of self-contempt, and, like all of us, (431). Even Jamie, in his bitter self-denunciation as a brother who has a part in this that hates life and wishes Edmund bars, probably strengthens their bond with his confession, while emancipating Edmund somewhat from his influence.

Mary emerges as most culpable, in spite of the playwright's having given her some latitude of expression. The perspective of the aggrieved son is a source of the drama's power. No doubt O'Neill omitted any reference to the fact that, by Edmund’s age, he had already been briefly married and had a child, in order to maintain such a singleness of focus. Yet as the play concludes there is more of a sense of resolution than of desolation. A gentling influence is most at work at those moments when O'Neill permits Mary Tyrone a voice that transcends her conflicts with the dictates of pure womanhood. Mary says, for example:

None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever (61).

Here she sounds most like Edmund/Eugene, whom she somewhat resembles. O'Neill assigns Mary lines that enunciate "all the four haunted Tyrones.” Acknowledging their affinity, he identifies her with his own psychological and artistic purpose of achieving “deep pity and understanding and forgiveness.” Through his de-mythologized recognition of the mother as separate and different and yet like, O'Neill moves his play toward realized intention.

-- Bette Mandl

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whilst the idiolects are so interwoven that, besides creating character, they contribute straight-forward plain language in real life." Even the most loyal O'Neillian has voices) of the early sea plays and The Hairy Ape. Each character in Hope's Bar has a particular idiolect, so that, even when it images torpor, the stage is verbally lively, uses a more complex form of the polyphony (the multitude of various and intercutting multitudinous seas incarnadine'' "is such a polysyllabic monstrosity as was never spoken artifice. We might call it "intuition," or "having an ear," but at an important level it which it is said. Each has the fine gift of all the dramatists, the capacity to command belief in the propriety of any given speech to its speaker: what we might label the "naturalness" of the dialogue. Such naturalness is obtained through selection and artifice. We might call it "intuition" or "having an ear," but at an important level it is composed. As Shaw pointed out, a line such as "This my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine" is such a polysyllabic monstrosity as was never spoken anywhere but on the stage: but it is magnificently effective and perfectly intelligible in the theatre."


We're all fall guys and suckers and we can't beat the game! ... Christ, if I felt the way you do! --is measured in Jamie's suddenly plain, "I thought you did." Made complicit because we have enjoyed the parody, we respond more sharply to both the implied resentment of one brother and the pain of the other. It is a modern equivalent of the suspension of writing in terms of talk ... so fed up with the dodge question of dialect, and it that banality or melodrama belongs to the character, not the dramatist. Such linguistic elements vary the surface of the play even whilst creating a dense texture of implication. And the shifts between them enable some of the most poignant moments as, for example, when the hurt inflicted by Edmund's mockery of Jamie's slang-- They never come back! Everything is in the bag! It's all a frame-up! We're all fall guys and suckers and we can't beat the game!... Christ, if I felt the way you do!--

Whilst the variant registers contribute to our sense of individual reality, O'Neill contributes to their "character" or "voice" in his own different way. O'Neill's own familiar commentary is telling ("I'm so straitjacketed by writing in terms of talk ... so fed up with the dodge question of dialect," and "it needed good language and lift it beyond itself") because of the risk of lapsing into the melodramatic or the sentimental inheritance of O'Neill and all the new prose dramatists. Yeats, saying that when modern people are deeply moved they have no expressive language but gaze silently into the fire, looked for a nostalgic answer in recent drama, as did Maxwell Anderson and even whole plays of O'Neill might be misjudged, but they are important experimental stages in the development towards the controlled texture of the mature writing.

For all its intimacy and its tiny cast, Long Day's Journey, too, is a polyphonic play. The Tyrones speak General American, like O'Neill and his audience, but have access to various registers that reveal the play of past experience within present existence. These color the dialogue but avoid the limitations of stereotyping apparent when a character only has access to dialect.

Mary, under influence of the drug, uses a gushing girlish register ("her eyes look right into your heart," "I was so mad at myself"); she and Tyrone have an Irish lilt when they address each other lovingly; Tyrone quotes Shakespeare sententiously ("the fault dear Brutus is not in our stars..."); Jamie parodies his father, travesty Shakespeare's lines or using fiendishly apposite stage directions (including both the teasing. "The Moor, I know his trumpet" in the opening scene and the terrifying. "The Mad Scene. Enter Ophelia," late in the play), quotes melancholic fin de siècle poetry or, more harshly, falls into coarse Broadway slang; whilst Edmund echoes the others' quotation with ironic versions of his brother's slang and, occasionally--budding more harshly, falls into coarse Broadway slang; whilst Edmund echoes the others' quotation with ironic versions of his brother's slang and, occasionally--budding more harshly, falls into coarse Broadway slang; whilst Edmund echoes the others' quotation with ironic versions of his brother's slang and, occasionally--budding more harshly, falls into coarse Broadway slang; whilst Edmund echoes the others' quotation with ironic versions of his brother's slang and, occasionally--budding
accurate. If my love was with me I didn't notice it. She must have been a ghost." The echo compels the audience to perceive the unconscious irony of Jamie's words and to recognize the part the maternal relationship has played in warping his life. Which is what I meant at the outset when I used the word "subtle" in relation to O'Neill. There is need here of Arthur Miller's "Attention, attention must be paid"--our attention is already riveted on these victims.

Our attention is demanded, too, by the complexity of the dialogue. The play itself teaches us how to listen to it. Perhaps, most obviously, through Ibsenish keywords. Certain references recur (to Shakespeare, to music, to the Virgin Mary, to the dead baby, to cheap doctors), and we are increasingly responsive to their significance for the character. They are also made to hear silences, areas of reticence. They use euphemisms, hiding from Edmund's "sawdust cold," referring now in morbide as "the poison," "her curse," so that breaking the taboo necessarily raises the dramatic tension. O'Neill, therefore, can shock the audience with Edmund's sudden cry, "Mama it isn't right," or bring us, gothic in its effect, when Mary, unlike the audience, fails to respond to the cry; only to disarm our hostility to the unfeeling mother, when, after Edmund has stumbled miserably away, he allows her the bare admission, "Oh, James, I'm so frightened. I know he's going to die."

The intensity of feeling is, again, in direct relation to the sparsity of the words and to their potent ordering. From such tormenting exchanges we recognize more generally that opportunities will always be missed, since the most heartfelt attempts at mutual confidence result in the cruelest denials.

This, then, is language in action, creating relationship by its lively juxtapositions. Attention must be paid to facts and events to their effect on the play, and the audience, becoming attuned to the texture of the dialogue, is able to leap the gaps and understand the shared assumptions. At any given moment, one of the four dominates, voicing delight, disappointment, engaging our sympathy, until the same character, by a cruelly thoughtful action, is clearly displaced, the place at the center of attention taken by another character. We must hold the classes of all four and delay judgment on the accusation and counter-accusation we hear.

The final scene is as deeply familiar and as perennially starting as the endings of other tragic masterpieces, and directors interfere at their peril with the stage picture O'Neill's text demands. Mary Tyrone stands right-front and speaks quietly to herself whilst her true self, in silence stage center, weeps and swears. When Edmund, out of context, her words contain no deep thought, no great poetry. Heard within the linguistic and dramatic structure of the play, however, they are almost unbearably moving.

The effect could only be achieved by a dramatist with an acute sense of what T. S. Eliot meaningfully used when he called it "the image," in which the verbal and visual are powerfully interactive. We hear one character but see the others listening silently: tormented, like us, by the words; sensitized by the ongoing action so that a word, a gesture, even a position the stage activates our memory of other moments that have prepared, and can now extend, the immediate image. Chandelier flashed on, Chopin waltz played, Mary enters, the hair she has continually neatened now let down, and she carries her wedding dress retrieved from the old trunk in the attic. This while through repeated naming have become emblematic of family mythology are now visibly present on the stage. The various speech resources of the character--quotation from Shakespeare, from fin de siecle poetry, Mary's schoolgirl register--are newly present now when the Tyrones are, at last, all together and all apart in the night of the title, to which the whole play has been inexorably moving.

All the linguistic variances and experience of the play is now available to enable O'Neill to bring this devastating drama to its end. There is little that has not been created and used in Moon of the Caribbeans, or patterned singing of "Shenandoah" in Mourning Becomes Electra, here he appeals to the auditory imagination with verse whose rhyme and meter cause it to linger in the mind. As the three stanzas of Swinburne's "A Levetaking," spoken by Jamie, are interwoven with dialogue in which each man, in turn, makes a brief and futile attempt to impinge on Mary's reverence, the poem, at once sonorous, impersonal and dreadfully appropriate, offers the minimal comfort of artistic formality: an elegy, spoken by the son for whom the least comfort is possible. The motif of Mary's final quotation, "there is no help for all these things are so," set against the naive trusting words of Mary's final monologue, "I know she heard my prayer and would always love me and see no harm ever came to me," are hardly less bearable by the stage listeners than by the audience watching them; particularly so because, as Mary's present tenses indicate, she has retreated into the world of the past whilst we share the perspective of the on-stage listeners. In the beautifully poised final lines, the quiet ending of her speech and of the play, we meet another example of O'Neill's precision: the verb tenses change treacherously, past and present now inseparably bound together, so that Mary again looks back to the past from the present from which there is no escape for any of the four Tyrones:

That was in the winter of senior year. Then in the spring something happened to me. Yes, I remember. I fell in love with James Tyrone and I was so frightened.

There is no finality in such a play. Life continues without solutions, not purged of suffering. Using an unusually extensive range of registers and speech forms, O'Neill has found scenic and linguistic means to explore the themes of alienation, inarticulacy and dispossessiveness, experienced by people striving for something more--themes which had occupied him since his earliest work.

There is much more to be said about this linguistic delicacy and complexity: but, instead, let me end by noting O'Neill's ironic humor and a brief example of dense texture in dramatic writing. A mark of O'Neill's mastery--of the functional and distinctive quality of his dramatic imagination and dramatic language--is that, in Edmund's monologue, precisely where expression is most in the past, more --"there is no help for all these things are so,"' set against the naive trusting words of Mary. Edmund's monologue, precisely where expression is most in the past, more --"there is no help for all these things are so,"' set against the naive trusting words of Mary. Edmund's monologue, precisely where expression is most in the past, the genuine voice that, even so, remain sardonically in character for the onstage speaker:

I couldn't touch what I tried to tell you just now. I just stammered.

That's the best I'll ever do. I mean if I live. Well it will be faithful realism at least. Stammering is the native eloquence of our fog people.

-- Jean Chothia

Notes

"Postscript to a Journey," Theatre Arts, 41 (April 1957), p. 27.

1 The sources of the quotations in this paragraph are, in this order, the following.


2 The sources of the quotations in this paragraph are, in this order, the following.


WAITING FOR THE DOUGIE: O'NEILL'S HUGHIE

There is, perhaps, no modern dramatist whose work seems so stylistically different from Eugene O'Neill's than Samuel Beckett. Where Beckett is concise, O'Neill is long-winded; where Beckett is abstract, O'Neill is concrete; where Beckett is suggestive and subtle, O'Neill is direct and repetitious. Where Beckett is minimalistic, O'Neill is expansive, perhaps even excessive. Yet many of O'Neill's stage directions bear such a striking similarity to Beckett's that some critics believe O'Neill's work is a conscious attempt to keep pace with the modern drama. In Godot, Vladimir and Estragon are simply listed in a running soliloquy as they journey to the rendezvous, while in O'Neill's most optimistic plays by some critics, and the paradoxical hope for human contact within the dark void of the modern world invites comparison with Waiting for Godot.

With Hughie, O'Neill creates a world of wistful affection for a grandfather who has his moment of glory in the limelight. In this setting, the stage is darkened, so that all signs of the hotel lobby were lost in the darkness. All the characters shrink to the center of the action while the rest of the world seems to be essentially confined to the space defined on stage. But on closer examination, Hughie proves to be unmistakably O'Neillian.

The setting is one aspect of the plays in which the parallel between the two works can be seen; while they serve similar purposes, they are quite different in detail. Godot takes place on a country road; the only physical feature present is a tree. The setting in Hughie, on the other hand, is more elaborate:

The desk and a section of lobby of a small hotel on a West Side street in midtown New York. . . . It is one of those hotels, built in the decade 1900-10 on side streets of the Great White Way sector, which began as respectable second class but soon were forced to deteriorate in order to survive. . . . The desk faces left along a section of seedy lobby with shabby chairs. The street entrance is off-stage, left. (Hughie 262)

And so on. This sets the action of the drama in a specific place at a specific time, unlike Godot, which seems to take place outside of familiar time and space. The setting in Hughie, however, is depicted in great detail. For example, the character of the Night Clerk, in which he is seen alone for several moments, with "nothing to do," is described:

So are his fat arms" (263). These stage directions go on at great length, specifying details of dress, color of eyes and hair, styles of walking, and so forth.

O'Neill's characters are often based on people he knew, which partially explains the abundance of details; but in contrast to Beckett's, these descriptions suggest another effect. Beckett's characters are described in action: who they are is defined by what they do; and what they do very quickly involves the other character. Vladimir and Estragon are seen together, interacting virtually from the moment the curtain rises. (Even at the opening of Act II, when Vladimir appears alone on stage, he is highly agitated until Estragon appears, and Estragon's boots are on stage, which presents the presence of Estragon himself.) In Hughie, on the other hand, the characters are described in isolation from the outset, and they remain rather separate from each other until the very end. Eric speaks, and Charlie barely listens; Charlie's thoughts are hardly ever verbalized, and they are often less than friendly.

The opening scenes illustrate this difference further. In Godot, when Vladimir enters, there is almost immediate interaction:

(Enter Vladimir

Estragon: (giving up again). Nothing to be done.

Vladimir: (advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart). I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. (He broods, muttering on the struggle. Turning to Estragon.) So there you are again.

Estragon: Am I?

Vladimir: I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone for ever.

Estragon: Me too.

Vladimir: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. (7)

Although Vladimir does not, at first, directly address Estragon, he does respond to Estragon's words: he thinks about something that Estragon has said. He then welcomes their reconciliation, a decided hopeful and positive opening moment. In Hughie, the opening is quite different. After the lengthy stage directions describing the Night Clerk, in which he is seen alone for several moments, with "nothing to do," Eric enters. Then, after further lengthy stage directions describing Eric, the latter speaks:

(ERIC avoids looking at the NIGHT CLERK, as if he resented him.)

ERIE: (peremptorily) Key. (Then as the NIGHT CLERK gropes with his memory--grudgingly.) Forgot you ain't seen me before. Eric Smith's the name. I'm an old-timer in this fleabag. 492.

NIGHT CLERK: (In a tone of one who is wearily relieved when he does not have to remember anything—he plucks out the key.) 492. Yes, sir.

The introduction of characters in the two plays further indicates the different approaches of the two dramatists. In Godot, Vladimir and Estragon are simply listed in the dramatica personae by name. When the play begins Estragon is described as follows:

Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before. (7)

When Vladimir enters, he is seen "advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart" (7), suggesting the presence of Charlie Chaplin perhaps, but not providing much in the way of physical or psychological characterization. In Hughie, on the other hand, O'Neill describes his two characters in great detail. For example, he indicates that the Night Clerk is "in his early forties. Tall, thin, with a scrappy neck and jutting Adam's apple. His face is long and narrow, and his hair thin, with a few greys in it. He is always perspiring, slavish, waddled, with pimples from ingrowing hairs" (263). He also describes Eric as being "around medium height but appears shorter because he is stout and his fat legs are too short for his body. He is around five feet six inches" (263). These stage directions go on at great length, specifying details of dress, color of eyes and hair, and so forth.

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Estragon, sitting on a low mound, is trying to take off his boot. He pulls at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again. As before. (7)
This is the conversation of two potential combatants stalking each other. Very few words are spoken; only the most utilitarian kind of contact is made. Soon after, in this opening scene, Erie becomes "secretive, with sinister undertones," and the Night Clerk (Charlie) "appears to listen with agreeable submissiveness" but be impressed, but his mind is blank and he doesn't hear unless a direct question is put to him, and sometimes not even then" (266).

This is the way many of O'Neill's other plays end, with this kind of disconnectedness. One thinks of Mary Tyrone rhapsodizing on her lost youth, while her husband and sons sit silently, isolated from each other and from her, each one lost in his own faded hopes and dreams. Or Lavinia, the lone survivor of the Mannon family, shutting herself off from the world to face a lonely andmnt within the Mannon mansion. Or even Larry Slade, sitting alone at Harry Hope's, unable to feel part of the life that has returned to the bar as the others celebrate the resurrection of the sustaining pipe dreams. All of these signs of isolation, or aloneness, usually take center stage at the end of an O'Neill play; more often than not, the opening depicts people together, communicating, somehow sustaining each other, or trying to do so—the Tyrones, the Mannons, the men at Harry Hope's. All are not necessarily happily together, there is a bond, or several conflicting bonds, that are quickly established. Hughie begins where many of the others end (especially the later plays): these other plays move from togetherness to isolation, while Hughie moves from isolation to togetherness.

In Beckett's Godot, the characters do not move; time passes, and the characters remain together at the end, much as they were at the beginning, to continue their ordeal, their waiting, their lives, which are eternally bound together. The play has a circular, or cyclical, pattern, rather than a progressive or regressive one, which more accurately describes the structure of Hughie as well as many of O'Neill's other plays. In the case of Hughie, the characters move from isolation to camaraderie, from suspicion to supportiveness.

In Godot, Beckett dramatizes the companionship between the two central characters through dialogue that is often, paradoxically perhaps, rather disjointed and nonsensical. At one point, for instance, they have decided that, to pass the time, they will begin to converse calmly all over again:

ERIE: (Taking the key, gives the CLERK the once-over. He appears not to notice it.)

Vladimir: When you seek you hear.

ERIE: You think all the same.

Estragon: You do.

ERIE: It does.

Estragon: You do.

ERIE: That prevents you from finding.

E: It does.

V: That prevents you from thinking.

E: You think all the same.

V: No no, impossible.

E: That's the idea, let's contradict each other. (41)

And so it goes, seeming much more like stream-of-consciousness, or free association, than conversation. To make the connections, Vladimir and Estragon seem to be operating within the same consciousness, aware of the subconscious workings of a single set of memories, rather than searching for conversational cues within a casual interaction between two people. Immediately after this exchange, Estragon congratulates them: "That wasn't such a bad little canter" (42). This frequently repeated sentiment calls attention to their ability to engage each other's interest, to participate with each other in some kind of interaction that will pass the time.

This is quite different, structurally and dramaturgically, from the way in which O'Neill depicts the "interaction" between Erie and Charlie. Their conversation makes more sense, on the surface, because it is mostly narrative and mostly in the form of

monologue. For instance, early in the play, Erie explains that he received his "moniker" because he was raised in Erie, Pennsylvania:

I don't remember nothing much about Erie, P-a, you understand—or want to. Some punk burg! After grammar school, my Old Man put me to work in his store, dealing out groceries. Some punk job! I stuck it till I was eighteen before I took a run-out-power. (The NIGHT CLERK seems turned into a drooping waxwork, draped along the desk. This is what he used to dread before he perfected his technique of not listening: The Guest's Story of His Life. He fixes his mind on his aching feet. ERIE chuckles.) Speaking of marriage, that was the big reason I ducked. A do and a half, and the Night Clerk, he hooked for the other old shotgun celery. I had to play being a sucker. This doll in Erie—Daisy's her name—was one of them dumb wide-open dolls. All the guys give her a play. Then one day she wakes up and finds she's going to have a kid. I never knew she was married. I vowed to myself to be in her life when I married her at last. I was always figured, she didn't have no idea who, so she holds a lottery all by herself. Put about a thousand guys' names in a hat—all she could remember—and drew one out and I was it. Then she told her Ma, and her Ma told her Pa, and her Pa come round looking for me. But I was no fall guy even in them days. I took it on the lam. For Saratoga, to look the bangtails over. I'd started to be a horse player in Erie, though I'd never seen a track. I been one ever since. (269-270)

This is the standard O'Neill story of the "conventional," stiffing, small-town youth left behind; it provides exposition, as well as an opportunity for an actor to tell an amusing, theatrical story. The details of the story, though, exclude the listener from participation in the experiences being recounted. Daisy, her Ma and Pa, Erie's Pa, the grocery store, escape to Saratoga—all of these concrete references make Erie an individual, different from other individuals with other stories and other details. Vladimir and Estragon seem to share a vaguely defined past, but O'Neill emphasizes that Erie and Charlie come from different molds. Thus, O'Neill engages the audience directly with his characters, as individuals, recognizing universal, concrete differences, while Beckett capilalizes on the more abstract notion that we share a collective past as human beings. Both approaches allow an audience to see the universal applications of the characters and situations depicted on stage; but Beckett's assumes a sense of sharing and connectedness, while O'Neill's derives from a sense of isolation and disconnectedness.

Apparently, O'Neill designed Hughie more to be read than staged (Carpenter 164), an intention which may help to explain one of the devices he uses to indicate the separation between the two characters. As the play progresses, although many of the stage directions relate to Erie, most of them consist of the characters' usual way of speaking. The reader begins to separate stage directions (in italics in the Modern Library edition) from spoken words, and to associate most of the spoken words with Erie and many of the (italics) inner thoughts with Charlie. The reader gains a sense of being played for a sucker. This doll in Erie—Daisy's her name—was one of them dumb wide-open dolls. All the guys give her a play. Then one day she wakes up and finds she's going to have a kid. I never knew she was married. I vowed to myself to be in her life when I married her at last. I was always figured, she didn't have no idea who, so she holds a lottery all by herself. Put about a thousand guys' names in a hat—all she could remember—and drew one out and I was it. Then she told her Ma, and her Ma told her Pa, and her Pa come round looking for me. But I was no fall guy even in them days. I took it on the lam. For Saratoga, to look the bangtails over. I'd started to be a horse player in Erie, though I'd never seen a track. I been one ever since. (269-270)

How to depict this on stage is, of course, the central challenge this play poses to any director. Whether one chooses to keep the thoughts silent, to use a voice-over with the actors on stage remaining silent, or to have Charlie speak his thoughts without any response or acknowledgment from Erie, perhaps using a lighting effect to set off thoughts from words, the director's interpretation as to how to depict whatever approach is taken, the important point is that it should serve to bring the audience into an interaction with Charlie, while it should exclude Erie. In this way,
through theatrical effect, the separation of the two characters is reiterated.

The dialogue in both Godot and Hughie may, for different reasons, then, seem disjointed, obscure, ambiguous. In Godot, the audience is the outsider, unaware of the precise connections the two characters make; but the connections are there, communication works, the dialogue, however, is aware of more than either character, in terms of what the other says or thinks; the audience understands the connections, but communication between the two characters barely functions, and the dialogue often comes to an uncertain halt.

About midway through Hughie, for instance, Erie is laughingly remembering Hughie's naïveté concerning horses, when he suddenly becomes 'reflective':

ERIE: ...'Y'know, it's funny how a dumb, simple guy like Hughie will all of a sudden get something right. He says 'They're the most beautiful things in the world, I think.' And he wins! I tell you, Pal, I'd rather sleep in the same stall with old Man o' War than make the whole damn Politics. What do you think?

NIGHT CLERK: (His mind darts back from a cruising taxi and blinks bewilderingly in the light: "Say yes.") Yes, I agree with you, Mr.--I mean, Erie.

ERIE: (With good-natured contempt.) Yeah? I bet you never seen one, except back at the old Grounds in the sticks. I don't mean them kind of turtles. I mean a real horse. (The CLERK wonders what horses have to do with anything--or for that matter, what anything has to do with anything--then gives it up. Erie takes up his tale.) (276)

On several occasions in the play, Charlie summons himself back to the "conversation" like this, guessing at an appropriate reply. Often it works, and the conversation (or, that is, Erie's monologue) continues uninterrupted. In this case, however, his response is strikingly inappropriate, and even Erie is surprised by it. By responding affirmatively to Erie's proposition that it is better to sleep with a horse than with a woman, Charlie's words suggest a connection between the two men that does not exist. And so Charlie wonders what "anything has to do with anything." Charlie cannot make the connections because he does not listen to Erie; Erie cannot make the connections because he cannot hear what Charlie is thinking.

It is evident, even in this scene, that Erie wants to communicate. His speeches are not monologues because he does not attempt to engage in a dialogue. He obviously had a communicative relationship with Hughie for fifteen years. Now, he attempts several ploys to get Charlie to interact with him, and he is never malicious. If he insults Charlie, he does so playfully, "good-naturedly." In fact, ironically, by comparison, Vladimir and Estragon are far more malicious towards each other, calling each other names such as "moron," "vermin," "sewer rat," and worst of all, "Critic!" (48). Vladimir often gives orders to Estragon, and the relationship between Pozzo and Lucky adds a malicious element to Godot that is absent from Hughie. The characters in O'Neill's play do not become outwardly angry at each other; that requires communication. They do, however, express frustration, anger, and bitterness at their situation, at Life.

Towards the end of the play, Erie wishes that Hughie were still alive so that he could boast to him of his false conquests with games and women, but then he has second thoughts, as he declares, "bitterly resigned":

But Hughie is better off, at that, being dead. He's got all the luck. He needn't do no worryin' now. He's out of the racket. I mean, the whole goddamned racket. I mean life. (287-288)
In both cases, the prospect that destruction may not be total, that someone will be left to endure, makes the nihilistic response unacceptable. In both plays, there is a sense that the individual actions of the characters are unimportant in the context of the larger philosophical question of life itself. In Godot, the characters defer a final decision to wait for Godot; but in Hughie, the Night Clerk is confronted with steel and stone, formidable resistance.

In Godot, the possibility that Godot may still come tomorrow keeps Vladimir and Estragon waiting; if they were to kill themselves today, they might miss Godot if he came tomorrow. They can convince each other to endure because, together, they have a purpose; alone, either one would lose his will. In Hughie, however, it is only after rejecting the nihilistic option, after facing the steel and stone, that Charlie finally confronts his loneliness, and then begins to turn to Erie:

The CLERK's mind still cannot make a getaway because the city remains silent, and the night vaguely reminds him of death, and he is vaguely frightened, and now that he remembers, his feet are giving him hell, but that's no excuse not to act as if the Guest is always right: "I should have paid 492 more attention. After all, he is company. He is awake and alive. I should use him to help me live through the night. What's he been talking about? I must have caught some of it without meaning to." The NIGHT CLERK's forehead puckers perspiringly as he tries to remember. (285)

In the face of silence, Charlie now needs companionship, but because of the flawed communication between them, now Erie does not hear him until, in his bitterness, he faces the same truth. After he claims that Hughie is lucky to be "out of the racket," Charlie responds:

NIGHT CLERK: (Kicked out of his dream—with detached, pleasant acquiescence.) Yes, it is a goddamned racket when you stop to think. Isn't it, 492? But we might as well make the best of it, because—Well, you can't burn it all down, can you? There's too much steel and stone. There'd always be something left to start it going again. (288)

Here, Charlie's thoughts become his words, without his awareness, and this moment marks the beginning of genuine interaction between the two men. They talk, move, together, away from the reality of silence and death, and towards a mutually beneficial companionship, ultimately symbolized by the two men huddled over the dice, shooting craps. Just as Vladimir and Estragon play games to get them through the day, so now, Erie and Charlie have found a game to get them through the night. Day or night, the game symbolizes the human interaction we need to survive.

There is an important difference, though, between these two relationships. The friendship between Charlie and Erie is based on a false premise: "The CLERK sees [Erie] now as the Gambler in 492, the Friend of Arnold Rothstein—and nothing is incredible" (291). Charlie now has a "real" Gambler to replace his imaginary street characters; now he has someone real through whom he can live vicariously. And in this way, Erie gains another Hughie, someone who will sustain his pipe dream of being a skillful Gambler, thus renewing his confidence, and giving him life. This is very different from Vladimir and Estragon, whose relationship seems so much more complete, honest, and enduring. They also have Godot. Erie and Charlie do not even have an appointment; there is no evidence that anything like Godot exists to give their lives greater meaning than they now have.

Therefore, it is difficult not to interpret the final stage directions of Hughie as a signal to the audience, much as other stage directions have been directed at the audience:

[IERE] chuckles, giving the NIGHT CLERK the slyly amused, contemptuous affectionate wink with which a Wise Guy regales a Sucker. (293)

Could this not be O'Neill himself winking in this way, not only at the Night Clerk, but at Erie and at the audience? Although the play clearly does move from isolation to connectedness, which is an optimistic movement, the connectedness is not firmly established, and it is not entirely clear where the movement ultimately is headed. In O'Neill's world, this kind of connection among people is often seen to be fragile indeed.

The final moment of Waiting for Godot has come to be somewhat emblematic of the existential dilemmas:

V: Well, shall we go?
E: Yes, let's go.

(They do not move.)

Curtain.

Vladimir and Estragon have nowhere to go; their only hope is to wait together for Godot, who may or may not come. Their relationship, however, has developed over the course of the entire play, and is so endearing that this does not seem such a terrible plight. The same cannot be said, however, for Erie and Charlie. They, too, have nowhere to go; their only hope seems to be with each other. But their relationship is built on false dreams and premises, and they have no Godot for whom to wait. Erie and Charlie have only Lady Luck, who has come and gone before, and seems mostly to have gone. Waiting for their luck to turn, to win some "dough," holds far less certain promise for these gambling characters than the promise that Godot will come holds for Vladimir and Estragon. An unknown quantity seems more hopeful than one that is known to be capricious.

Compared to the endings of his other late plays, such as A Touch of the Poet, Long Day's Journey Into Night, and Moon for the Misbegotten, in Hughie, O'Neill seems to present a relatively optimistic view on coping with life's apparent meaninglessness. The knowing wink at the end, however, suggests that O'Neill knows better, and so should we.

-- Steven F. Bloom

WORKS CITED


DRAMATIC FORM IN EUGENE O'NEILL'S THE CALMS OF CAPRICORN

The Calms of Capricorn was to have been one of the plays in a cycle of historical dramas planned by Eugene O'Neill. Plans for the cycle occupied much of the dramatist's attention during the last years of his career. O'Neill succeeded in completing only one play in the cycle, A Touch of the Poet (written between 1936 and 1946). He partly finished an extensive revision of a third draft of another, More Stately Mansions. A rough, unrevised scenario for a third play, The Calms of Capricorn, escaped destruction when, in 1943, the playwright undertook to destroy the rough drafts of remaining unfinished works. The Capricorn scenario was included among papers given by the O'Neills to the Yale Library between 1951 and 1959.

In the late 1960s, Donald Gallup, then Curator of the O'Neill Collection, undertook
The transcription of O'Neill's handwritten scenario for this work.² The theatricality of the unfinished work and its accompanying designs encouraged Dr. Gallup to undertake yet another task—that of translating the scenario into dramatic form.³ The scenario and the play developed from it have added substantially to our understanding of O'Neill's intention for the cycle.

The projected cycle of historical dramas represented a logical development in Eugene O'Neill's evolution as a playwright. Like those of European modernists, O'Neill's career was characterized by an extended pattern of experimentation, one designed to give theatrical expression to a new epoch in Western history, not merely to the political developments which distinguish it from earlier epochs, but also to the ideas, values, passions, and visions of the human condition which generated them.

O'Neill's approach to the treatment of history developed through a number of phases. In the first, that of his career as a writer, he appears to have seen history as Walt Whitman once described it: as a "theatrical backdrop" against which the lives of individuals are played out.⁴ Throughout the middle phases of his development, the playwright appeared to share the interest of European writers, including Luigi Pirandello, Jean Giraudoux, and Jean Cocteau—as well as those of painters such as Pablo Picasso and film-makers such as Sergei Eisenstein—in the interpretation of modern history by reference to myth and legend. In the last years of his career as a working playwright (1930-1943), the American dramatist was to develop an approach which has correspondences to the treatments of history developed during such the same period by Bertolt Brecht.⁵

One factor distinguishing the epic forms of O'Neill from those of these European playwrights was his attempt to create works expressive of the political, social, cultural, and moral values which have distinguished American society from earlier historical kinds. It can be argued that the major works of his final years—The Iceman Cometh and Long Day's Journey into Night—represent the height of O'Neill's skill in creating such epic forms.

It is not surprising in this context to discover that the last years of Eugene O'Neill's life were preoccupied with plans for a more formal, if not a more conventional treatment of American history; that is, with the creation of a cycle of plays which would encompass the American historical development. The first notes about this project were entered in his diary in 1931. Plans for the cycle underwent many revisions. The eventual plan, as described by Travis Bogard, involved a sequence of plays beginning in the period of the American Revolution and concluding in the period in which the cycle was originally conceived; that is, in the 1930s.

The three plays—A Touch of the Poet, More Stately Mansions, and The Calms of Capricorn—constitute a mini-cycle, a combination of a mini-cycle and its component plays. The mini-cycle is an expression of the lives of members of a prosperous and powerful American family in the years between 1820 and 1860. At the same time, each play focuses on a pattern of historical developments in the tumultuous nineteenth century, a century which saw the effective establishment of the United States as a nation and the Civil War which would challenge its unique identity.

Each of the plays in this abbreviated cycle is concerned with a specific motif in this simultaneous history. A Touch of the Poet elaborates on a motif in the pattern of immigration which shaped American society in the early decades of the century. More Stately Mansions treats industrial expansion, economic growth, changes in patterns of transportation and communications, and the effects of Fin de Siècle on the character of American society. In The Calms of Capricorn, O'Neill proposed to translate into theatrical imagery aspects of the Westward Movement, an historical phenomenon which was to alter both the individual character and the collective destiny of the American people.

One of the most striking characteristics of this mini-cycle is the pattern of variations in its component plays. As O'Neill, in his preface to The Iceman Cometh (1926), has observed, each component play is an expression of the political, social, and economic values endangering American society in the years preceding the Civil War. Indeed, the tension between the idea of freedom and the idea of slavery is the subject of a soliloquy by Honey, in the opening scene of the play. For the passengers, the ship itself becomes the societal context in which variations on this theme are played out. Scenes aboard ship treat of changes in the structure of American society; in the character and function of religion; in the roles of women in the evolving culture; and in attitudes toward personal freedom. But by far the most powerful theme in this drama is the idea of change itself. The play is organized in a manner similar to those used in the shaping of modern novels, painting, musical composition, and films. In this second work, O'Neill undertook to interpret characters and their actions simultaneously and from different perspectives; that is, to embody the essentials of an historical epoch, as well as the particulars of a pattern of interrelated personal crises, in a series of theatrical moments.

The Calms of Capricorn, the third work in this mini-cycle, is a sea play, a drama of spectacle and daring, set against the background of the 1850s and the Westward Expansion, a phenomenon which was to have a profound effect on the American imagination, as well as on the geographical, social, and economic identity of the nation. O'Neill signifies this changing face of America—character and consciousness in the journey of the Harford family from Massachusetts to California, a journey which takes them by clipper ship around the Horn.⁶

A prologue of sorts takes place on Sara Harford's potato farm in Massachusetts, where Simon's tragic quest—begun in More Stately Mansions—ends.⁷

The principal action of The Calms of Capricorn begins after the death of Simon; it is set on board the clipper ship the "Dream of the West," about to set sail from New York for San Francisco. Its passengers represent what Walt Whitman had earlier defined as a "catalogue of American types." They include Sara Harford and her sons—Wolfe (a bank clerk), Jonathan (a railroad clerk), and Honey (a tin peddler). Also included among the passengers are the owner of the ship, Theodore Warren, and his daughter Elizabeth; Ben Graber, a companion of Sara's; the Reverend Samuel Dickey, a Protestant minister; and a company of gold seekers, whose songs are often heard from their quarters below. The Captain of the ship, Enoch Payne, is accompanied on this voyage by his wife, Nancy. Also on board are Ethan Harford, the first mate; Jackson, Ethan's eventual successor; and Thomas Hull, the former mate.

The motivating crisis in the drama develops, some weeks after the voyage has begun, when the "Dream of the West" is becalmed in the South Atlantic. For twenty days, the ship is motionless, its passengers and crew imprisoned in its limited confines. O'Neill uses the calm as a device to motivate the passengers to reveal an intricate pattern of personal crises, crises which he treats as having parallels in the larger context of American history. In this third work, O'Neill's mini-cycle focuses on the unique character of American historical identity.

The journey of the Harford family from New England to California symbolizes an
historical transition with many levels of meaning, perhaps the most significant of which is imaginative. For the journey undertaken by the Harfords is a symbol of a change in consciousness, a change interpreted in terms of the personal histories of this family, but having broader implications for the society. Sara Harford demonstrates this altering sensibility in the closing moments of the drama, as the "Dream of the West" approaches its end. \[...\]

In attempting to shape a heroic saga expressive of the significance of the Western Experience, O'Neill selected a form which was known to him from his boyhood reading, the sea play. As in earlier works, such as Bound East for Cardiff, the play has the outline of a journey, a voyage both in and out of time. The form of the sea play, with its perilous voyage, seems appropriate for the interpretation of this transition in American history, not only because of O'Neill's early success with the genre, but also because of his love for and knowledge of the world of ships and shipping. The playwright uses the ship itself as a stage, not unlike those on which the history plays of the past were staged.

In his scenic sketches for The Calm of Capricorn, O'Neill undertook to compress time and space within a more-or-less formal stage arrangement. He projected against this compressed proscenium stage a pattern of interrelated actions which progresses in seeming response to the rhythms of the sea. This intricate pattern of actions proceeds along multiple and often simultaneous lines of exposition, as the playwright brings to the attention of the reader-spectator crises in the lives of each of the Harford sons and--by inference--in that of the evolving society. This complex pattern of action is projected against a number of specific settings: two on land and seven on board the "Dream of the West." Act III and IV take place in various locations on board the "Dream of the West."

Unifying this pattern of actions is a familiar motive, one symbolic of the power of the sea. It involves the obsession of Ethan, eldest of the Harford sons, with the sea, a passion symbolized in his efforts to become captain of the "Dream of the West." This motive is interpreted in two related actions, one involving Captain Payne and the struggle for the mastery of the ship; the other involving Payne's wife Nancy. A counter motive to his sea obsession is the intermarriage with Leda Cade, and the birth of Wolfe--a gambler--attracts the interest of Leda Cade, making him a figure in a phantom war. Their projected marriage represents the kind of merger of economic and social interests which would have significance for what Whitman described as the "history of the future." Another line of development is also future-oriented. It follows the interactions between the crowd of gold seekers and Sara Harford's youngest son Honey--a tin peddler--for a career as a politician in the developing West.

The play follows these related actions as they move from place to place in the physical setting of the ship, as well as from plane to plane within the collective consciousness of the principals. The climax of all actions occurs in the closing scenes of the drama, as Ethan, the sailor, takes his own life; Jonathan, the ambitious railroad clerk, concludes arrangements for a marriage of convenience with Elizabeth Warren; and Honey, the tin peddler, demonstrates his potential appeal as a politician by quelling disturbances among the gold seekers. The gold seekers en route to California, Wolfe--who perhaps represents O'Neill--appears to remain an observer in this complex drama.

In the scenario, O'Neill projected an action possessing certain of the qualities of tragedy and melodrama. Indeed, he seemed constantly to move the drama between these positions on the scale of meaning, as well as on that of style. He appears to have employed these traditional forms--tragedy and melodrama--as symbols of the unreconciled "opposites" which characterize the lives of the Harfords, the sea play in the 1850s and 1860s. While many of the crises in The Calms of Capricorn seem melodramatic in kind, both the beginning and the end of the drama have a tragic quality. The play, which begins on land, with the conclusion of Simon's quest, ends as land is sighted, with the death of Ethan. It is Sara who closes the drama with the tragic cry, "Ethan! My first-born!"

The three plays in this cycle reflect O'Neill's continuing interest in the shaping of American characters capable of achieving tragic stature. He treats variations on the theme of tragic heroism in the lives of three such characters, each of whose crises in some way representative of those taking place in American society during the period between 1828 and 1860. The tragic protagonist in The Calms of Capricorn is Ethan, who achieves, during the course of the action, considerable stature. A poetic figure, whose ideals have been shaped by earlier epochs of American history, Ethan seems destined for tragedy because of his inability to respond effectively to a rapidly changing society. The play traces his fall, noting the primary factors which will account for this tragedy: his suicide of and/or failures of his brothers in the new environment. O'Neill planned for the subsequent histories of the remaining Harford sons to be chronicled in three succeeding works tentatively entitled "The Earth is the Limit," "Nothing Is Lost Save Honor," and "The Man on Iron Horseback."

In the cycle to which he gave preliminary form, Eugene O'Neill sought to interpret American history by means of the theatrical images, poetic constructions capable of fusing forms and contents drawn from the past, as well as from popular and formal traditions evolving in the modern arts. In The Calms of Capricorn, he sought to synthesize a wide range of such materials within an epic form capable of giving simultaneous explication to actions of personal, social, and historical significance.

In the first two works of this mini-cycle, O'Neill devised forms which have similarities to European kinds: A Touch of the Poet to the romantic dramas of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and More Stately Mansions to the experimental forms of the twentieth. In The Calms of Capricorn, he appears to have attempted the creation of a more original form, a heroic saga, with characteristics drawn from the emerging traditions of American literature, music, dance, and painting, as well as others drawn from the popular art of the film.

In these three works, O'Neill appears to have devised an epic of modernist definition, a collage-like form expressive of the variety as well as the unity in American experience. The three plays are linked not so much by a continuous structure as by a unifying theme--the search of each of these American protagonists for a unique identity, one expressive of the values of a changing society. It can be argued that O'Neill shaped his epic after the manner of Walt Whitman. Like the poet he sought to create an original form out of diverse materials, to unify varied modes of expression within a complex imagery.
Like other plays in the cycle, The Calms of Capricorn is a work dependent on the language of the theatre for its realization. In December, 1981, an experimental production of The Calms of Capricorn was mounted in the Hemsley Experimental Theatre of the University of Wisconsin. Its purpose was to determine the primary characteristics of such a production language. The performance style chosen for this exploratory production was designed to translate the text into a production form devoid of excessive decoration, which could serve to give events, characters, situations, and motivating ideas clear and concrete expression. The production team sought to interpret the events taking place on board “Dream of the West” in a manner consistent with the physical setting, the historical context of the drama, the multiple lines of action outlined, and the psychological, social, and intellectual dimensions of the characters portrayed. At the same time, the production team attempted to create a theatrical language capable of revealing the motives which inform the actions of these characters, as well as something of the tension between ideals and objective conditions on the ship and in the world outside.

Perhaps the key element in the symbolic language codified by the playwright is the ship, conceived by O'Neill as a symbol of the world of the play. It was designed for this production so as to run the length and most of the width of the theatre. Its rigging, extending into the fly space, served to establish both actual and imaginative dimensions of the setting. The properties were chosen for their realism and their consistency with the period in which the play is set. Apparent discontinuities in this setting were mediated by light patterns which served to isolate and/or relate the various areas of the stag, and by a sound score which provided continuity, as well as a sense of the world outside, through the use of choral music, crowd noises, street cries, the sounds of the ship’s engines, and the ominous silence which characterized the calms.

Special attention was given to realistic details of life aboard ship, including social conventions and professional codes. Special effects were used to invoke the presence of the sea—in this work, the primary antagonist, the embodiment of fate. A major challenge involved the ways in which the identity of that sea could be made evident. The design staff undertook the development of an integrative scenic language, one which could be used to invoke the presence of the sea, as well as to suggest its power both within and without the confines of the ship.

Both major and minor characters were developed with careful attention to realism of gestures, movement, and vocalization, as well as to costumes, properties, and special effects. Major characters were developed in such a way as to interpret inner states of consciousness and to unify these several planes of being within a coherent outer identity. The style of acting chosen required realistic attention to factuality, but allowed for enlargement and enhancement of the profile of action, as well as for the texture of interior life, and the representation of transitions between outer actions and inner responses.

The orchestration of these interpretative patterns, both those acted and those expressed in design, required an extended period of rehearsals. The form which emerged through this pattern of rehearsals appeared always coherent—indeed, often powerful. In other of O'Neill’s works, the play achieved a unity in production not always evident in the text-as-read.

--- Esther M. Jackson

NOTES

1 For a more extensive discussion of the cycle, see Travis Bogard, Contour in Time (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 371-406.


3 Eugene O’Neill, The Calms of Capricorn (The Play). Developed from O’Neill’s Scenes to by Donald Gallup, with a transcription of O’Neill’s scenario, notes by Dr. Gallup, and photographs of five set designs by O’Neill (New Haven and New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1982).


5 In “Passage to India,” Whitman described Christopher Columbus as “Admiral of the ocean sea,” and the “chief histrion” in the “scenes” which characterized the world of 1492. See Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader’s Edition, p. 417 (lines 152-155) and note 154.


7 Both Brecht and O’Neill created historically defined characters who appear to exist simultaneously in the past and the present. Some of these characters were based on historical figures; others appear to have developed as imaginative representations of what Walt Whitman styled “composites.” O’Neill introduced images of Marco Polo, Juan Ponce de Leon, and the Biblical Lazarus into his dramas; Brecht developed characters based on Galileo, Saint Joan, and Adolf Hitler. In plays such as The Good Woman of Szechwan, Mother Courage, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Brecht seemed to have engaged in the creation of fictional characters whom he regarded as “representative” of definite historical figures. O’Neill followed a similar course in the creation of the sea, “in this work, the primary antagonist, the embodiment of fate. A major challenge involved the ways in which the identity of that sea could be made evident. The design staff undertook the development of an integrative scenic language, one which could be used to invoke the presence of the sea, as well as to suggest its power both within and without the confines of the ship.

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3 Eugene O’Neill, The Calms of Capricorn (The Play). Developed from O’Neill’s Scenes to by Donald Gallup, with a transcription of O’Neill’s scenario, notes by Dr. Gallup, and photographs of five set designs by O’Neill (New Haven and New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1982).


5 In “Passage to India,” Whitman described Christopher Columbus as “Admiral of the ocean sea,” and the “chief histrion” in the “scenes” which characterized the world of 1492. See Leaves of Grass, Comprehensive Reader’s Edition, p. 417 (lines 152-155) and note 154.


7 Both Brecht and O’Neill created historically defined characters who appear to exist simultaneously in the past and the present. Some of these characters were based on historical figures; others appear to have developed as imaginative representations of what Walt Whitman styled “composites.” O’Neill introduced images of Marco Polo, Juan Ponce de Leon, and the Biblical Lazarus into his dramas; Brecht developed characters based on Galileo, Saint Joan, and Adolf Hitler. In plays such as The Good Woman of Szechwan, Mother Courage, and The Caucasian Chalk Circle, Brecht seemed to have engaged in the creation of fictional characters whom he regarded as “representative” of definite historical figures. O’Neill followed a similar course in the creation of the sea, “in this work, the primary antagonist, the embodiment of fate. A major challenge involved the ways in which the identity of that sea could be made evident. The design staff undertook the development of an integrative scenic language, one which could be used to invoke the presence of the sea, as well as to suggest its power both within and without the confines of the ship.

Both major and minor characters were developed with careful attention to realism of gestures, movement, and vocalization, as well as to costumes, properties, and special effects. Major characters were developed in such a way as to interpret inner states of consciousness and to unify these several planes of being within a coherent outer identity. The style of acting chosen required realistic attention to factuality, but allowed for enlargement and enhancement of the profile of action, as well as for the texture of interior life, and the representation of transitions between outer actions and inner responses.

The orchestration of these interpretative patterns, both those acted and those expressed in design, required an extended period of rehearsals. The form which emerged through this pattern of rehearsals appeared always coherent—indeed, often powerful. In other of O’Neill’s works, the play achieved a unity in production not always evident in the text-as-read.
asked, "What is all history but the work of ideas, a record of the incomputable energy which his infinite inspirations infuse into man?"


16 Robert B. Heilman writes of the dramatic forms of Eugene O'Neill in The Iceman, the Arsonist, and the Troubled Agent (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973). He treats A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions as hybrid forms, with A Touch of the Poet tending toward a tragi-comic resolution of crises and More Stately Mansions toward a conclusion which is melodramatic. Like Griswold (see note 13), Heilman interprets melodrama as a form expressive of notions about character, action, language, thought, and setting which reflect the attitudes of society, as well as those of the individual playwright.

17 A tragic motif which emerges through the pattern of O'Neill's work is the failure of the "pursuit of happiness." The specific context of that search appears to differ from play to play. In plays such as Anna Christie, it is associated with love and family. In works like The Great God Brown, it is equated with success in the "divided" protagonist's career. In dramas such as The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape, happiness is seen as dependent on social acceptance. In Days Without End, the ground of the search for happiness is theological. On occasion O'Neill suggested that the measure of happiness in American society is wealth. Indeed, he planned to include in the projected cycle a play entitled "The Greed of the Meek." All of these themes seem to be variations on a more comprehensive theme; that is, the search for a genuine identity, a sense of self consistent with the ideals of the evolving American society. The evidence of his plays suggests that O'Neill, like playwrights in earlier periods of theatrical history, saw the search for genuine identity as inescapably tragic.


WHAT'S IN A NAME? THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "MANNON" IN MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

In a memo written in his work diary during early work on Mourning Becomes Electra at Cap d'All, France, Eugene O'Neill gave himself these instructions on the subject of names in the American trilogy he was basing on Aeschylus' Oresteia:

Names of characters--use characteristic names with some similarity to Greek ones--for main characters at least--but don't strain after this and make it a stunt--no real importance, only convenience in picking--right names always tough job.

There follows a list of the names of the major Greek characters in the Oresteia legend, with possible American equivalents, including those actually used in the final draft of the play.

O'Neill's suggestions that the names chosen would have "no real importance" besides reminding us of their Greek originals and that his only criterion for selection would be "convenience in "The Haunted" that he was the Mannon--the Mannon becomes Electra. But in a perceptive study of the significance of character names in O'Neill's work, Egil Tornqvist has shown that the question is more complicated than O'Neill's words would indicate. He points out that in writing Mourning Becomes Electra, O'Neill was in search of "characteristic names" like the Greek ones, a phrase Tornqvist analyzes in this way:

By "characteristic" O'Neill must have meant: (1) recognizable as New England names of the 1860's; (2) indicative of the mental qualities of the bearers (369).

Tornqvist then examines the first names of the characters in Mourning Becomes Electra to show that they are "characteristic" in both of his senses, thus proving that we must be wary of O'Neill's assertion that names in the trilogy will have no real importance, and attentive to his concern with finding the right names for his characters.

But Tornqvist makes no attempt to explain the significance of the surname Mannon. He gives his apparent reason earlier in the article:

If surnames usually carry less significant meanings than Christian names [in drama], there is a good reason for it. Unless the surname is given but to one character in the play, its meaning must be reasonably compatible with all who share it or else seem insignificant (363).

Perhaps Tornqvist looks for no special significance in Mannon because some who bear the name in the trilogy--e.g., Ezra, Christine, and Orin--seem temperamentally disparate, i.e., are divergent in "mental qualities." But O'Neill portrays all the members of this family as bound together by a common psychological fate symbolized by the "Mannon look" which all of the family wear. As Amos Ames says of Christine's strange look in "Homecoming":

Secret lookin'--'s as if it was a mask she'd put on. That's the Mannon look. They all has it. They grow it on their wives.... They don't want people to guess their secrets.

And at the end of "The Haunted," Lavinia, in her own words the last Mannon, includes Christine's comment about the为一体的 reckoning of the guilty Mannon dead for whom she must atone for the rest of her life (178). On their faces and in their souls, the Mannons bear the same terrible stamp, and it is worth asking if the family name in any way reflects the fact.

Any analysis of the meaning of Mannon must begin with Ezra Mannon, the family patriarch whose name is O'Neill's imitation of the Greek Agamemnon, the name of the king of Argos in the Oresteia. It is well known that Aga-mennon means "the very-steadfast," signifying particularly the Greek hero's prowess in defensive battle. There is clear evidence in "The Haunted" that O'Neill was quite aware of this fact, for he has Orin say this of his father, Ezra Mannon, the Agamemnon of Mourning Becomes Electra:

Do you know his nickname in the army? Old Stick--short for Stick-in-the-Mud. Grant himself started it--said Father was no good on an offensive but he'd trust him to stick in the mud and hold a position
Like Agamemnon, Ezra Mannon is steadfast, so we can see that on one level Mannon is a pun on "manna," "steadfast." This epithet is applicable to the entire family since they all persist in their tragic destiny even when, like Ezra (who returns from the war seeking a new loving relationship with his wife), Christine (who fights assimilation to the Mannon ways), and Lavinia (who tries to escape both the Mannon name and fate through marriage to Peter Niles), they attempt to repudiate the hateful Mannon legacy. Here, then, is evidence that the Mannon family name signifies that the Mannons are "steadfast" in their collective doom.

-- Richard P. Moulton

NOTES


2. Egil Törnqvist, "Personal Nomenclature in the Plays of O'Neill," Modern Drama, 8:4 (Feb. 1966), 362-373. Subsequent citations will be included parenthetically in the text.

3. Törnqvist observes that usually a particular significant surname is given to only one character in a play, or is significant for only one of those to whom it is given. However, he does consider certain surnames in O'Neill significant for more than one character, such as that of Captain and Mrs. Keeney in Ile (365), the Harfords and the Melodys in the cycle plays, especially the completed A Touch of the Poet (372), and Hogan in A Moon for the Misbegotten (372-373).

4. The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, II (New York: Modern Library, 1982), 9. Subsequent citations will be included parenthetically in the text.

5. O'Neill, Son and Artist (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1973). Louis Sheaffer points out that Mannon is also a pun on Mannion which is intended to emphasize the fact that the family is the richest in town (338).

REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND PRODUCTIONS


[The following review, shorn of some of its gratuitous foliage, appeared in the "Books" section of the Chicago Tribune (pp. 1, 11) on centennial Sunday, October 16. Hence the celebratory references, which have been retained. — Ed.]

Today may not loom large on everyone's cultural calendar: but for some of us it caps a joyous, worldwide series of gatherings and festivals honoring playwright Eugene O'Neill, who was born exactly 100 years ago in a family hotel on Broadway. Inspiring the summer-long tribute were two facts: that O'Neill created almost single-handedly a serious theatrical tradition for America, and that he penned several of the greatest plays yet to appear in our land. And that the October 16 centennial should see the first complete edition of his plays and the fullest collection yet of his rich and illuminating letters: well, no commemorative cake could have more glorious icing!

There was enough sensation and scandal in O'Neill's own 65 years to insure him immediate notoriety, whatever his literary or theatrical gifts. Three marriages: two divorces, the first impelling a suicide attempt in a New York City dive from which a crow rescued him; an actor-father onond of drink who had squandered his promise in search of easy success; a mother whose morphine addiction, when the young Eugene discovered it, triggered his renunciation of his Catholic heritage; a record of parental disregard that contributed to the eventual suicides of both of his sons and the disowning of his only daughter, Oona, after her marriage to Charlie Chaplin; and a record of periodic drug addiction that periodically outraged the official defenders of conventional decency. (His plays were banned in many more places than Boston!)

O'Neill's life, it might be said, reads like an O'Neill play, as that entity is traditionally (though falsely) regarded—dour, dismal and doomed. So why the celebration? And why the veneration we feel for a misbegotten man who, notoriety notwithstanding, spent his last decade (1944-1953) virtually forgotten, his plays unperformed, his hand stilled by a debilitating disease that made writing impossible? Good questions, but easy enough to answer if one examines the four books published today. They more than corroborate the hopes heaped on O'Neill in his lifetime—three Pulitzer Prizes and the 1936 Nobel Prize for Literature. (A fourth Pulitzer was awarded for Long Day's Journey Into Night when it was released in 1956.) The selected letters offer the deepest and most intimate picture yet of his inner life. And the three volumes of plays make it at last possible, without wide delving, to assess in full his theatrical achievement. And it is awesome.

The story of O'Neill's life has been well told in the past. Arthur and Barbara Gelb and Louis Sheaffer left no stone unturned and no gray area unexamined in their biographies. But the letters (560 of the more than 3,000 that Bogard and Bryer managed to uncover) flesh out the biographic bones, soften the popular image considerably, and add an up-close authenticity that no third-person account can equal. Here are letters to his parents, to childhood sweethearts, to his wives and children and fellow writers and artistic associates—a number of them excerpted in previous books but never printed in full until now. And the portrait that emerges is of a shy but dedicated, opinionated but gentle and compassionate man who wore his celebrity with some embarrassment, almost abandoned his "hopeless hope" in human
experience of love and security (despite periodic rifts) in his third marriage, to
former actress Carlotta Monterey.

The first letter, to a cousin in 1901, like many that follow it, shows that the
standard picture of O'Neill as congenital brooder, like the standard picture of his
playwright, is false. (A lover of dogs and football, who resents the bitter taste of "coff
and Mourning Becomes Electra), the threats to life and spirit of materialism and
industrialism (The Hairy Ape and More Stately Mansions), the illusions and "pipe
dreams" that can shelter or constrain (A Touch of the Poet and The Iceman Cometh), the
peace that can seep through (An Artist's Birthday), the ties of love and hate, and
members of a family--O'Neill's own boyhood family--in that richest and deepest of
American plays, Long Day's Journey Into Night. Even lesser efforts, like Welded
and Days Without End, threw revealing light on the superior works around them and on
O'Neill's attitudes toward, respectively, marriage and the Catholic faith he never
completely abandoned.

One measure of O'Neill's supremacy is the fact that, while Long Day's Journey is
the greatest American tragedy. Ab. Wilderness! may well be the greatest American
comedy. However serious his message or mission, he knew that drama must first
entertain if it is to do anything else. And entertain us he consistently does.

As an artist's birthday, though, is not the time to tote up hits and duds. Besides,
each reader should have the right to compile his or her own lists. What's important
is that today, at last, we have all the candidates, and a rich feast of memorable
plays, within eight comfortable covers. I really should not have called them icing
on the cake. These monuments will outlast any commemorative confectionery, and will
insure that Eugene O'Neill's second century will be even more triumphant than his
first.

-- Frederick C. Wilkins

2. SEA PLAYS (In the Zone, The Long Voyage Home and Ile), directed by Edward Golden.
Bard Theater, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, October 20-29, 1988.

As its contribution to the O'Neill centennial, the Department of Theater at the
University of Massachusetts used its high stage and excellent technical resources
most successfully to evocatively the nautical aura of O'Neill's early one-acts.
Stage-wide scaffolding suggested the open deck of the ships. Bulkheads and skylights,
before a sky-blue cyclorama occasionally dubbed with clouds and smoke. The stage level, accessible from above by steep stairs at both sides, was
divided into three parts, one for each of the evening's three plays. At our right, the
triple-decker bunk of the season's forecastle, for Ile. Joan Peters' sets and Spencer S.
Brown's lighting--especially the menacing, diagonal shafts of light from above in
Ile--succeeded, not only in concentrating our attention on the succeeding playing
areas, but also in providing a unity among the evening's diverse parts. Not a small
feat, considering the variety of locales--a British tramp steamer, a London dockside
pub, and a nineteenth-century American whaler. And the unity of setting underscored
the unity of these three plays; in spite of the differences of locale and time, or wherever they journey, the "children of the
sea" are gripped by a tenacious force whose talons they cannot escape.

An opening tableau, showing sailors on deck in Ile, set the tone for the evening,
inviting great interest in the subsequent performance. We heard sea sounds, ship sounds, sea
chanties accompanied by accordion, and a voice-over montage of words from various
places in O'Neill's works that suggested the variety of responses the sea arouses in
different characters, paradigms of oneness with the cosmos, and Paddy's lament for the passing of the sailing ship, "Oh these
things will out--" a refrain that was repeated several times.

"It's a hell of a life, the sea." This aural, visual and vocal prelude was repeated, perhaps even better than the plays that followed, what Normand
Berlitz, the production's dramaturg, described as "a theme that O'Neill inherited from Melville--"the ambiguity of the sea and the
ambiguity of human nature."

In the Zone is tough to bring off without Moon of the Caribbees, where Smitty's nature and past are more clearly established; but the performance caught well the snowball effect of suspicion and innuendo that is the play's core. O'Neill tended to deride In the Zone, because it does not directly confront the "behind life forces" that he saw as his creative raison d'être. But it is a marvelous study in mass hysteria and, ultimately, mass guilt. And a successful production tricks the audience into sharing that guilt by laughing in the early stages and realizing subsequently that such laughter betokens vicarious complicity in the actions of the on-stage characters.

Scott Davison, as Davis, made clear how much his character relished his special glory with Scotty; and Michael Flood, though a bit too neat and hale for someone as dissipated and dispirited as Smitty, showed the pitiable agony (when we could see him) of the Glencairn's resident outsider.

The Long Voyage Home brimmed with life, albeit low life, as the sailors, touching in their seldom-worn shore duds, were ensnared in a seamy world with whose duplicity they were ill-equipped to deal. Dudley Stone, gold chain glittering on his red plaid vest, more than lived up to his name as Fat Joe; Kate and Freda (Amanda Percival and Jennifer Lavenhar) were the tattiest of pallid tarts; and Jonathan Jude Duquette as Olson, ill at ease in his straw boater and formal attire, was a pathetically easy prey for Lavenhar's Freda, whose moment of regret for her role in his victimization was a touching thing even in the verminous squalor of dockside doxydom. Aided by a uniformly excellent cast, Bessell, who is the BPT's Artistic Director, told O'Neill's story without undermining any of its richness of character complexity and ambiguity. It would be easy, for example, to blame the three principals' subsequent deterioration on Ruth, since it is her first-scene declaration of love for Robert that sets the deterministic ball rolling. And if the declaration is insincere--just the manipulative coquetry of a femme almost literally fatale--then the blame would be deserved. But Eliza Bond played the first scene so sincerely that Ruth emerged as no more culpable than either of her beaux. The young Ruth may not know her mind or heart, but she believes what she says. (Of course, years later, numbed into retributive bitterness than of candor.)

All in all, the production, with its skillful blend of sights and sounds and confrontations, disclosed the evocative richness that was O'Neill's from his earliest days. It was that which made it an especially valuable contribution to the celebration of his centennial.

-- Frederick C. Wilkins

3. BEYOND THE HORIZON, directed by Frank Bessell. The Berkshire Public Theatre, Pittsfield, MA, September 29 - November 5, 1988, with a special matinee performance on Sunday, October 16.

Thanks to the centennial and to dedicated regional groups like the Berkshire Public Theatre, O'Neill's seldom performed early works are beginning to emerge from near-oblivion. In all my years as a peripatetic O'Neillian, I'd never, except in a fine television performance years back, managed to see a production of his first Pulitzer Prize winner until now. Why has Beyond the Horizon suffered such neglect? Its length, perhaps: three hours in this production, with two 15-minute intermissions. But longer late O'Neill plays pop up everywhere. Or possibly its oppressive heft: once the brothers Mayo and their inamorata have made their first-act choice, in the second act, they are caught in a deterministic web that provides no escape for them and little relief for us. Or it might be the sheer technical challenge of the alternating indoor and outdoor scenes that are no problem for a reader but can be daunting to a company with limited budgetary and mechanical resources. It can't be the roles, which are rich and deep--unless the inclusion of "two weary horses" in the first act and a talking two-year-old in the second are seen as insurmountable obstacles!

The Berkshire Public Theatre production, skillfully directed by Frank Bessell and atmospherically enhanced by music of Aaron Copland, proved that none of these problems are problems. The play has more than enough vitality and substance to deserve regular production. The three hours may not have flown by, but audience involvement was sustained throughout. The performance had humor--particularly in the acerbic barbs of Mrs. Atkins (Irene McDonnell)—that offered periodic breaks in the deepening gloom. The horses were, naturally, omitted (could O'Neill really have expected them?); Mary Mayo was played by a child of six or seven (Leah Lotto) sufficiently dimwitted and demure to dispel disbelief, and set designer Bud Clark easily solved the scenic challenge by showing the farmhouse interior and the area outside it simultaneously.

Before a rear curtain suffused with a pinkish sunset glow at the start, the stage was divided into a room at our left (the Mayo sitting room, which grew more disheveled as scene succeeded scene) and a farmland area at the right, bordered by a rough rail fence and a road like those of a postcard of the Berkshire Hills. Bessell, who is the BPT's Artistic Director, Aided by a uniformly excellent cast, Bessell, who is the BPT's Artistic Director, told O'Neill's story without undermining any of its richness of character complexity and ambiguity. It would be easy, for example, to blame the three principals' subsequent deterioration on Ruth, since it is her first-scene declaration of love for Robert that sets the deterministic ball rolling. And if the declaration is insincere--just the manipulative coquetry of a femme almost literally fatale--then the blame would be deserved. But Eliza Bond played the first scene so sincerely that Ruth emerged as no more culpable than either of her beaux. The young Ruth may not know her mind or heart, but she believes what she says. (Of course, years later, numbed into retributive bitterness than of candor.)

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including the title phrase, passionately. And Moran's Andrew aged credibly, retaining a touch of his early vitality and good nature even after life itself, from his natural milieu had taken its toll. (I'd forgotten how likable Andy remains--a quality that Moran's charm of mien and variety of vocal tones succeeded in emphasizing.) The elder Mayos (Amy Judd and Glen Barrett) revealed the two strains in their sons' milieu had taken its toll. (I'd forgotten how likable Andy remains--a quality that natures--she, moody like Robert; he, volatile like Andrew--though the severity of the father's outburst against Andy in the second scene was no more believable in performance than I'd found it in the script. Bruce T. MacDonald had the right salty swagger for Captain Scott; and Irene McDonnell, as mentioned before, brought more than enough querulousness to the role of Ruth's invalid mother.

Frank Bessell deserves hearty plaudits for eschewing easy answers to the hard questions involved in playing the text in full, rather than eviscerating it for easy consumption, and for showing that the 1920 Pulitzer committee was right. Beyond the Horizon may not be the most pleasant of O'Neill's plays, but it is definitely seaworthy still. I hope many more companies will follow the Berkshire Public Theatre's pioneering lead in returning it to the regular repertory.

--- Frederick C. Wilkins


The Ashland Festival Iceman came close enough to being excellent for its flaws to aggravate more than they might in a mediocre performance. I lay some of the credit and most of the blame at the door of the director, Jerry Turner, who seemed to see the play as a realistic melodrama interlarded with entertaining comic moments and a distracting subplot. At least two actors were as good in their roles as one could expect to see: Richard Elmore as Larry and Paul Vincent O'Connor (replacing Denis Arndt) as Hickey. Mr. Elmore seems to be O'Neill's Larry and Mr. O'Connor, with a perfectly conveyed Larry's particular kind of Irishness. He made strange with whomsoever he addressed, and sometimes seemed single-handedly responsible for the innumerable horrible playing.uchs Larry might have understood, finally, the depths of Parritt's story, had it been given, and might have directed the audience to recognition.

Mr. O'Connor played Hickey's scenes without problems but also without obvious distinction until Act Four. He had no chance to show much of the character because most of the lines revealing Hickey's hostility toward his old pals in the bar had been cut. (This was a simpler Hickey than O'Neill's. But if one accepted the director's premise, that the Iceman is merely a realistic melodrama, then this Hickey made sense.) In the narrative of Act Four, O'Connor created the best imaginable context for the murder and for its telling. He told Hickey's story quietly and calmly, as if the salesman was consciously thinking about himself and the murder for the first time and blundering his way to the climax. Whatever heights and depths the performance reached were largely owing to Mr. O'Connor's quiet thoughtfulness in the fourth act.

The production as a whole had many good moments, particularly in the first and last acts. The comedy in Act One was very well done. Philip Davidson as Mosher was particularly sharp, with flawless timing and an assured touch with the language. From the beginning the audience responded strongly to the comedy, laughing at the right times in Acts One and Two. But in the intermission after Act Two, I heard several people asking how many more acts there were and when it would end. The remarks testified to lost direction and momentum. Between the beginning and end heavy cuts caused the play to wander—that and self-serving antics by the actor playing Harry Hope. (Someone said that Hope seemed to be one of the boarders rather than the owner, which I thought apt.) The ensemble of bums needed a bawo continuo that wasn't there. Less annoying and less deliberate problems came with other actors to whom the slang had no meaning and the language no rhythm, or whose ethnic and regional accents came...
and went; but none of these was really distracting except in the actor overplaying Parritt. He seemed from the start a mature, street-wise man in his thirties, so much Hickey's. Larry Paulsen played the part as if he were trying out for Jamie Tyrone--and he might make a good Jamie. But he was badly miscast as the 18-year-old irritating them through adolescent nagging and guilt. In one scene he faced down Rocky! Through faintly epicene mannerisms Mr. Paulsen suggested an explanation for he had recently fallen for one. This Parritt needed nothing from Larry and gave no hint of O'Neill's tragic depths as he moved toward his doom. 

The setting by John Dexter, which made good use of the stage area and was appropriately seedy, gave the first indication of the director's decision about the Parritt story: there was no window out of which Larry could look at the end. Costumes by Jeannie Davidson, lights by James Sale, and period music by Todd Barton were all well done. I hope that in the future Ashland will try more O'Neill. They clearly have the resources to do his well. 

-- Stephen A. Black

NEWS AND COMMENT

3. "EUGENE O'NEILL AS CONTEMPORARY THEATRE" was the title of the international symposium organized by Yoshiteru Kurokawa and held at Hosei University in Tokyo on June 11-12, 1988. The following report is by Emiko Kuroda, who noted that the event, with 14 major speakers and an audience of over 200, was a great success.

The speakers were these: Tadashi Uchino (Okayama Univ., Japan), Warg Yegun (Shanghai International Studies Univ., China). Tetsuo Arakawa (Institute of Modern Theatre, Japan), Adele Heller (Provincetown Playhouse, USA), Toen Kitagawa (Theatre, Japan), Adele Heller (Provincetown Playhouse, USA), Normand Berlin (Univ. of Massachusetts, USA), and Herbert Blau (Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, USA).

The presentations were essentially of three kinds: technical, historic, and thematic.

Both Uchino and Chothia represented the technical category. Uchino analyzed O'Neill's three pageant plays, The Fountain, Marco Millions and Lazarus Laughed~ the thing most particularly lost from the middle acts was the growth of insight and
electra. Osada analyzed O'Neill's mask plays, especially The Great God Brown, stressing the process of character individuation. Egri assessed the psychological relevance of O'Neill's works. Ikeuchi spoke on O'Neill's critical view of myth and reality. Kurokawa described the aspects of love in eternal discord in Mourning Becomes Electra. Berlin considered the Beckettian aspect in O'Neill's work, focusing on the expression "nothingness" expressed in The Iceman Cometh. And Blau applied the methods of deconstruction of Iceman, especially its use of pipe dreams. Both Iceman papers aroused lengthy and interesting discussions.

The first day featured readings and performances of scenes from Long Day's Journey, Anna Christie and Mourning Becomes Electra. The second afternoon comprised a panel discussion whose main topics were (1) nothingness in O'Neill, (2) the interpretation of dramatic texts, and (3) the acceptance of O'Neill's plays in contemporary China. Thanks to the speakers' insights and the eagerness of spectators to interact with them, O'Neill's name was indelibly impressed on the minds of all who were fortunate enough to attend.

2. THE CENTENNIAL IN NEW LONDON. After a centennial-even grand ball at the Port and Starsbury (see page 50), which featured a fifteen-minute fireworks display and a 100-candle birthday cake, the O'Neill Centennial Committee, headed by Gerald P. Ceniglio, began the festivities on October 16 with a brunch at the New London Radisson, at which an ice reproduction of Norman Legassie's sculpture of the young O'Neill dripped ingratiatingly, and the winning entries in a local student writing contest were read to the assembled brunchers. At 12:15 p.m., the Governor's Foot Guard led the guests to a grandstand at City Pier, where music was provided by the U.S. Coast Guard Band and the Yale Glee Club, whose selections included the world premiere of an "O'Neill Portrait" with music by Fenno Heath and lyrics spun from words of O'Neill by George C. White. Among those in attendance were Governor William O'Neill, New London Mayor Carmelina Cono Kazler, Mr. White, and Sunday Event Chairpeople Michael Lamperelli, Sally Pavetti and Lois McDonald. Also present were actors Fritz Weaver (a memorable Con Melody from the 1970s) and Dina Merrill, who saved the musical day by conducting the glee club when they and the band got out of sync during group singing of "God Bless America." Sculptor Norman Legassie won the plaudits of the throng when Mr. White unveiled the statue that will be a permanent part of the New London Harbor. A memorable start for a stunning day that, for many, concluded many miles away, on Broadway.

3. THEATER COMMITTEE CAPS ITS DECADE WITH STIRRING TRIBUTE. On Sunday evening, October 16, the Theater Committee for Eugene O'Neill brought its decade of activities to a grand close with a "Centennial Tribute to Eugene O'Neill": scenes and songs from O'Neill's plays by stars of stage and screen, presented at the uptown Circle in the Square, whose Artistic Director, Theodore Mann, received the Committee's tenth and final O'Neill Birthday Medal for his major contributions, to public awareness and appreciation of O'Neill and his work.

The two-part program, offering scenes from eleven plays, was stitched artfully together with passages from O'Neill's non-dramatic writings, read by Peter Gallagher (as the young O'Neill), Len Cario (as the mature O'Neill) and Jason Robards (as the aging O'Neill). The plays and players were these: Bound East for Cardiff: Gallagher as Yank is comforted by Cario as Driscoll. Beyond the Horizon: Rafael Sbarge as the dreamer Robert Mayo. All God's Chillun Got Wings: Keith David as Long and Kate Burton as Ella Downey. Desire Under the Elms: Philip Bosco as Ephraim confronts the latter's son Eben (Gallagher) and Abbie (Burton).

Strange Interlude: Mariette Hartley as Nina Leeds, with her "three men"--Cariou as
“INTERLUDES FROM O’NEILL” was the title of a centenary tribute devised and coordinated by Bob Roman and presented at the New School in New York City on the evening of October 10. In a fairly chronological arrangement, seven actors offered speeches by eight characters in seven of O’Neill’s plays: Terry Donnelly as the wife in *The Hairy Ape*; Paula Kenny as Anna Christie (her “revelation monologue”); Dermot McNamara as Paddy in *The Hairy Ape* and Ephraim Cabot in *Desire Under the Elms*; R.D. Flinter as the stenographer in the Off-Off-Broadway play *Nina* (Paddy); Patricia Angelin as Nina Leeds in *Strange Interlude*; Stephen Joyce as Erie Smith in *Long Day’s Journey*; and Geraldine Fitzgerald as Mary Tyrone in *Long Day’s Journey* (her play-closing monologue).

5. “EUGENE O’NEILL: CELEBRATING 100 YEARS” was the title of a week-long birthday party (October 10–16) hosted by the Theatrical Outlet in Atlanta, Georgia, and organized by its director, Kerstin Marsolais. Workshops and talks by local scholars shared the bill with director José Quinto, who spoke on the 12th, and a performance of a new October 16 play, *Long Day’s Journey into Night* starring Frank Willow and Mary Nell Santacroce on the 16th, that brought down the house—literally. Wrecking balls hung above the theatre as was by now levelled to make way for a shopping mall. O’Neill would have appreciated the bittersweet irony of that final fill to the play’s celebration in his honor.

6. “EXAMINING THE LEGACY OF EUGENE O’NEILL” was the title of a panel discussion at the Museum of the City of New York on the evening of October 21. Presented in cooperation with the Theatre Library Association, the discussion was moderated by C. White, President of the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center. The speakers were: actress Geraldine Fitzgerald; Margaret Louisa Romand, author of *The Eugene O’Neill Companion*; and Sally Thomas Pavetti and Lois Erickson McDonald, Curator and Associate Curator of the Museum’s Collections, Washington University Libraries, St. Louis, MO 63130. The “double bill” was actually quadruple, as there was also an O’Neill Film Series (Long Day’s Journey, The Long Voyage Home, Mourning Becomes Electra, and the Blanche Sweet *Anna Christie*) and a production of *Desire Under the Elms*, directed by Dr. Harvey Hammmer, who organized the special collections section of the UW Olin Library. (Dr. Hammmer, who organized a guided tour of the collection on the morning of the 12th, produced a 24-page, illustrated exhibit catalog that is as handsome as it is informative. Afro-American interest in acquiring a copy might write to Holly Hall, Head of Special Collections, Washington University Libraries, St. Louis, MO 63130.) The “double bill” was actually quadruple, as there was also an O’Neill Film Series (Long Day’s Journey, The Long Voyage Home, Mourning Becomes Electra, and the Blanche Sweet *Anna Christie*) and a production of *Desire Under the Elms*, directed by Wu Artist-in-Residence Ann Marie Costa, each evening. A surprise treat was the presence of Annie Chaplin, one of O’Neill’s granddaughters, as a showing of *Before Breakfast*, a film by Italian director Mino Daati, which she stars. Our congratulations to Professor Schrey, Dr. Hammmer and all concerned for showing that there is as much affection for O’Neill in America’s heartland as in Europe and the Orient.

9. CENTENNIAL DOUBLE BILL-PLUS IN ST. LOUIS. Thanks to the entrepreneurial skills of Henry I. Schvey, Chairman of Washington University’s Performing Arts Department, the O’Neill centennial got headline treatment in St. Louis. On Wednesday evening, November 13, the Missouri Historical Society honored its best-known citizen with a “Celebration of Eugene O’Neill,” which featured the first ever readings of two plays completed the series: *Desire Under the Elms* with Geraldine Fitzgerald and playwright Terrence McNally. A film marathon followed on Saturday evening, November 16, that brought down the house literally. Wrecking balls hung above the theatre as was by now levelled to make way for a shopping mall. O’Neill would have appreciated the bittersweet irony of that final fill to the play’s celebration in his honor.

10. O’NEILL CONFERENCE IN BANGLADESH. That the O’Neill centennial celebration is truly global was made even more evident when word arrived of a conference on December 27–30 about Late Plays of Eugene O’Neill.” Evenings were devoted to performances of three sets of plays (Bound East for Callard, in the Zone and Jle) directed by Professor Metten, while the morning sessions were either the first morning’s session (Wednesday) directed by the Actor.” His colleague, Robert A. Nelson, followed with a talk on “Strategies for Directing *Ah, Wilderness!* O’Neill’s Short-Lived Foray into Light.” Other faculty papers were “Three O’Neill Women: An Emergent Pattern,” by Professor Waterstradt; “Long Day’s Journey Into Night,” by John Henry Raleigh. The next three days comprised a celebration entitled “Eugene O’Neill: Autobiography and Art.” The November 10 session, “O’Neill’s Early Plays,” included talks by Richard J. van Gorder (The Hairy Ape (English); and “Expressionism in O’Neill’s ‘Uniquely Probing Vision,’” by Stanislawa Arogyasami) and Barbara Gelb, biographer of Eugene O’Neill. The November 11 session, “The Search for Self: The Archetypal Journey in The Hairy Ape and The Iceman Cometh” (John O. LeBaron); “Reflections of O’Neill’s Views on Self- Aggrandizement” (Timothy J. Rowley); and “Expressionism in O’Neill’s ‘Uniquely Probing Vision,’” by Stanislawa Arogyasami) and Barbara Gelb, biographer of Eugene O’Neill. The November 11 session, “The Search for Self: The Archetypal Journey in The Hairy Ape and The Iceman Cometh” (John O. LeBaron); “Reflections of O’Neill’s Views on Self- Aggrandizement” (Timothy J. Rowley); and “Expressionism in O’Neill’s ‘Uniquely Probing Vision,’” by Stanislawa Arogyasami).
at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. The organizer for the event is Dr. Imtiaz H. Habib. We hope to report on the conference if an attener will send information.

11. SECOND NYC O'NEILL EXHIBIT. In addition to "American Lines," the exhibition of O'Neill manuscripts at the Museum of the City of New York that was mentioned in the last issue (p. 87), there was another exhibit, in the New York Public Library's Billy Rose Theater Collection at Lincoln Center. Entitled "The Public and Private O'Neill," the exhibit closed on November 31. (Note that the first-mentioned exhibit continues until 1/8/89.)

12. FLOYD ADDRESSES AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON IRISH STUDIES. Dr. Virginia Floyd was a speaker at the Fall 1988 Conference of the ACIS's New England Section, held at Salve Regina College in Newport, RI, on October 7-8. Her subject: "Eugene O'Neill: The Irish-Yankee Conflict in Five New England Autobiographical Plays."

13. O'NEILL AT ASTR '88. Saturday, November 12, was, in a small way, O'Neill Day at the Ohio State University on November 10-13. He was the subject of a paper at a 1:30 session, "The Sea Plays [Glencairn quartet], dir. Edward Berkeley. Willow Cabin Theatre Co. at the Intar II Theatre, New York City, with additional on the following Friday and Sunday (at 8 and 3 p.m. respectively). The opera has music by Edward Thomas and libretto by Joe Masteroff, and the star is Judy Kaye, recently of The Phantom of the Opera, "in her New York operatic debut." Presented by the New York Opera Repertory Theatre, the production is directed by David Gately, with scenery by Michael Angeles, costumes by Gregg Barnes, and lighting by Kirk Bookman. Leigh Gibbs Gore will conduct the New York Opera Repertory Theatre Orchestra. For information, call (212) 947-5850.

17. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS.


"Eugene O'Neill: A Centennial Celebration." Special section of The Day (New London, CT), October 11, 1988. 16 pp. [As a tribute to the playwright and the unveiling of a statue in his honor at New London's Civic Pier on centennial Sunday, October 16, the Day's special O'Neill edition featured articles by Louis Sheaffer ("Family and Home Provided Details for Masterpieces"), and Michael Burlingame ("New London Sites Found in Many of O'Neill's Plays" and "O'Neill's Reputation in Drama Is Secure"), plus reportage by Paul Baumann and David Collins about Monte Cristo Cottage, the new statue by Norm Legassie, and older New Londoners who remember O'Neill's days there.]

The Eugene O'Neill Songbook, collected and annotated by Travis Bogard. Ann Arbor: MI: UMI Research Press, 1989. Approx. 250 pp. $44.95 cloth. ISBN 8357-1937-5. (An eagerly awaited volume, out early in 1989. Here is UMRP's advance description: "More than any other twentieth-century dramatist who did not write for the musical theater, Eugene O'Neill used songs in his plays, making music integral to the dramatic action. This is the first collection of piano-vocal scores representing every song contained in all O'Neill plays that use music. Travis Bogard has meticulously researched the music presented here. Songs are grouped around the individual plays in which they were incorporated, and each group is preceded by an introduction that forms an introduction for this anthology of folk and popular music. Of great interest to actors, directors, stage managers, and scholars. Specially designed to make [it] easy to use for stage productions."

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Goll, Sylviane. "Eugene O'Neill Lived Here." The Boston Globe Magazine (October 16, 1988), pp. 22-23, 57-63. [Comprehensive if conventional survey of O'Neill's time in New England, especially the early years (New London, the sea, Baker's class, Provincetown), with only passing mention of the last days in Marblehead and Boston.]


McCracken, David. "O'Neill's Haunted House." Chicago Tribune (Sunday, October 16, 1988). [The history, renovation, and psycholiterary resonances of "dove-gray" Monte Cristo Cottage, where "the playwright's life and art were forged." Associate Curator Lois McDonald conducts a tour on a sunny day ("an Ah, Wilderness! day," as she calls it), and offers the rationales for assigning various second-story rooms to specific Tyrones/O'Neills.]

McDonough, Edward J. Quintero Directs O'Neill. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989 (available in the Spring). Approx. 230 pp. $44.95. cloth. ISBN 08357-1934-0. (UMRP's advance description: "Reconstructs all twelve of director José Quintero's productions of ... O'Neill. McDonough focuses specifically on the process of putting O'Neill's plays on the stage. He traces and discusses production concepts, auditions, casting, scenic designs, rehearsals, and performances. McDonough begins by reconstructing each play in its original production when O'Neill was present, and then compares [it] with the Quintero production a generation later. Pictures, reviews and biographies form the basis of these reconstructions. [along with] interviews with designers, stage managers and actors—among them some of the most famous of the post-war period, including Jason Robards, Colleen Dewhurst and Geraldine Fitzgerald." A review will appear in a future issue.)

Miller, Arthur. "A Fabulous Appetite for Greatness" [review of Selected Letters of Eugene O'Neill]. New York Times Book Review (November 6, 1988), pp. 12-13. (Because the letters "demystify him," the collection is "essential to any understanding of Eugene O'Neill" and his "noble quest." The "sustained intensity of his feelings ... brings him close." Neither unsophisticated nor a total loser, O'Neill was, according to this lucid if passionless appraisal by a successor, "the anarchist radical to the end."


Porter, Laurin. The Banished Prince: Time, Memory, and Ritual in the Late Plays of Eugene O'Neill. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1988. 140 pp. $39.95 cloth. ISBN 8357-1934-0. (Just out, the volume will be reviewed in a future issue. Here is the synopsis: "In UMREP's advance description: "Porter reveals the inner-unity of two cycles of plays written at the culmination of O'Neill's career—the highly autobiographical series which includes The Iceman Cometh, Long Day's Journey Into Night and A Moon for the Misbegotten, and O'Neill's cycle of historical works including A Touch of the Poet, which concludes with A Moon for the Misbegotten and The Iceman Cometh.")


Putzel, Steven D. "Whiskey, Blarney and Land: Eugene O'Neill's Conceptions and Misconceptions of the Irish." In Zach & Kosok (see 2nd Egri entry above), III, 125-132.


Stanciu, Virgil. "O'Neill și renunțarea tragediei." Steaua. 37 (Dec. 1986), 44. (Study of the book with that title by Petru Comarenco.)


Vena, Gary. How to Read and Write About Drama. New York: Arco Publishing Co., 1988. 6.95 paper. (This volume, by an eminent O'Neillian, will be reviewed in a future issue. Terry Helbing, noting its arrival in the October 10-16 issue of Theater Week, wrote: "Would that many a theater critic see this book and add it to
his or her library.


18. SPECIAL O'NEILL ISSUE. As was announced in the Spring 1988 Newsletter, the November '88 issue of The Recorder, published by the American Irish Historical Society, is devoted to O'Neill. Edited by Terence P. Moran and Lowell S. Swortzell of New York University, the contents are divided into five parts:

O'Neill the Irishman
- "Eugene O'Neill: Gift of a Celtic Legacy" (Virginia Floyd, USA)
- "O'Neill: A Voice for Racial Justice" (Father Pascual Onunwa, Nigeria)

O'Neill the Dramatist
- "Tragedy and Solipsism: The Kinship of Moby Dick and The Iceman Cometh" (Marc Mauport, Belgium)
- "The Psychology of Alienation, or What Parodies Are Good For: A Note on O'Neill's Modernity" (Péter Egri, Hungary)
- "High Anxiety: Women in The Iceman Cometh" (Ann C. Hall, USA)
- "O'Neill's Tragedies: A Chinese View" (Zhao Yu, China)
- "Anna Christie's Baptism" (Madelaine Smith, USA)

O'Neill the Theatrical Genius
- "O'Neill in London: A Touch of the Poet, 1906" (Jean Chothia, Great Britain)
- "Desecrating an Idol: Long Day's Journey Into Night as Directed by José Quintero and Jonathan Miller" (Sheila Hickey Garvey, USA)
- "Whose Play Is This, Anyway? Interpreting Mary and James Tyrone" (Doris Hart, USA)
- "Feelings in O'Neill's Plays: An Actress Analyzes Abbie in Desire Under the Elms" (Zhu Jinglan, China)
- "Interpreting Marco Millions: Two New York Productions" (Brenda Murphy, USA)
- "The O'Neill Tradition at Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Theatre" (Tom J. A. Glasson, Sweden)
- "O'Neill in Japan: A Report on the Centenary Celebration" (Lowell S. Swortzell, USA)
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- "Directing A Moon for the Misbegotten at Pace University" (Ruis Woertendyke, USA)

O'Neill the Classroom Subject
- "O'Neill Double-Bills in Classroom Teaching" (Klara Szabó, Hungary)
- "Another Look at The Hairy Ape (Vera Jiji, USA"

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INDEX TO VOLUME XII (1988)

I. ARTICLES.

Adler, Thomas P. "Beyond Synge: O'Neill's Anna Christie." #1, p. 34.


Bloom, Steven F. "'Waiting for the Dough': O'Neill's Hughie." #3, p. 28.

Bogard, Travis. "'First Love: Eugene O'Neill and 'Boutade. ' " #1, p. 3.


Gelb, Barbara. "In Search of O'Neill." #2, p. 3.


Jackson, Esther M. "Dramatic Form in O'Neill's The Calms of Capricorn.") #3, p. 35.


Kolin, Philip C. "All God's Chillun Got Wings and Macbeth.") #1, p. 55.


Manheim, Michael. "O'Neill's Transcendence of Melodrama in the Late Plays.") #2, p. 22.

Mauroff, Marc. "Eugene O'Neill's Innovative Craftsmanship in the 'Glencairn Cycle (1914-1917).") #1, p. 27.

Miller, James. "From Nobody to the Nobel: Two Decades of First Night O'Neill Criticism.") #2, p. 8.

Moorten, Richard P. "What's In a Name? The Significance of 'Mannon' in Mourning Becomes Electra.") #3, p. 42.


Shafer, Yvonne. "In Iben's Back Room: Related Patterns in The Iceman Cometh and The Wild Duck.") #3, p. 8.

Tuck, Susan. White Dreams, Black Nightmares: All God's Chillun Got Wings and Light in August.") #1, p. 48.

Voelker, Paul D. "Biography, Autobiography and Artistry in A Wife for a Life.") #1, p. 10.

Williams, Gary Jay. "Turned Down in Provincetown: O'Neill's Debut Re-examined.") #1, p. 17.

II. REPORTS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES IN 1988.

Han-sur-Lesse, Belgium, May 20-22 (Marc Mauroff). #2, p. 46.


Nanjing and Shanghai, People's Republic of China, June 5-15 (Gary Vena). #2, p. 57.

Tokyo, Japan, June 11-12 (Emiko Kuroda). #3, p. 52.

III. BOOKS REVIEWED.

Adler, Thomas P. Mirror on the Stage: The Pulitzer Plays as an Approach to American Drama (Jordan V. F. Connolly). #2, p. 65.

Bloom, Harold, ed. Eugene O'Neill (Frederick C. Wilkins). #2, p. 64.

Bloom, Harold, ed. Eugene O'Neill's "The Iceman Cometh" (Frederick C. Wilkins). #2, p. 64.

Bloom, Harold, ed. Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night" (Frederick C. Wilkins). #2, p. 64.

Burkman, Katherine H. The Arrival of Godot: Ritual Patterns in Modern Drama (Thomas F. Connolly). #2, p. 66.


Murphy, Brenda. American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940 (Thomas F. Connolly). #2, p. 67.

O'Neill, Eugene. Complete Plays, ed. Travis Bogard (Frederick C. Wilkins). #3, p. 45.


Vena, Gary. O'Neill's "The Iceman Cometh": Reconstructing the Premiere (Frederick C. Wilkins). #2, p. 63.

IV. PRODUCTIONS REVIEWED.

Ah, Wilderness! New Haven, CT (Frederick C. Wilkins). #1, p. 68.

Beyond the Horizon, Pittsfield, MA (Frederick C. Wilkins). #3, p. 48.

Hughie, Stockholm, Sweden (Frederick C. Wilkins). #2, p. 82.

The Iceman Cometh, Ashland, OR (Stephen A. Black). #2, p. 51.

Long Day's Journey Into Night, Denver, CO (Linda Ben-Zvi). #1, p. 64.

Long Day's Journey Into Night, New Haven, CT (Frederick C. Wilkins). #1, p. 68.

Long Day's Journey Into Night, Stockhool, Sweden (Frederick C. Wilkins). #2, p. 83.


Marco Millions, Prague, Czechoslovakia (Jarka M. Burian). #2, p. 76.

Mourning Becomes Electra, Chapel Hill, NC (Frederick C. Wilkins). #1, p. 66.

Mourning Becomes Electra, Brno, Czechoslovakia (Jarka M. Burian). #2, p. 76.

S. S. Glencairn, San Francisco, CA (Jeffrey D. Mason). #2, p. 79.

Seas Plays (In the Zone, The Long Voyage Home, Ile), Amsterdam, MA (Frederick C. Wilkins). #3, p. 67.

Strange Interlude, Brussels, Belgium (Frederick C. Wilkins). #2, p. 80.


PLEASE USE THE APPLICATION BLANK BELOW (OR A PHOTOCOPY THEREOF) TO BEGIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IN THE EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY AND RECEIVE THE 2 1989 ISSUES OF THE NEW EUGENE O'NEILL REVIEW.

TO: Jordan Y. Miller, Dept. of English, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881.

Please record my membership in the Eugene O'Neill Society for 1989. I've checked the appropriate category below, and have enclosed a check or money order (payable to the Eugene O'Neill Society) for the requisite amount. Rush me the requested materials.

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