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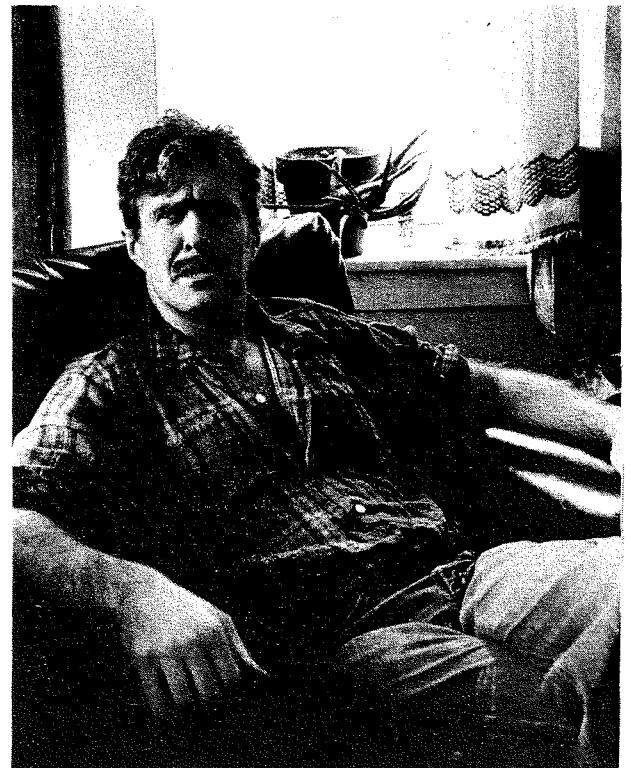
The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

SPRING 1982

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Playwright David Wheeler, photographed in his most O'Neillian mien by *The (Provincetown) Advocate*, at the time of his premiere performance of "Here Before You...Eugene O'Neill," which is printed on pp. 3-15.



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EDITOR'S FOREWORD: NEW YEAR, NEW FORMAT, NEW PLAY

Greetings! Actually the first two "new's" need little comment. That the Newsletter herewith enters its second half-decade is gratifying--and more than a little surprising. When I first envisioned it, back in '76, I had no idea that it would catch on (and *go on*) to the extent that it has. Nor that it would grow to be so time-consuming a venture. But your compliments and suggestions are so heartening that the Newsletter has no intention of flagging or folding, even if its editor and staff periodically display symptoms of both! *Do* keep those cards and letters coming, folks, as Bob (or was it Ray?) used to say. Modesty prevents my quoting from those letters, except in advertising, but believe me, they mean a lot.

As for the second "new," it is obvious at first glance that the Newsletter is flirting yet again with a new format. But such flirting is expensive; and, as I try to please both those who are happy with what has been and its attractive price, and those who urge that the Newsletter be "upgraded" to the rank of review, quarterly or journal less "ephemeral" in appearance, the cost may become prohibitive. (This is not a plea for extra financial contributions. But it is true that it may be necessary ere long to return to the corner-stapled, loose-leaf past; and if every old subscriber were to recruit one new one, the problem would vanish.) Since sufficient numbers of you have expressed approval of the current price--and title--I have no plan for changing either in the near future. But I can predict with fiscal certainty that the next two issues will not be as plump as this one.

As for the new play which opens Volume Six, I already mentioned it in the last issue (p. 37), and playwright David Wheeler is introduced in the "Persons Represented" section at the end of this issue. *Here Before You...Eugene O'Neill* was premiered, appropriately, at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum on May 23, 1981, to the delight of many, and to the consternation of others who prefer a less irreverent treatment of America's greatest playwright. Mr. Wheeler admits that the play is "part parody of the man," but notes that it is "a loving parody, a respectful one, and ... an attempt to parody the myth-making process." (*The Advocate*, Provincetown, June 25, 1981, "Summer Guide," p. 15.) As Catherine Gammon noted, shortly after the premiere (*The Advocate*, May 28, 1981, p. 19), the play is "a risky undertaking that gains or loses strength with the receptivity of the audience." Knowing the generous receptivity of the Newsletter audience, I think the risk is small. The fact that the play has since been performed at the Helen Shlien Gallery in Boston and, this spring, at the Theatre Marigny in New Orleans, strengthens my faith in its value. I precede it with the cover and program note that Mr. Wheeler provided for its Provincetown premiere.

"It is my belief that extremism in the deployment of humor is excusable. Thus, certain tributaries in the play meander momentarily away from the mainstream of total fidelity to the life and thought of Eugene O'Neill. The design of the play overall, however, is to serve as a faithful reflection of the famous playwright's philosophy and of the events in his life leading up to and including the first reading of his plays by the Provincetown Players in 1916."

--David Wheeler

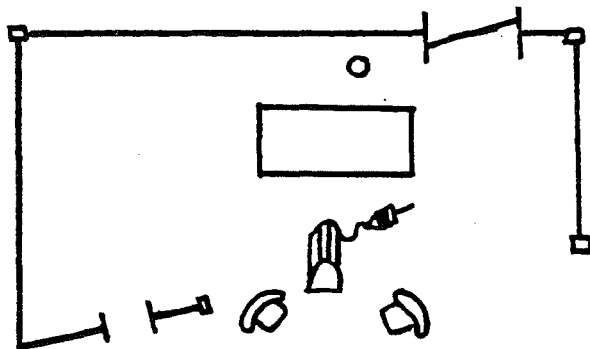


HERE BEFORE YOU...EUGENE O'NEILL

A PLAY FOR ONE ACTOR IN THE ROLE OF EUGENE O'NEILL

NOTES ON STAGING

Scene: the dining room of the Provincetown home of "Jig" Cook and his wife Susan Glaspell on a mild summer night in 1916. There are pictures on the wall upstage. Various objects about the little room suggest the home's seaside location: nets, oilskins, chests, shells, clam rakes, and so on. There is a large wooden table up-center, upon which rests an oil lamp and a drinking glass. A stool stands behind the table. A lobster trap stands down-center, flanked by two deck chairs. There is a door up-right and a window down-left, opening to the audience. A foghorn is heard in the distance throughout. Off and on, crowd murmurs are heard coming from behind the door.



Eugene O'Neill, aged twenty-eight, sports a thin moustache and has short, erratic, jet-black hair. He is tall and lean, has piercing dark eyes, and wears a dour expression at all times. He wears a short-sleeved pink Hawaiian shirt and baggy olive-green Bermuda shorts. All pockets are stuffed with small bottles. He pads about the stage in sandals, black socks reaching to his knees.

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With a weathered nail keg under his arm, O'Neill enters Jig Cook's dining room through the door. He shuts it behind him but checks for a keyhole or a crack through which he might be able to peep. He wanders about the little room, setting the keg down on one pass by the lobster trap and then moving off in search of an outlet for his nervousness. He occupies himself with any number of time-killing gestures, such as straightening pictures, stretching, examining objects, and so on. Once aimlessness is established, he begins toying with the fingernails of one hand which is held in a closed position. From this activity (center stage) he will evolve an exaggerated mimicry of the emergence and first flight of a butterfly -- his hand held aloft, still at first, then twitching tentatively, and finally bursting forth to comically test new wings. In a blinding flash, the other hand, a tight fist, strikes the butterfly with a fury. The butterfly takes an immediate nose-dive as O'Neill states angrily:

I hate mime.

He resumes his puttering; he fiddles and diddles, then plops into the chair down-left, falling into a reverie. Eventually he stirs with yet another attempt at an amusement. The lines are spoken in a comical impression of a man of letters:

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have with us tonight Eugene O'Neill... "oft-misquoted, oft-footnoted, and oft-the-races," as he's fond of describing himself. Mr. O'Neill, before I submit to you any of my prepared questions, is there anything, let's say "free-form," you would like to share with the friends of Dramatists on Parade?

He quickly changes to the chair down-right. Emphatically in his own deep, nervous voice:

No.

A long pause is followed by a hesitant development of the monologue, a reluctant oration that rapidly gains momentum as O'Neill unloads manuscripts from the keg, stacking them up in a towering fashion atop the lobster trap:

Just this, perhaps: down in the trenches, mime won't help you out.... Words, words, words, words... words, words, words; you have to have them ready in barrels... thun-der-in' words... confalutin' words... flutterin' words... syr-in-gic words... words all trundled up in bundles, stowed away in amphorae, you have to have them ready -- stashed in cribs and racks and purses, pockets and satchels, dufflebags and mangers... in haversacks and scabbards, in Gladstone bags (Gladstone -- that's my middle name you know)... in portfolios and portmanteaux... vases and cisterns, chests and hampers, boxes and bins... in tanks and ewers and vast vats... carafes, canteens, and demijohns... words in cruets and percolators, porringers and crucibles, canterburies and whatnots, ambries and davenport... in cubbyholes, vestibules and hubble-bubbles, stash them away in firkins, have them ready in retorts... in samovars, beakers, and goblets... in reliquaries and funeral urns.

As he finishes stacking:

There... Fog... Thirst... The Sniper... a veritable leaning tower of drama upon which we might focus our discussion...

Pulling a heavily-laden paper spindle out of the keg:

a monument matched in stature only by the height and theatricality of my rejection slips.

Casually picking one from the center of the spindled papers:

"Dear Sir: We the editors here at Harpdawn Publishing have been distressed of late over the ungodly but all-too-common practice of the rampaging plunder of ancient civilizations by the modern. So it is with infinite pride that we hereby restore this primitive artifact to its rightful native context."

He crumples the paper and selects another:

"Dear Mr. O'Neill: I have read your play with the greatest of interest; I have noted well how you chronicle human emotion; how you mystically wed the concrete to the abstract; how you etch your compelling portraits of the rank psychology that both suffuses and transcends the world as we know it; how you lace rich characterization with heartfelt analysis; how you mirror well the bugbears too much with us, i.e., the nagging ironies modern man faces, drifting as he is, ceaselessly in a senseless age...."

After turning the paper over in search of the non-existent conclusion, O'Neill tears up the slip and selects another:

"Dear Mr. O'Neill: I must confess I did not understand your play the first time I read it. Unfortunately, I only read it once."

Standing up and stepping forward:

It's lucky I have another career on which to rest me Irish background, should this playwrighting finally leave me flat. In Eugene O'Neill, a touch-o'-the-poet...

Turning to the "moderator" whom he acknowledges as sitting in the chair down-left:

quite the scoop for any reprehensible gossip such as yourself...listen to this... you'll see....

Turning back to face the audience:

Deep in the jungles of the Chapultepecs,
You'll find curlicue temples concave and convex.
They're the swaying designs of young male architects
Enduring a taboo on premarital sex.

No, that isn't one of mine...I think Ring Lardner worked that out. Here's one of mine:

A little bird came down the walk....

No, that's Emily Dickinson...memorable, my poetry....Ah! Yes. This is one...yes, I'm sure this time. It's called "Infinity"...

Sarcastically:

my last poem of the evening. Did you ever notice how apologetic poets are when they read? "I'll just read two, well maybe three more," "just two to go," and "my last poem of the evening..." I'm always tempted to jump up at that point and yell, "Thank the dear blarsted Lard in heaven!" Well, I'm different. I make no apologies. Let me just mention, however, that this poem was written under the extremely difficult conditions of hurtling back and forth across the country from one whistle stop to the next, detraining only long enough in each town for the old man to play out his pathetic road show, The Count of Monte Cristo.

Bitterly:

You can forget about the warmth and stability of a typical adolescence in my case... private schools, an alcoholic older brother, general family turmoil, up, down, in, out, yanked in every direction at once...Christ! How was a person supposed to write a decent poem, delicate and subtle in its rendering? Anyway..."Infinity" -- my last poem of the evening...

Gently at first, then with rising frustration:

My mother is an irrepressible addict,
Who administers her morphine in the attic,
In the living room, in the cellar,
In Pullman cars and sleepers, day coaches,
Backstage...

My father plays the Count of Monte Cristo,
 In theaters he plays the part and bistros.
 In Duluth, New Orleans, Tuscaloosa,
 St. Paul, New York, Seattle, Little Rock,
 Five thousand times he's played the part, and this
 From a man whose idea of infinity is something around a-dollar-ten?

Oh, to hell with this....

Sits down in the chair down-right. To the "moderator":

Let me just say in anticipation of your first question, one concerning, I would imagine, my now-infamous loss of faith (to which I "seem so bound for celebration"), that all I can do is emphasize my belief that conflicting reports of my dramatic fall from a state of grace have succeeded only in creating undue confusion in the public mind regarding a minor event that is, at best, merely representative of man's failure not only not to see what is clearly in front of him, but also not to see what is not so clearly before him, a point that I'd like to make perfectly lucid, but am apparently unable...to make.

Stands up, crosses himself, and chants:

I only know I came into consciousness hearing that "in the beginning God created heaven and earth, that He forged man after His own appearance, that Jesus Christ died on the cross to better redeem man from his lugubrious boners, that on the third day Christ arose and ascended into Heaven, post partum infinitum, that sin and redemption are within the reach of any honest, hard working bogtrotter provided sufficient Hail Mary's are proffered indoors upon the knees or even outside in an erect stance in spiteful opposition to the weather -- inconstant, at best, in New England."

Sits down.

I lived with this information in perfect peace and was fairly drunk with the Spirit of the Incarnate Word until I discovered red wine one evening at age thirteen. Then and there partial truth was revealed to me -- that if the Christian ritualists do indeed go to their deaths and rise again, it is only because of the uplifting action of the Holy Yeast, ingested in quantity in the form of the blood of Christ and Eucharist wafers. Compounding this creeping realization was a statement made by one of my teachers during that day: "Man has been increasing in height three inches every century." Lying there in my boarding school stupor, I started down the long and tortuous back road of history, down through the centuries -- nineteenth, eighteenth, back and back -- and as closely as I could calculate the matter, it's impossible for Jesus Christ to have stood, even in sandals, any taller than eleven inches. It was precisely at that moment I realized here stood a figure blown way out of proportion throughout the ages.

Forget the Kierkegaardian leap of faith, I say. Skip church! Ha! I spit on your "Universal Truth!" Poot! Oh...uh...sorry...

He leans down to wipe the shoe of the "moderator."

...and, uh, looking forward to the next two questions, let me just answer the first, "What is my opinion of playwrighting in America?" by saying that I think it's a great idea and that I intend to institute the practice the very second this insufferable interview is concluded. And to address your third question, I confess to have forgotten all together not only the substance of the inquiry, but in addition my carefully constructed reply, although, knowing moderators as I do, I could well suppose that it --

the question -- was composed somewhat along the following lines: "Mr. O'Neill, the audience would love to hear...is it true you came to know your literary heroes -- Conrad, Ibsen, the Greek poets -- while off on your romantic voyages to Honduras, Argentina, Liverpool, and Durban?" -- a brilliant lead-in to which I would have haughtily responded, "That's entirely correct. I'd claw my way up the mast to reef the sails in roiling seas, labor for eighteen hours straight, sometimes twenty, working the deck with bleeding hands, later hauling and stacking massive timbers or shoveling mule dung out the port hole, after which I'd swill down my beef jerky and mushy hardtack, enduring the company of cutthroats in semi-darkness, and then, picking my teeth, I'd saunter into the ship's library (usually four or five thousand carefully selected volumes), there to bring down a copy of Oedipus at Colonus or The Doll's House to relax with while taking tea in the seaman's lounge. Let me set you straight on this...I've sailed up and down whole continents, criss-crossed the world's great seas, and only once did I ever see a book aboard ship, excepting the log, of course. As any sailor who's to occupy an upper bunk would be well advised to learn, hiding something under your mattress makes it immediately apparent to the resident of the lower berth. Falling into my ratty accomodation one night aboard the Ikalis, I raised my weary eyes in the general direction of the Lord (God knows why), only to see a little publication staring back at me from under the bosun's mate. Its title? So You Want To Be a Writer.

Stands up to illustrate his actions.

I managed to free it up without waking the owner and to sneak away with it into the lantern light. Introducing such chapters as "Experimental Symbolic Figures," "Interior Monologues," and "Developing Rhythm" (it was a Catholic publication), was this remarkably helpful suggestion: "Secure a reliable writing pen, find a small pad of white lined paper, and, in a quiet corner of the room, select a subject of interest to all." Over the years, I've rewritten that humble book a thousand times in my mind. This is my latest introduction: "Locate a pen that rests comfortably in your hand and forthrightly shove the blarsted thing right up your bleepin' arse! So you want to be a writer, eh? Fat friggin' chance...that's what I say. But...if you must persist, first allow your older brother to lead you into the inescapable grip of Bohemian sin; then aspire to higher education only to be thrown out of Princeton in your first year for innocently hurling a beer bottle through the wrong window; enter then into a clandestine marriage that bears not so much strange, as unexpected, unfortunate fruit; then run away to seek gold in Honduras, contract malaria, and, with your tail tucked squarely between your legs (if you still have two), return to New York to further humiliate yourself in an asinine production of Monte Cristo; ship out next to Argentina, where you will work in the company office of Singer Sewing Machine in Buenos Aires, next finding yourself shoveling it aboard a cattle boat bound for Durban, South Africa; then manage somehow a miserable return that only leaves you in a more deplorable state back in Argentina. Ship out again, this time for the Port of New York, where you immediately fall into a life of sin and destitution in a waterfront bar called Jimmy the Priest's...

Sits down atop the stool:

familiarizing yourself in all your travels with such themes as a sad man's pathetic founder in 'dat ole davil sea,' man's fall from grace in a condescending, indeed sniggering, universe, or the wayward nature of those forces shaping the dark onion of man's psyche, and then -- and only then -- get back to me! And do it all before you're twenty-five!"

Following a long pause, he turns to glare at the "moderator":

Oh, I know full well what's in your mind...objectivity, my arse...you moderators are all alike...

In the "moderator's" mocking tones:

"Jimmy the Priest's...how could he?"

Well, where else could a slobbering gob in such a wretched condition go? Home?

Leaps up to illustrate:

With the old man coming in from rehearsal dressed up as Edmond Dantes, spotting me loitering over a pumpernickel and rye, bounding up the stairs, drawing his rapier, and leaping out into midair only to catch himself at the last moment on some branch of the chandelier, all the while roaring, "Get thee back before the mast!", me wondering all this time why it's always "before the mast" that I'm supposed to be getting, since most mainmasts are 'midships, meaning that one spends as much time behind (aft) the mast or even beside (athwart) the mast as one does before (afore) the mast. You can sense from this my dilemma. At any rate, (and that's just how the proprietor termed it), it was Jimmy the Priest's or nothing.

Sits down on the stool.

A buck-fifty for a room per month, provided you didn't mind the roomies, rummies, whatever you want to call them, five cents for a whiskey downstairs, all the raw cabbage you could eat for free. Often as not I wouldn't take a room up above...Jimmy'd let us sleep in the bar, just as long as we didn't keel over, a tendency uncommon to us salty gobs. We'd sit there insensate, the Brotherhood and myself -- a noble lot, immobile, stacked up, yah -- Brother Beith, Major Adams, Cappy Christopherson, T. J. Standard,

Jerking his thumb at the room behind the door:

the seaman Driscoll (I set him into my Bound East), Joe Smith, and Eugene Gladstone O'Neill. Speaking out of a sudsy froth, Standard said to us all one long and lazy afternoon, "I call it a good day, brothers, when I finally rise up offa this stool sometime toward the latter part of the evening and attempt to stagger across the room, forgetting as I stumble forth why it was I ever got up." And we had our bad days too, immobilized by the black Irishmen when we couldn't afford the whiskey bar.

He stands up and, pulling several flasks and odd-looking vials from his pockets, begins mixing up the strange concoction he describes, offering a benediction as he stirs the contents in a glass:

The black Irishman: one part canned heat strained through a dirty necktie..."Who made the world?"...two parts wood alcohol mixed with camphor..."God made the world"...some varnish diluted with park fountain water..."Who is this God person?" ...dash of sarsaparilla and four parts benzine..."God is the creator of heaven and earth and all thingies."

He holds the glass up to the light and then adds a little oil from the lamp on the table. As he slowly brings his face up to the rim of the glass and peers down in:

And then, ever so slowly, or not that slowly, the Brotherhood approaches the brink....

Crossing himself:

"Who made the world? God made the world."

He takes a large swig with a devil-may-care gesture and then, in a delayed reaction, whips his head back, aghast at the drink's fiery assault on his mouth and throat.

Argh! God, who made this drink! You couldn't get away with calling this "drinking"; you'd have to call this some form of rehearsal -- rehearsal for oblivion...I drank this; therefore, I was....

Tipping the glass up again in front of his face:

This is good practice for looking down the barrel of a gun and seeing annihilation bearing down on you in slow motion....

Takes a drink and then apes the optimists:

"Oh, don't be such a gloombird, Genie; everything's going to be all right."

Furiously:

Ha! Everything's not going to be all right. History is history...and it's not bunk, as commonly thought...history is bunker, after bunker, after bunker.

Again tipping the glass up in front of his face; now peering through it:

I see world-wide unrest....

Pans the audience:

I see an angry mob....

He sets the glass down and tiptoes to the door. He peeps through a crack and a chagrined look comes over him:

I see the Lusitania going down....

He returns to his seat atop the stool.

It was after a binge of the black Irishmen that Major Adams passed away. Our resident physician (and I use the word paramedically) said the Major died of a liver ailment, though none of us had it figured out what it was he could've eaten. In the spirit of the Major's life and times we lathered ourselves into a stupor for the funeral, and at least three of the brothers tumbled down into the grave atop the coffin and had to be rescued by the one serious mourner. I was one of the revelers, but still, a serious doubt about survival had been established. I sobered up enough soon after to sign aboard the S.S. New York, a luxury liner for Liverpool -- me, a foul and loathsome thing hulking around in the bowels of the ship, rising up only to serve the meals to the equally foul and loathsome passengers, the rank and rancid privileged class: "The treasure of Monte Cristo! Oh, ho-ho, the world is mine!"

After an hour-long debate they say, "I'll just have the chef's salad," or "I'll have a side order of cottage cheese," or "I'm flat-out interested in getting scrod." I say, "Sit tight," and pretty soon I'm back with the order.

Often it was I'd have the desire to drop my tray, to strip right out of my little sailor suit, to raise my fist and loose my radical point of view: "Land is power...free the land!" But I kept quiet; I knew the response -- the diners would rise up as a body of one, pork lips flapping in unison: "Oh, shut up young man and buy."

I shipped a return to New York as fast as I could, right back to Jimmy the Priest's...

Sits down atop the stool.

where I languished...

Stands up.

until training down to New Orleans with my older brother, Jamie, a model of perfection to which all morality contrasted. But as the cursed luck would have it, the old man was plyin' his part in town, and the brother and I were pressed into the service of the production. As the blessed luck would have it, however, Jamie and I were able to so badly botch our business on stage that the entire engagement had to be cancelled, and I could flee back to New York City, right back, needless to say...

After a long pause he plunks down once more atop the stool.

to Jimmy the Priest's. Back to the Booze Boys Brotherhood at Jimmy the Priest's Institute of Culture, where once more a fuzz fell over the Lord's dominion.

He becomes more and more agitated, disoriented, and shaken as he states his recollections:

In no time I was reduced to a lousy condition and was soon quaking like a teetering geezer stuck up in some old folk's home in Aspen. I'd convinced myself it was a simple case of tottering on the rim of a nervous breakthrough. Ha! My only chance for a breakthrough there was to crash through Jimmy's rotten floorboards; by this time I'd become a drinker's drinker....

He climbs atop the table where he sits facing the audience:

I allotted time to plan the approach, I was flawless in my execution, and an earlier phase, "recuperation," had been jettisoned all together. And the economics of the situation? I'd taken to comparing my poverty to the Jersey Palisades -- quite the looming majesty in spite of the deplorable state.

Working himself into the alcoholic's blather:

Money...money...money...money...money...money...money...money...money...money, money, money, money, money, money, money, money, money...argh! Oh, argh! Phenh! Phenh!

Regrouping:

On top of this, up overhead, Brother Beith takes a gorgeous, heroic flying leap one night, out the window, through the air, and right onto the god-forsaken macadam. He'd fueled his flight with Pond's extract, a little whiskey and gasoline, and, upset by his wife's high-steppin' (this a woman he hadn't seen in fifteen years), Brother Beith departed the waterfront.

Unwinding:

Oh, honey...honey...honey...honey...honey...honey...honey...honey...honey, honey, honey, honey, honey, honey, honey, honey, honey, honey.... Argh! Oh, argh! Phenh! Phenh!

Collecting himself:

Well, I was feelin' a bit-o'-the-old-Irish-remorse meself, and a month later I put down a bottle of Veronals, and passed away sublimely.

He lies down on the table as though dead. After a long pause he raises his head only enough to address the audience:

I awoke to find myself, however, not in the hairy arms of the Holy Spirit, but atop a frigid metal slab at Bellevue. A gorilla in dress whites lumbered into the room coughing violently. He slammed down a cup in front of me, and hacking as though to tear himself apart, choked out, "If you don't drink dis yellow stuff here, youse-a-gonna-be stone dead within the hour." "You're one to talk," was my rather distinguished remark. "Well, I'll have you know that I'm not in the least afraid to die. I hold myself responsible for my actions...I hereby refuse the antidote." "All right," he growled, "what the hell do I care?" and hunched away.

He does a quizzical and panic-stricken take and leaps off the table:

In my haste to grab up the yellow stuff, I knocked the blarsted cup to the floor. Mime won't help you out.

He dashes about, flashing a few classic mime routines, such as a man walking or caught behind an imaginary wall, and then states:

The "help!" started forming down deep in my bowels. It blew itself into a sizable bellow long before it reached my lungs, where additional gusto was provided. By the time I loosed the friggin' thing, it hit Bellevue like the wrecking ball: "HHHHHHH-EEEEEEELLLLLLLLLPPPPPPP!" I must have had a gallon of that yellow stuff in front of me within fifteen seconds.

He climbs back onto the table and lies down again, taking several long and agonized breaths before stating:

I'm in the sanatorium now...that's sana-tor-ium. A summer has passed since my father (and I use the word paraparentally) yanked me up and out of Bellevue and forcefully plopped me down in New London, setting me to work for the Daily Telegraph. I've got tuberculosis to thank for saving the day. I had no idea how serious it was (by which I refer to working a regular job and not the TB) until it was directly upon me. I was able to convert a bad cold, however, and the next thing I knew I was being disturbed by the raucous undertones of a Catholic priest: "Do you know who it was who died to save you?" Quickly assessing the situation, I said, "Do you think this is any time for riddles?" and, rather than suffer any further conversation, I hastened away in a grand and delirious dream armada -- two punts hallucination, three punts recollection, and one galleon residue of benzine.

He staggers to his feet to illustrate:

The dreams laid claim and I soon found myself painfully lashed to something rigid and splintery, not exactly the reverie I'd had in mind. Sensing rough waters up ahead, I strained against what was either the mast of the Charles Racine or my bed at Gaylord's Tubercular Farm. The hallucinations rolled in over me, taking the form of towering thunderheads blowing up over what was now clearly the deck of a decrepit square-rigger foundering in high seas. The ugly mugs of crewmen faded in and out before me -- an assembly of wharf rats, thugs, and scalawags such as I'd never beheld. The storm hit with a force unknown to seamen, tossing the ship about like a peapod over rapids. The scoundrels were washed back and forth across the deck and were crying out to the Lord in pathetic voices, just as I, at my post, faced death with hand held high...

He is holding his right arm in front of him in a defense posture:

"No! No!"

Just as the ship was preparing to finally pitch over in the darkness, a bolt of lightning split the mast in two, throwing me into the raging sea free of the burning vessel.

He begins a comic mimicry of a person plunged into monumental seas characterized by great peaks and troughs. To his own surprise, he is enjoying himself:

Well, you know me...how I've always loved the water...even as a little lad, miserable as I was, how I'd splash around in the washtub, sailing boats. So, fifteen-foot waves or no, drowning wharf rats, circling sharks, and thunder...I was having a whale of a time, floating on my back, spewing sea water like an exuberant putti, dreaming away atop the crests, sparring with death down in the valleys...

"Rising" and "falling" to illustrate his words:

life...death...life...death.... "Well, life has its design...happenstance...vibrancy... sluggishness...honesty...sophistry...its specifics...its...its...."

Shaking off his hallucinatory recollections:

Well, this last statement, I awake to find, I'm babbling to the night nurse, a wonderful woman, sponging me down, breaking the fever impeding my convalescence.

As strength returned, Sophocles was before my eyes, and Strindberg. I drifted in and out of dream plays, classical treatments...and penned my first play, a worthless little melodrama, all before my six months at the tubercular farm had passed. I wrote six more one-acts, recovering now at the Ripplin House in New London. Gaining momentum the following year, I enrolled in George Pierce Baker's Workshop Forty-Seven at Hahvahd University, where I learned but one interesting fact -- Cambridge, Massachusetts, is the only place in the world where a certain snake is pronounced "boer constrictah."

Sitting down on the stool as he speaks of Jimmy's and immediately jumping up again:

In skirting Jimmy the Priest's Institute of Culture, Particularly the Tubercule Bacillus, I passed directly to Greenwich Village, a hoppin' town where "quickie" is said to have several meanings other than "fast drying cement mix."

Sits down atop the stool.

It was in the Hell-Hole, tavern to gangsters, drunks, and literati (not that I'm suggesting much separation), that I first heard the low and lecherous beckoning call...

He crooks his finger to create the configuration of:

"Cape Cod...Cape Cod...."

He goes to the window, leans out, and looks out onto the audience.

Only thirty wharves still standing...

Sings:

Thirty wharves still standing...
No...now it's twenty-nine.
I look out on a fishing village
That's enduring a decline....

Musing:

1916...Provincetown, Massachusetts...dories floundering in the wakes of Boston trawlers, carriages passing under banners...barkers yelping at a gaggle of gawkers...twelve hawkers hooking.... I look across the street onto Lewis Wharf, past the chandler's, past the fish packers' shack, out to Margaret Steele's studio, "The Theatah." I lean back inside...

Waddling like Charlie Chaplin:

I walk like a pelican back to my stool; I whistle a little sea chantey...

Sings:

"Whiskey feeds the soul of man,
Whiskey feeds the mind.
Give me some 'o yer whiskey, lad,
.....thanks."

Sing a little sea chantey, rather; trying to act nonchalant as Jig Cook and his crew in the back there decide the fate of my Bound East for Cardiff....

He sneaks over for a quick peep through the keyhole and then returns to the stool.

No matter...it was just drifting (and I use the word peripatetically) that brought me out onto the Cape. I just thought I'd stick my feet in -- you know, maybe get as far out as Hyannis.... I drifted out with an aimless drunkard, Terry Carlin, a village anarchist who gained fame calling for the secret wiring up of rich folks' closets, so that when they lifted fancy items down from the hangers, small electric shocks would be administered. I met him last winter in the Hell-Hole, where talk was cheap -- pacifists canvassing seeds for the nonviolent overgrow of the central government, atheists calling God a cave painting that caught on, Irish Catholics cursing a vicious spook called Calvin, who "never fails to raise his ugly head count"; some talk of this Jig Cook, I'll admit, but mostly just jabber about the latest alcoholic rage: the rum sour, Irish whiskey, or tequila mockingbird (tequila and tequila with salt and a twist. The twist? No polluting the alcohol with the salt; that you just throw over your shoulder onto the birds behind you mocking: "Mind thee, O'Neill, hell's gaping maw," or "How's life down in the bottle, Genie?") Bah! Chit-chat was free and easy in the Hole -- talk of the Ballet Russe, Pablo Picasso, Sigmund Freud, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, talk of the little theaters, of Jig Cook and Susan Glaspell, Max Eastman, Hutchins Hapgood, Provincetowners, New Yorkers, artists, writers, and aspirants, a lot of flippin' flap over another summer season out on this god-forsaken spit of sand....What was all of that to me?

Defensively:

I traveled upcape for one reason, if for any purpose at all -- to watch the tourists play out their drama on Commercial Street.

Stands up, goes to the window, and leans out.

And having done it, I'll tell you this -- it's gewgaws and knickknacks that subdue these intrepid pioneers. Trying to roll back into the bar today, I found myself in the surplus store, "Marine Curiosities." I was aghast at the spectacle -- goods fallen from the backs of wagons laid out as "specialties," horseshoe crabs two bits (free for the asking on the beach). I listened with awe to the pioneers. "Would you look at this," one of the patrons cried aloud, holding up a canvas sling used, no doubt, in the rapid deployment of stillborn calves, "maybe Edna would like one of these...." It was a seething mass of humanity -- ten, twelve strong -- children terrified by dried sea worms on display, wives scandalized by blowfish, infuriated daddies: "Don't you call Barb-Barb 'Gumball,' Peeblie!" Oh, babble on, oh pioneers, babble on.

Walks to down-center and supplicates dramatically:

Oh, Monsignor Charlatan, I confess to an all-pervasive lie today, for so it is that I'm here for other reasons than those originally stated. It is directly away from this frippery and fudge, today's "high drama," that I fade in search of my secret place, there to clarify the issues hiding beneath the banal ballet in towns and cities, aboard ships, and on stages. These issues: what is man's place in the shifting, restless eternity below the moon of the Caribbees; what's to be done with the tragedy of a man's life revealed in the zone; Just what is "the zone"? Does will exist in the long voyage home? Do grace and the miraculous play a part in the passage to Cardiff?

Backing up as he moves in large circles about the stage:

Into the Province Lands I back away, there to clarify and state my case at seaside, precisely that it should, some day, be spoken. "Have mercy on me, O God, for I know my iniquity and my sin is always before me." I back away, ever so slowly out of town and down the beach. "Create a clean heart in me and renew a right spirit within my bowels."

Backing into something that he must step over (miming):

Suffering the prostrate piles, I edge away, enduring as well

Becoming agitated; now hopping, now scratching at himself:

the stickly sand spurs, random abandoned sawfish blades, men-o'-war, broken glass, field mice, and calico crabs, those little red menaces that walk backwards -- a swarm of us walking backwards out of town.

Calming down:

I quietly and pensively wend my way, sometimes in circles that conform to this corkscrew geography, my path winding around like a grain of sand attached to a gossamer insect thread whipping about a blade of dune grass first one way and then the other in sea breezes. Backing, backing, down Snail Road...what the -- !

He has stepped into something. He freezes and then summons the courage, still not looking at the imaginary object, to pick it up from behind his back and bring it out in front of him:

Argh! A bloody sea gull body, its ribcage working its way out through the wound, a marrow-harrow through top ground...God, it's a good thing I've got a shot or two of the concoction....

Halting before he can bring his flask to his mouth, he senses a presence "upstairs" and timidly raises his eyes to heaven. He then looks down and speaks in a booming, authoritarian voice:

Eugene O'Neill! This here is the Lord a-talkin' to thee. Dost thou not think it's about time thou put a parbuncle on thy rakery?

Aside:

You know, I never really thought He actually spoke in those terms....

Raising his head to heaven:

Well, my Lord, I'm more of the pint-o'-view meself, that I should ferment...debauch ere goitre and pox dispatch me.

Swigs. Contritely:

"Wash me, O God, and cleanse me of my sin...and stop fingerin' me spirit." Backing, backing...out the back, down and out -- down Snail Road (as I've already said), out across the railroad tracks, through those funny little trees, out across the blistering silica, past the dune shacks, past the colossal dead man's fingers (the frames of ship wrecks arching in the sun), out all the way to the backside of the Cape, where the land ("the Lord he is my firmament") ...

He has ended up back at the stool where he sits down, and, miming the activity of writing, states:

gives way to open ocean; where the sand bows down to the damp grey shroud wherein the riddle's majesty may be

pronounced "see-CREE-ted":

secreted...SE-creted, rather; to the damp grey shroud wherein any form may take its shape. All the way out...to state my case at seaside.

He moves into his chair down-right and addresses the "moderator":

I think that's all I have to offer "free-form" to preface your first question...so, fire away, I guess...

He waits for a response and in the ensuing silence detects excitement behind the door.

Oh, God! Is that an enthusiastic murmur I hear next door? Do the Provincetown Players rise up as one -- as one aroused by my Bound East for Cardiff? Oh, the sea is up...my nerve is up....

He gathers up his plays, stuffs them into the nail keg in great confusion, and hurries toward the door to join the Players.

Words! Words, words, words, words...you have to have them ready in barrels...

He opens the door, steps halfway through it into the next room, and turns back momentarily to address the audience before he exits:

mime won't help you out.

CURTAIN

--David Wheeler

Groups interested in hiring Mr. Wheeler to perform *Here Before You...* Eugene O'Neill, or any of his other monodramas -- on Cellini, Gaughin, and Audubon -- may gain information on rates and dates by writing the author, either c/o The Newsletter or Biohydrant Publications, R.F.D.#3, St. Albans, VT 05478.

THE ICEMAN COMETH: EUROPEAN ORIGINS AND AMERICAN ORIGINALITY (PART TWO)

[This is the second of three installments of a monograph originally published in Budapest: in the Modern Philology section of *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae*, XI (1980), 82-107. Part One appeared in the last issue of the Newsletter (Winter 1981) on pp. 5-10, and the concluding section will be printed in the next issue. Professor Egri, wishing to "round off the picture" of the European antecedents of *Iceman*, has added to his original essay the section on Synge's *Well of the Saints* which begins this second installment.--Ed.]

IV

Illusion is also confronted with reality in Synge's play, *The Well of the Saints* (1905), in which the eyesight of two blind beggars, Martin and Mary Doul, is temporarily restored by a Saint, a wandering friar. When the couple realize how ugly they are, and Martin fails to win the love of Molly Byrne, a girl of exceptional beauty whom he initially and mistakenly takes to be Mary, they welcome the return of their blindness, refuse to be given a second and permanent cure, and start day-dreaming of the "grand" beauty that will be theirs when her long hair and his beard are white.

The illusory embrace of self-deceit as self-defense and the illusive rejection of reality as escape constitute too close a parallel between *The Well of the Saints* and *The Iceman Cometh* to be easily dismissed as fortuitous coincidence. The compositional rhythm and structural stages of darkness illuminated by illusion, the light of truth brought by an external agent wishing well but doing damage, and the relapse into darkness implying the rebirth of the pipe dream: these mark further links between Synge's play, which O'Neill certainly knew, and O'Neill's drama, which may have received creative impetus from the American playwright's Irish predecessor. The act of diving into and submerging in illusion is viewed with understanding and irony by both writers, and O'Neill's epic interest is also anticipated by Synge. If *Iceman* dramatizes and multiplies the mold of a short story, *Well* reads like a dramatized folk-tale, and *The Playboy of the Western World* creates the impression of a dramatized popular anecdote.

A meaningful similarity is, of course, far from being an absolute identity. Whereas in *The Well of the Saints* the day-dreaming inclination of the beggars is counterpointed by the sobriety of all the other characters, in *The Iceman Cometh* all the figures are caught in their pipe dreams. Where in *Well* only the Douls find themselves repulsive--and for Martin, Molly is the epitome of resplendent beauty--in *Iceman* no character on the stage can bear facing his or her reality, and only off-stage figures (like Evelyn and Rose) embody unambiguously positive values. In *The Well of the Saints* Synge's irony is playful and compassionate; in *Playboy*, where Christy Mahon is inflated into mock-heroic proportions through the boasting lie of having slain his father with a single swish of the loy, illusion turns into delusion and deception, and authorial irony is more pronounced. While Synge's laughter is charming and humorous, O'Neill's irony in *Iceman* is increasingly tragicomic and tragic.

The alternative of seeing or being blind in *Well* presents the opposition of reality and illusion clearly in both literal and symbolic terms, but it involves less of the underlying social and moral implications of the antithesis between actual truth and sustaining ideal than does the dichotomy of facing or eluding one's total predicament in *Iceman*. Synge's play implies the hope of the Irish Revival at the beginning of the century; O'Neill's drama expresses the hopeless hope of humanity

alienated from itself and tottering in the ruins of World War II. All the same, O'Neill's *Iceman* seems to have taken at least a gulp from Synge's *Well*.

V

The relationship between O'Neill and the three aforementioned playwrights--Ibsen, Gorky, and Synge--can be described as an influence which was received and modified by O'Neill according to the requirements of his own world outlook. The Chekhov-O'Neill contact should rather be termed a typological convergence which is manifest on a number of planes.

1. So far as their artistic attitudes are concerned, G. Lukács's characterization may be quoted:

The tragicomedy of Ibsen's stern imperatives ... is foreign to O'Neill's drama. O'Neill's tragicomedy has been through the school of Chekhov. The ethical-dramatic dialectic is no longer that between absolute imperatives and the impossibility of their realization. We are now concerned with the scope and possibilities of human action as such; O'Neill's subject is man himself, his subjectively tragic and yet objectively comic situation. Again, to say that O'Neill drew inspiration from Chekhov is not to accuse him of imitation. The America he portrays is, sociologically, that described by his contemporaries--though he often, to win dramatic distance, sets the scene in the America of the past.... O'Neill wishes to know whether a man is in the last analysis responsible for his own actions or is the plaything of psychological and social forces over which he has no control. His American *Electra* acknowledges responsibility for her actions with tragic pride; the integrity of human personality is preserved, though at a great cost. But such a situation is unusual in O'Neill. More often, the authentic and the inauthentic are inextricably interwoven in his characters--the accent falling more and more frequently on the latter. That is O'Neill's originality. Seeing the situation as he does, he is yet able to affirm, with his own brand of tragicomic defiance, a basic integrity in human personality. For all the apparent gloom, this is the message of later dramas like *A Moon for the Misbegotten* and *A Touch of the Poet*.¹¹

The same applies to *The Iceman Cometh* as well.

2. The theme of yearning desire versus barren truth, of inspired illusion opposed to commonplace reality, also joins Chekhov's and O'Neill's dramatic art, even if the point of reference--the ideal fostering the illusion--beckons, with Chekhov, from a distant future, and has receded, with O'Neill, into a distant past.

3. Chekhov's and O'Neill's treatment (reduction) of the dramatic plot also offers an area for meaningful comparison. As Timo Tiusanen has noted,

within the realistic framework [of *The Iceman Cometh*] there is a thematic fluidity which would not be permitted in a tighter play, closer to the formulas of the "well-made play." The coordinating factor is a problem common to all the characters--not a plot, in which each should perform his own, highly individual function.... *The Iceman Cometh* is, in its orchestral organization of the material, O'Neill's *The Three Sisters*.¹²

¹¹G. Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, translated from the German by John and Necke Mander (London, 1969), pp. 83-84

¹²Timo Tiusanen, *O'Neill's Scenic Images* (Princeton, 1968, p. 270. It should be noted that Mary McCarthy also sees the characters of the play as a unified body reacting

We may add that the impressionistic and symbolistic overtones, and the coupling of social characterization with psychological insight, also provide significant links between Chekhov's and O'Neill's plays.

4. So does both playwrights' integration of the pattern of the short story into the structure of the drama. This integration is, in fact, the formal (generic) equivalent of their achievement in preserving human integrity in the face of, in the teeth of, an alienated world.¹³

VI

This procedure can best be studied in the Conrad-O'Neill relationship, whose starting point seems to be a short story by Joseph Conrad entitled "Tomorrow" and published in *Typhoon and Other Stories* in 1903.

"Tomorrow" is about a retired and monomaniacal coastal skipper, Captain Hagberd, who has been waiting sixteen years for the return from the sea of his runaway son, Harry, incessantly hoping and continually stating that he will turn up "tomorrow." When, however, "tomorrow" becomes "today," and Harry actually appears at Colebrook, a small British seaport, the Captain is unwilling and unable to recognize and acknowledge his son, and submerges even deeper into his cherished obsession. Thus the tale embodies a dramatic reversal and, by its epically exposed closing peripety, proves to be a characteristic short story, rather than a simple narrative.

The relationship between accident and necessity also bears out the presence of a dramatic interest in the epic story. Harry's learning about his father's having advertised for him is purely accidental. The consequences of the information, however, follow from the characters involved, the situation given, and are, therefore, necessary. When Harry finds out that his father expects him to arrive by the following day, he, quite naturally, warns the Captain that his supposition is incorrect: "I fancy there's something wrong about your news," he says.¹⁴ "I could give you some real information about your son--the very latest tip, if you care to hear" (262). His father, however, does *not* care to hear. In fact he finds the very idea an insult: "Here's a fellow--a grinning fellow, who says there's something wrong. I've got more information than you're aware of. I've all the information I want. I've had it for years--for years--for years--enough to last me till tomorrow. Let you come in, indeed! What would Harry say?" (262) The old man seems to have misunderstood his son's words. Harry's "There's something wrong about your news" simply means

to the exigencies of their illusory predicament and O'Neill's argument collectively, and she also relates *The Iceman Cometh* to *The Three Sisters*, but she finds Chekhov's play superior to O'Neill's: "O'Neill might have studied the nature of illusion through the separate relations of a group of characters (*The Three Sisters*), but his people are given but a single trait each, and they act and react, in the loss and recapture of illusion, not individually but in a body. Bare and plain, this play has the structure of an argument...." Mary McCarthy, "Eugene O'Neill--Dry Ice" (1956), in *Raleigh*, p. 52. I personally do not agree that such a kind of collective reaction would make O'Neill's play inferior to Chekhov's. [Here, for readers without installment one of Professor Egri's essay, is the full citation for the work subsequently referred to as *Raleigh*: John Henry Raleigh (ed.), *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Iceman Cometh"* (Englewood Cliffs, 1968). --Ed.]

¹³I have analyzed the problem in detail in my forthcoming book, *Chekhov and O'Neill: The Uses of the Short Story in Chekhov's and O'Neill's Plays*.

¹⁴Joseph Conrad, "Tomorrow," in *Typhoon and Other Stories* (Leipzig, 1928), p. 261. (I have dropped the hyphen in to-morrow.) Subsequent page citations refer to this edition, and will be included in the essay in parentheses.

that his son cannot come the following day if he is right there already. But the Captain interprets Harry's encouragement as a menace--there's "something wrong" about his expectation. He feels his life's hope in danger.

The accidental misunderstanding, however, expresses a psychological necessity and a psychic need: the inevitable and unalterable fixation of his disturbed mind on the redeeming idea of his son's return in an ever-approaching and ever-shifting future. The reader's sudden realization that what seems to be a chance event is indeed the abrupt manifestation of a necessary trend is due to the operation of a dramatic change of aspect in the composition of the tale, which by this very organization proves to be a genuine short story.

Dramatic energy is channeled into Conrad's story in a number of other ways as well. Captain Hagberd and his son are strongly contrasted characters, the former sticking to the land, and the latter taking to the sea; the Captain (the son of a bankrupt farmer) having become a sailor against his will and Harry by inclination; the Captain being a tyrannical father often using a hard leather strap on his disobedient son, and Harry being an independent-minded boy who was unable to bear his father's ferocious whims. The Captain preferred to be confined to his house and garden and wanted to make his son a lawyer's clerk; Harry was a restless, reckless boy, who abhorred what he would call a rabbit-hutch and knocked down all sorts of barriers. The father was a penny-pincher; the son hated hoarding riches and didn't want or need more money than was absolutely necessary for a drink, a fare, and an easy-going life. The Captain was hardly able to shift his emotional allegiances and, especially after his wife's death, turned with all his stubborn, unflinching affection towards his absent son; Harry was incapable of developing strong and constant emotional ties with anyone, whether his father or a girl, and the only reason he returned home at all was that he had been told his father was advertising for him and he hoped he would be able to touch the old man for the five quid he needed to finish off a promisingly begun drinking bout. It is little wonder, given all these opposed traits, that the two figures are headed for a dramatic clash.

The conflict reaches its paradoxical acme when, enwrapped in his illusion about his son's advent "tomorrow," the Captain throws a shovel at Harry, just missing his head. He considers the boy a grinning informer offering him unsolicited and dangerous news about his son, and he rejects him in the name of that son--so sure to arrive the following day. Harry cannot be Harry if he is to arrive "tomorrow" rather than "today." Nor can the loving son of his well-guarded self-deception be identical with this insolent lad who laughs at him the way common townspeople do. His son, as seen in the Captain's mind's eye, is a psychological defense against their mockery, so how could this mocking fellow possibly be he? Awaiting the return of the mythical Harry is the only kind of life the monomaniacal Captain is able to accept as real, so how could an unpleasant youngster with a gloating grin be anything but unreal? If Harry is real, the Captain is mad. Would it not be mad to admit he is mad? So, for the near-deranged Captain, the only sane action saving his ideals is the insane rejection of his son. In short, the incompatibility of illusion and reality in Captain Hagberd's mind is the main theme and thrust of the story.

The dramatic dichotomy between father and son is accompanied and reinforced by the antagonism between the Captain's tenants (and neighbors) Josiah Carvil, a former boat-builder and a blind widower, and Bessie Carvil, his daughter, whom he keeps entirely to himself, isolates from the world, and subjugates and terrorizes with his capricious and selfish whims. What could be voluntary, filial service is thus turned into hostile, forced servitude. Old Carvil's physical sightlessness and old Hagberd's mental blindness are like opposite mirrors between which a tragic truth passes and becomes multiplied.

The clash between the Captain and his son, the contrast between illusion and reality in old Hagberd's mind, and the opposition between Josiah and Bessie Carvil are linked with a further conflict that evolves between Harry and Bessie.

The Captain considers Bessie the only sensible girl in town and the only one worthy of becoming Harry's wife. He is even prepared to cut Harry off without a shilling if he does not marry her. The Captain's frequent hints about such a marriage,

and Bessie's forced isolation at the side of her exacting and nagging father, naturally arouse her interest in the mythical son. And when Harry actually returns, his nonchalant casual, world-trotter's manners, as well as his good looks and his need to rely on her in approaching his father, awake her tender feelings for Harry. When the Captain drives Harry away, never to return, and the lad kisses her for the first and last time, Bessie feels humiliated and heartbroken, left alone for good, exposed endlessly to old Hagberd's hopefully hopeless insanity and old Carvil's harassingly helpless tyranny.

All these various sorts of conflict seem to combine into a major contrast: the simultaneous necessity and tragic impossibility of a change. The Captain will be unable to face reality as long as he lives; the blind Carvil will continue wallowing regally in his armchair and bellowing unbearably for Bessie throughout his life; and Bessie is destined to lead a miserable existence until her death. Unable to tell whether "it was the beat of the swell: or Harry's "fateful tread that seemed to fall cruelly upon her heart" (278), she heard the fiendish voice of her father, "and, as if overcome by fate, began to totter silently back towards her stuffy little inferno of a cottage. It had no lofty portal, no terrific inscription of forfeited hopes--she did not understand wherein she had sinned" (279). A realistic representation of a naturalistic hell; in part the price of Captain Hagberd's illusion, in part the consequence of a fateful constellation.

Part of the dramatic effect of the story is derived, one might say, from the abrupt changes of narrative focus; the sudden shifts of the inner scenes of deliberation and assessment. At first one is involved with the predicament of the Captain, and, though the reader sees the delusion of old Hagberd's unreal expectation, he can sympathize with the old man's paternal anxiety, love and hope. The malice of the local barber, who provides the exposition for his customers as well as Conrad's readers, arouses one's emotions rather for than against the Captain.

With the appearance of Harry the reader is provided with an insight into his attitude. Harry's references to his father's having used the hard leather strap to keep him at home, and, sixteen years ago, having thrown a shovel at him to keep him out of home (one of the carefully constructed antithetic situations in the story) highlight the whimsicality of the Captain's behavior and strongly qualify his image of himself as an affectionate father. From a son run away to the sea, Harry partly changes, in the reader's eyes, into a son *driven* away to the sea, even if his restless and reckless stance gives an independent motivation to his act as well.

The end of the story emphasizes the tragic plight of Bessie--an innocent victim, used, abused, and left alone to the merciless mercy of her overbearing father and obsessed neighbor. The insane irony of her tragic fate is concisely expressed in the Captain's triumphant chuckle above her head (278), "the voice of madness, lies and despair--the voice of inextinguishable hope":

"You frightened him away. Good girl. Now we shall be all right. Don't be impatient, my dear. One day more." ... It was as if all the hopeful madness of the world had broken out to bring terror upon her heart, with the voice of that old man shouting of his trust in an everlasting tomorrow. (279)

These shifts of focus, insight and emphasis seem to suggest that the dramatic strategy underlying Conrad's story is developed along the lines of a mosaic design. The dramatic pattern of the narrative is supported by what might be called scenic effects, appropriately scaled down to the scope of the short story.

1. Harry Hagberd's appearance is preceded, prepared and introduced by the window of the Carvils' downstairs parlor being lit up. It is dusk, and putting on the light has, of course, a perfectly natural explanation. Still, it also has a dramatic role in that it gives the scene a miniature dramatic impulse by focussing the limelight of attention on Harry's entrance onto the stage of the story. The scenic effect is all the more pro-

nounced since it takes place in the silence which follows old Carvil's shouting.

2. Harry's arrival is accompanied by a cold white light lingering in the western sky. The hour of the day, of course, perfectly justifies this glimmer. Again, though, in the given context, one cannot help feeling that it also flashes a glimmer of hope, even if its coldness would seem to give the lie to much expectation. Perhaps it is not without reason that the clear streak of light under the clouds dies out when Bessie is explaining to Harry the nature of the Captain's obsession, which Harry sums up aptly (265): "It's all tomorrow, then, without any sort of today, as far as I can see." Any kind of open statement in the story about the possible symbolic meaning of the appearance and disappearance of the light would be an overstatement, and would inevitably ruin the possibility of sensing a symbolic connotation in the total image,¹⁵ whose symbolic charge and scenic value are enhanced by the figure of Bessie Carvil appearing in black silhouette in the parlor window, then flitting out before the other cottage, "all black, but with something white over her head" (262).

3. Another characterizing scenic image is Harry's stepping aside, out of the streak of light, upon hearing old Carvil shout for Bessie. Harry inquires whether it is her husband, "with the tone of a man accustomed to unlawful trusts" (268-269).

The style of Conrad's story is often dramatically condensed and polarized, corresponding to the frequent parallelisms and confrontations in the characterization of figures and composition of situations. Accordingly, the language of the story can be dramatically abrupt and directly challenging, as in the unexpected and epically unintroduced question put by Bessie: "'What are you?--a sailor?' said an agitated voice" (269). It can be terse, eloquent and patterned in rhythmic parallel phrases, as in Harry's answer to Bessie's question about where he thought he ought to have been born by rights if not in that hutch of a house: "In the open, upon a beach, on a windy night" (268). It can be based on sharp contrasts, as in Harry's reference to the role played by women in his life: "The scrapes they got me into, and the scrapes they got me out of!" (274), or as in his rather unkind remark to Bessie, who gives him the money he has asked for: "'You can't buy me in,' he said, 'and you can't buy yourself out'" (277). It can even reach the level of a witty dramatic dialogue with spirited retorts to sharp reproaches linguistically patterned in succinct parallelisms and antitheses, as in the swift exchange of words between Bessie (referring to the Captain) and Harry (defending himself):

"He starves himself for your sake."

"And I have starved for his whim," he said....

"All he has in the world is for you," she pleaded.

"Yes, if I come here to sit on it like a damn' toad in a hole." (274)

In the last unit of the passage, even the formal "he said," the last narrative remnant of a distance-keeping quoting sentence, has been dropped. The text is ripe for dramatization.

VII

Conrad lost no time in turning his short story into a one-act play. It was presented under the title "One Day More" by the Stage Society in London, on June 25, 1905.

"One Day More" retains practically all the essential features of "Tomorrow": its conflict, its main characters, the basic situation, and the development of the plot are fundamentally the same. Even much of the dialogue has been retained in the play,

¹⁵For a dramatic-symbolic use of natural lighting effects, compare, e.g., the scenic connotations of the setting and rising sun in O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*.

which is subdivided into five small scenes, thus making the latent mosaic pattern of the story explicit. The close parallelism of story and play underlines and retrospectively justifies the dramatic quality of the former. And the deviations between "Tomorrow" and "One Day More" release and crystallize this quality in the process of dramatic adaptation.

The conflict between the Captain and his son becomes sharper, for instance. There is a true dramatic ring to Harry's characterization of the inevitability of their clash. Explaining to Bessie why he cannot stay at home and behave as an obedient son of an irascible father, he speaks in short, hard, lapidary sentences: "I ain't accustomed to knuckle under. There's a pair of us. Hagberds both. I ought to be thinking of my train."¹⁶ In this way the statures of both father and son have been raised and made compact.

The antithesis in Captain Hagberd's consciousness between illusion and reality is represented minutely in the story. There are a number of tangled references (approaching, though not copying, the haphazard turns and returns of everyday speech) to how the Captain professed that his son would surely return "next week," "next month," "next spring," "next year"--and "tomorrow" (T, 246-247, 249, 250, etc.). In the play the set of phrases is contracted, abbreviated, arranged in a rapid succession and in a dramatically decreasing--one might say, tumbling--order. As Josiah Carvil puts it, grumbling to Bessie in grim malice: "He bothered everybody so with his silly talk of his son being sure to come back home--next year--next spring--next month--What is it by this time, hey?" (ODM, 136) And the Captain, though the question is not put to him, is quick with the answer in the play's following scene: "tomorrow. . . . One day more" (ODM, 139). Dramatic generalization, propelled by fateful necessity, tends to discard or cut through narrative curves and episodic digressions.

The opposition between Josiah and Bessie Carvil is also thrown into greater relief in the one-acter, which begins with their conversation during a walk. This change in composition has a number of dramatic advantages: it gives emphasis to Carvil's domestic tyranny and Bessie's suffering; it provides a more stable framework to the piece--a rondo form starting and finishing with Bessie's plight; and it is an appropriate way to reveal the necessary antecedents in action and dialogue rather than in the barber's narration which, along with the barber himself, can be dispensed with. The function of suggesting the townspeople's malice against the Captain is transferred from the relatively lengthy narrative of the barber to the flash-like dramatic appearance of a new figure, the Lamplighter, who also shows Harry the way to his father's cottage.

Bessie's mistreatment by her blind father is also focussed later in the play by scenic presentation. In the story, old Carvil's blindness and nagging are described. In the play his condition and attitude are effectively shown: in Scene 2 he shouts for his hat, continues yelling while Bessie is walking toward him with his hat in her hand, and only stops bellowing--but then abruptly, in mid-sentence--when she puts his hat on his head.

The tragic conflict between Bessie and Harry also gains greater momentum in "One Day More" than in "Tomorrow." In the story Bessie is rather passive, even submissive. In the play her personality asserts itself with much greater clarity, consciousness and energy. Already before Harry's arrival, she defends emphatically old Hagberd's belief in his son's return against her father's derisive remarks about the old lunatic's delusion: "What is so mad in keeping up hope?" (ODM, 136). And even

¹⁶ Joseph Conrad, "One Day More," in *The Modern Theatre*, Vol. III, ed. Eric Bentley (Garden City, N.Y., 1957), 161. Subsequent page citations refer to this edition and are included in the essay in parentheses with the identifying initial ODM. (Future parenthetical references to "Tomorrow" are preceded by a T.)

when old Carvil conjectures that the Captain may not have had a son at all, Bessie speaks out strongly in the Captain's defense: "What does it matter? His talk keeps him up" (ODM, 137). When Harry does arrive, she gives up her earlier attitude of soothing the Captain by reassuring him that there is nothing wrong about him anywhere, and she is "calm and forcible" (ODM, 162) when, continuing her earlier half-attempt to enlighten the Captain about the truth, she decides she will make him see that his son has come back.

In the story, Bessie is passively distressed and hopelessly ashamed when Harry learns that it was she whom his father intended him to marry, and makes up his mind to leave immediately. "She had not moved, and she remained half turned away from him, pressing her head in the palms of her hands.... She stood a little on one side, with her head drooping as if wounded; with her arms hanging passive by her side, as if dead" (T, 276-277). In the play Bessie "*turns unexpectedly and pushes him with both hands*" (ODM, 164), and orders him fiercely to go away.

After Harry's final departure the Bessie of the story is overcome by fate, overwhelmed by tearful sorrow, and subdued by her private inferno which swallows her although she does not understand wherein she had sinned. Her sobbing is counterpointed by the triumphant chuckle of Captain Hagberd's mad and inextinguishable hope in an everlasting tomorrow.

The Bessie of the play is no less desperate and broken, but she is more ferocious and clear-sighted. At play's end, three kinds of laughter are contrasted: Bessie's, first faint and then louder, expressing her realization of the tragic irony of her fateful situation; that of the grinning vagabond, as the Captain calls him; and the "*affected gurgling laugh*" (ODM, 165) of Captain Hagberd, whose chuckle cuts Bessie's laughter short and turns it into a sob. Whereas the Bessie in the story does not understand what sort of sin she is suffering for, the Bessie in the play understands much more and turns to the Captain, who is triumphing in his delusion, with the bitterly perspicacious words: "Go in; be quiet! You have done harm enough" (ODM, 165). And finally, upon the Captain's insane reassurance about Harry's coming home "tomorrow," she loses control of herself, shouts at old Hagberd's face, "You make me mad" "*with rising inflection*" (ODM, 165), a statement which seems to shake, perhaps even shatter, the Captain's illusion:

Captain Hagberd, *above, in a voice suddenly dismayed and shrill.*

What! What do you say, my dear? no tomorrow?

Broken, very feebly.

No--tomorrow?

Window runs down. (ODM, 166)

In the story Bessie refrains, as a rule, from arguing with the Captain. Only once does she try to throw some doubt on his unreal hope doomed to disappointment; but seeing the expression of horror and incredulity come at once over his face, she ceases her attempt to sober him up and relapses into her habit of humoring him in silence. She explains to Harry her usual failure to contradict his father by referring to the harm she might have done the Captain: "It would only have made him miserable. He would have gone out of his mind" (T, 265). What is a diffidently rejected, distant and abstract possibility in the short story becomes a desperately bitter, actual dramatic deed in the one-act play.

All these modifications in the concept and method, enhancing and releasing the dramatic quality in the story, justify the generic change from narrative fiction to drama. But a change in kind is not necessarily tantamount to a change in value. Although "One Day More" was praised with good reason by such different and reliable critics as Shaw, Galsworthy and Max Beerbohm,¹⁷ Conrad himself had misgivings about

¹⁷See Eric Bentley (ed.), *The Modern Theatre*, Vol. III, editor's notes, p. 305.

the achievement of the play, which certainly does not reach the literary level of the short story.

The process of dramatization involves disrupting the capillary network of minor everyday episodes, outer and inner motifs, in order to emphasize what is necessary and inevitable in the protagonists' relationships. One of Conrad's strengths as a narrator lies in representing dynamic charge in small details and characteristic circumstances. Dramatic shortcuts, eliminating such details, posed a difficulty which he could not always and entirely solve.

In the story, for example, Bessie's embarrassment over how to tell Harry it is he whom the Captain expects "tomorrow"--i.e., that his father is insane--is described in a credible way: "She did not answer, helpless before an insurmountable difficulty, appalled before the necessity, the impossibility and the dread of an explanation in which she and madness seemed involved together" (T, 263). Her inhibition is convincingly rendered by the psychological elements of the suggestive description. Even the use of the word "helpless" as an apposition, and the cumulative rhythm inherent in the repetition of nouns like "difficulty," "necessity" and "impossibility," play their parts in the total effect. In the play, however, such dramatically condensed narrative means cannot be applied, and Conrad was unable to find the dramatic equivalent of his epic description. Bessie's wringing her hands and lamenting to herself and to the audience--"What had I better do?" (ODM, 148)--just do not do.

Similarly, in the story Harry asks Bessie for money in a straightforward and believable way. In the play, however, the dichotomy between Harry courting Bessie and needing her money is "dramatized" by such awkward asides as "I don't seem to get any nearer to my railway fare" (ODM, 158, 161), which are inappropriately "funny" and unnecessarily overemphasize a calculating trait in Harry, who has just made a clean breast of his unsteady ties with both women and ships, and does not seem to be a person beating about the bush.

To give a true, dramatic significance to the theme of illusion and reality involved in the story, a real dramatist was needed.

[Concluded in the next issue]

--Peter Egri

DIALOGUE BETWEEN SON AND MOTHER IN CHEKHOV'S *THE SEA GULL* AND O'NEILL'S *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT*

Eugene O'Neill acknowledged his debt to August Strindberg from the beginning, and the special sharpness of recrimination among family members in his later plays offers ample evidence of the unabating influence of the tormented Swedish genius on America's greatest playwright.¹ So, too, is Ibsen's varied and pervasive influence throughout the entire O'Neill canon, from the social radicalism of the 1920's to the seeming nihilism of *The Iceman Cometh*, a play which, as several critics have demonstrated, is remarkably similar in theme to *The Wild Duck*.² What has never been

¹ Numerous articles have linked O'Neill and Strindberg. See, for example, S. K. Winther, "Strindberg and O'Neill: A Study in Influence," *Scandinavian Studies*, 31 (1959), 103-120; and Murray Hartman, "Strindberg and O'Neill," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 18 (Oct. 1966), 216-223.

² The similarity between these two plays was first pointed out in Sverre Arestad's "The Iceman Cometh and The Wild Duck," *Scandinavian Studies*, 20 (Feb. 1948), 1-11.

adequately discussed--in fact, has hardly even been alluded to--is the similarity between Anton Chekhov's plays and O'Neill's, especially O'Neill's later works. O'Neill only once mentioned Chekhov in the 1920's--in a perhaps sarcastic remark about Chekhov's "perfect plotless plays"³--and he vehemently denied a reviewer's suggestion that his popular *Strange Interlude* was Chekhovian.⁴ Nevertheless, there are qualities in O'Neill's later plays and Chekhov's five great dramas which suggest that the Russian and the American not only saw life in similar terms but dramatized the dynamics of close emotional relationships in similar ways.

The large similarity between the two, which links them to the greatest playwrights of the past, is one of moral vision--their mutual sense that in the midst of overwhelming futility there is hope. Few modern playwrights have so thoroughly devastated the traditional avenues of human belief and aspiration as have these two, while at the same time unflinchingly affirming the strength and capacity of the human spirit to endure. Certainly not Ibsen, whose social protest of the 1870's and 1880's gave way to the dark defeatism of the 1890's in a play like *John Gabriel Borkman*. Nor Strindberg, who withdrew into worlds of private fantasy, and thereby helped found the whole movement called dramatic expressionism. And the ever-sunny Bernard Shaw, who was also a favorite of the early O'Neill, could never take human depravity really seriously. Chekhov and O'Neill alone, among early twentieth century dramatists, could look at the ghosts in the human closet--could acknowledge the hatred, deceit, violence, and cowardice with which all human beings, even those we consider the "best," are burdened--and at the same time find their central characters, with few exceptions, redeemable. They could say incontrovertibly that by any rational standard life is morally and spiritually bankrupt, and could at the same time make human experience rich and glorious. To be sure, both found man saved to an extent by the comic--the way Chekhov uses the term "comedy" to define *The Cherry Orchard* is quite appropriate to a play like *A Moon for the Misbegotten*--but it is something other than, more than, the comic which makes these the great playwrights they are for a century so deprived of the promise and expectation which kept men and societies going in the past. I have heard it said by audiences of both *The Three Sisters* and *The Iceman Cometh* that "for some reason" they are not so despairing as they first appear. In fact, that they are finally quite the opposite of despairing is what gives them the awesome power they possess in our time. Viewers and readers deeply familiar with these plays find that they make life at its very worst seem bearable--a quality that has been a characteristic of all great tragedy from the Greeks on down.

Lengthier discussion than this can provide would be needed to isolate the salient characteristics of the kind of hope Chekhov and O'Neill have in common. What I wish to introduce here is that, as psychological dramatists, they see both hope and despair as two sides of a single coin and as responses which grow out of the closest of human relationships. They seem to imply that both what is wrong and what is right with the world grow out of the way people get along with one another in families, friendships and close-knit societies. Further, their dialogue indicates their mutual belief that close relationships--most often family relationships--are inevitably characterized by sudden alternations of feeling, by violent shifts from great affection to great hostility and back again. Their characters express their need to love and their need for love; they show as well their need to hurt and the inevitability of their being hurt in return. And these playwrights realize that the creation of hope versus the creation of despair is directly related to the success versus the failure of these severe confrontations.

It has been reiterated by several critics since, most recently by Peter Egri. (*The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter*, Winter 1981, pp. 7-9.)

³ From an interview with O'Neill which appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune*, 16 March 1924; reprinted in Oscar Cargill *et al.*, *O'Neill and His Plays* (New York: New York University Press, 1961), pp. 110-112.

⁴ See Louis Sheaffer, *Eugene O'Neill: Son and Artist* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 384.

Two plays in particular indicate more precisely the way in which the two playwrights treat the dynamics of intense emotional confrontation by members of a family. In both plays what results from the confrontations in question is despair--despair which in one case leads to suicide; but it is the kind of confrontation which in other instances leads to great reassurance for the central character involved and indirectly for the audience. The two plays are *The Sea Gull* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, both of which deal with the disastrous effects on a creative youth of parental instability. Arkadina affects her son Konstantin very much the way both James and Mary Tyrone affect their son Edmund in the O'Neill play. As James's egotistical vociferousness as an actor helps make his son feel inadequate, similar histrionics on the part of the great actress Arkadina persistently shake her son's self-confidence in *The Sea Gull*. As James combines this bravado with an oft-alluded-to miserliness, Arkadina denies her son even clothing suitable to his social position, so great are her fears concerning money--fears which, it seems implied, grow out of the same kind of earlier deprivation which James explicitly describes in his own background. Both Arkadina and James, of course, also spend money quite recklessly when it suits them--to the added dismay of their sons.

But Arkadina's deeper effects on Konstantin resemble more closely still the influence of the mother, Mary Tyrone, on her son in the O'Neill play. There are surface similarities between the two women: for example, their mutual contempt for the social backgrounds of their husbands and their disdain for "country" life. But the deeper influence on their sons has to do with what in one is a literal addiction, and in the other an obsession with an individual which to her son is like an addiction. Mary's morphine affects Edmund precisely as Arkadina's Boris Trigorin affects Konstantin. The addiction/obsession of the mothers contributes to the suicidal frenzy of their sons, a frenzy which explicitly culminates in Konstantin's suicide in the Chekhov play. In the case of Edmund, potential suicide is a shadow which lingers on the fringes of the play, as Louis Sheaffer's two-volume biography amply demonstrates.⁵ *Long Day's Journey* is unquestionably an autobiographical play, and anyone even remotely familiar with O'Neill's life realizes that his entire canon persistently re-enacts his struggles with suicidal feeling directly related to his relationship with his mother. The devastating consequences of a mother's rejection of her son is central to both Chekhov's play and O'Neill's.

The similarity goes beyond situation, however. It is also reflected in the way mother and son in these plays talk to each other at critical junctures, at those points where the depth of their closeness is revealed but where also the lasting damage to the son is done by the mother. Arkadina and Konstantin have only one such encounter in *The Sea Gull*: their dialogue in Act Three, which begins with Konstantin's request that his mother change his head bandage--he has wounded himself superficially in an unsuccessful suicide attempt--and ends with his furious tearing off of the dressing Arkadina has applied. There are several such encounters in *Long Day's Journey*. In one, late in the play, Edmund begins by appealing to his mother to acknowledge his illness (consumption) and overcome her addiction, and ends by calling his mother a "dope fiend." Such encounters are critical because one feels the sincerity of the characters and knows that they are being as honest as they possibly can with each other. The possibility for honesty in the mother, however, is limited by the addiction or obsession she will not admit, and this sharp limitation brings about her cruel rejection of her son. What chiefly characterizes these mother-son encounters in the two plays is the violent shifts in feeling on the part of both figures, shifts which culminate in sudden, explosive insult. In both plays the son appeals while the mother evades. Both mothers feel quite tender toward their sons at the start, but it is they who begin the vicious exchanges that ensue. The confrontation in *The Sea Gull* begins as follows:

⁵ Eugene O'Neill: *Son and Playwright* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1968); and Eugene O'Neill: *Son and Artist* (see note 4).

Arkadina: But it's almost healed. What's left is the merest trifle.
(*Kisses him on the head.*) And no more click-click while I
am away?

Konstantin: No, Mother, that was a moment of insane despair....
(*Kisses her hand.*) You have magic fingers.⁶

After reminding his mother of her charitable nature, which she tends to forget, Konstantin continues:

Lately, these last few days, I have loved you as tenderly
and as completely as when I was a child. I have no one left
but you now. Only why, why have you succumbed to the
influence of that man?

Arkadina: You don't understand him, Konstantin. He is a very noble
character.

This, of course, Konstantin rejects completely, and instead accuses Trigorin of cowardice.

Arkadina: You take delight in saying disagreeable things to me. I
respect that man and I ask you not to speak ill of him in
my presence.

Konstantin: And I don't respect him. You want me to consider him a genius,
too, but forgive me, I can't lie, his books make me sick.

Arkadina: That's envy. There's nothing left for people who lay claim to
a talent they haven't got but to disparage real talent.

Arkadina's charge of envy is her evasion of what Konstantin is saying about her feelings toward Trigorin. She ends in further evasion, alluding to the middle-class background of Konstantin's father, then calling her son a decadent and a nonentity. He retaliates by calling her a miser. That they make up before they part testifies to their deep love and need for one another, but the damage to the son is great and, as it turns out, fatal.

Here is O'Neill's handling of the same kind of exchange:

Mary: Come and sit down. You mustn't stand on your feet so much.
You must learn to husband your strength. (*She gets him to sit
and she sits sideways on the arm of his chair, an arm on his
shoulder, so he cannot meet her eyes.*)

Edmund: Listen, Mama--

Mary: Now, now! Don't talk. Lean back and rest.⁷

Mary, sensing what subject he wishes to bring up, evades what he will have to say, first by her excessive concern about his "summer cold," and then by attacking doctors. But Edmund is determined to make his point:

Edmund: Mama! Please listen! I want to ask you something! You--
You're only just started. You can still stop. You've got the
will power! We'll all help you. I'll do anything! Won't you,
Mama?

Mary: Please don't--talk about things you don't understand!

⁶ Quotations from *The Sea Gull* are from *Chekhov: The Major Plays*, tr. by Ann Dunnigan (New York: The New American Library, 1964), pp. 143-145.

⁷ Quotations from *Long Day's Journey Into Night* are from the sole published edition of that play (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), pp. 91-92, 120.

She then begins her oft-heard but to Edmund persistently hurtful accusation that it was his being born that started her on morphine. This leads him in turn to a tone of seeming indifference to her claim that one day the Virgin Mary will help her overcome her problem. In response she assumes a tone of cold indifference to *his* feelings and lets it be known that she will have someone drive her to the drugstore for the obvious purchase. While they do not quite hurl insults here, as do Arkadina and Konstantin, the effect is the same, and their later exchange on the same subject (too long to be quoted here) leads to Edmund's "dope fiend" accusation. There is always a truce of sorts, but Edmund is terribly deflated by his failure, forced to accept for perhaps the thousandth time that his mother is impenetrable. Following their later, similar exchange, Edmund dashes out for a long walk in the fog, with what one can well assume are suicidal thoughts on his mind. Were it only his mother that stood between him and the "insane despair" that leads Konstantin to take his own life, Edmund could easily have suffered the same fate. (In O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, a distraught son *does* in fact take his own life because of his mother's rejection of him--and his subsequent betrayal of her.)

What makes these mother-son confrontations in Chekhov and O'Neill so tellingly similar is that the violent opposition of tenderness and quick, deadly hostility in them is so unmitigated--there is no holding back of either feeling--and that they are so obviously part of a long-standing trauma of rejection felt by the son from his earliest years. One senses the endless repetition of these exchanges; they feel like echoes of similar exchanges going back to the point of the mother's first withdrawal and the son's first terrible disillusionment. The son eternally appeals, but the mother will not hear. We sense that we are witnessing part of a long-established pattern of confrontation which makes explicit the nature of the despair both sons feel. Mary's addiction from the start, says an Edmund who could also be speaking for Konstantin, "made everything in life seem rotten." The critical rejection which results from their mothers' obsessions is central to what makes Edmund and Konstantin want to give up on life.

The difference between the heroes is, of course, that Edmund is able to triumph over his hurt, whereas Konstantin is not. Edmund is finally able to find from his father and his brother the love he has been deprived of. His dialogue with them is characterized by the same violent vacillations of feeling which characterize his relationship with his mother, but with father and brother there is no sudden denial, no cold cutting off. Quite the opposite. Edmund's confrontations with father and brother during the final act of *Long Day's Journey* end in new openness, with deep hurt but still deeper reconciliation. Those confrontations end in confession and mutual reassurance, unlike Edmund's confrontations with Mary, which end in an utterly artificial "making up," which involves no confession and very little reassurance. Edmund finally feels with father and brother the kind of emotional contact which Konstantin never finds. The doctor (Dorn) and Konstantin's uncle (Sorin) try but cannot truly reach him. Nina, who might have saved him in the end, is herself too deeply hurt by Trigorin, and by life, to do anything for Konstantin. She remains prisoner to obsessions which parallel those of Arkadina and Mary--so there is nothing left for Konstantin but the overwhelmingly cold terror from which he cannot escape. Edmund, in being able to be reached by others, is more fortunate.

Long Day's Journey, by juxtaposing the best with the worst in close human relationships, becomes for me a uniquely hopeful modern play. Chekhov, not yet ready to find the same kind of hope in the emotional chaos of *The Sea Gull*, or its monumentally painful predecessor *Ivanov*, came to the same kind of acceptance in his final three plays. For example, an exchange similar to the one from *The Sea Gull* occurs between the still-youthful Petya and the motherly Lyubov in the third act of *The Cherry Orchard*--an exchange of heated insults culminating in Petya's storming out of the room. But despite Petya's abrupt exit, there is no breaking off of communication. In fact, the two are seen waltzing together not twenty lines later. Far

from being brought to a sense of their abiding hostility, we gain a sense of their abiding affection in spite of their anger at one another. So, too, what Vanya and Sonya are ultimately able to do for one another in *Uncle Vanya* turns that play away from the despair which characterizes the ending of *The Sea Gull* and makes its conclusion not unlike the conclusions of O'Neill's later plays (especially, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*); while the final union of the three sisters--which is nothing short of miraculous--is the very embodiment of the transcendent hope in the midst of apparent futility with which I began this discussion. My main idea, however, has been that the means by which Chekhov and O'Neill arrive at the same point, create the despair and later the hope which links their plays, is in the intense dialogue of emotional confrontation which is best illustrated by the mother-son dialogue in *The Sea Gull* and *Long Day's Journey*.

--Michael Manheim

O'NEILL AND FRANK WEDEKIND, PART ONE*

[The Newsletter's second use of serialization is particularly appropriate, as the second half of Ms. Tuck's study of the relationship between O'Neill and Wedekind, which compares two major female characters--O'Neill's Nina Leeds (in *Strange Interlude*) and Wedekind's Lulu (in *Erdgeist*)--will be a part of the special Summer-Fall issue on "O'Neill's Women." --Ed.]

Iconoclasts of the stage, Frank Wedekind and Eugene O'Neill frequently shocked audiences in their choice and treatment of unorthodox subject matter. A statement by the American dramatist defines the German playwright's artistic aim as well: "I intend to use whatever I can make my own, to write about anything under the sun in any manner that fits or can be invented to fit the subject. And I shall never be influenced by any consideration but one: Is it the truth as I know it--or, better still, feel it? If so, shoot, and let the splinters fly wherever they may."¹ Little research has been done concerning O'Neill's debt to Wedekind, although several critics have discussed the American playwright's affinities to German Expressionism in general.² Even though separated by time and country, there are nonetheless intriguing resemblances in Wedekind's and O'Neill's lives, personalities, and--most importantly--artistic concerns. Furthermore, the influence of *Frühlings Erwachen* (1891) on *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933) and of *Erdgeist* (1895) on *Strange Interlude* (1928) indicates that Wedekind was an important ancestor for O'Neill. In this essay an attempt will be made to compare those plays, to ascertain O'Neill's familiarity with Wedekind's work, and to suggest some similarities between the two writers.

* I am grateful to Horst Frenz for suggesting this topic. We intended to write the article jointly, but his illness has made that impossible. Nevertheless, my debt to him remains.

¹ Barrett H. Clark, *Eugene O'Neill* (New York: McBride, 1927), p. 99.

² For example, Clara Blackburn, "Continental Influences on Eugene O'Neill's Expressionistic Drama," *American Literature*, 13 (May 1941), 109-133; Ann Gertrude Coleman, "Expressionism--40 Years Later," *CEA Critic*, 27 (Feb. 1965), 1, 7-8; Otto Koischwitz, *O'Neill* (Berlin: Junker und Dunnhaupt Verlag, 1938), pp. 136-145; and two publications by Mardi Valgema: *Accelerated Grimace: Expressionism in American Drama of the 1920s* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), and "Expressionism in the American Theatre," in *Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon*, ed. Ulrich Weisstein (Paris and Budapest: Didier; Akadémiai Kiadó, 1973), pp. 193-203.

I

Both men were painfully sensitive, introspective, and withdrawn; each had unsatisfactory relationships with women and highly unstable family circumstances.³ Simply to escape parental confines and demands, Wedekind and O'Neill sought their freedom in the unfettered bohemian life of the *demi-monde*. The American playwright spent many of his young adult years in the alcoholic depths of New York City, while Wedekind lived among lower-class, under-privileged drifters who were not encumbered by bourgeois morality. Wedekind's political poetry and his contributions to the satirical magazine *Simplizissimus* helped to foster his reputation as a freethinker. O'Neill absorbed radical philosophies from Benjamin Tucker and Terry Carlin⁴ and, like Wedekind, read Nietzsche constantly and avidly. For a time, in fact, O'Neill carried a copy of *Also sprach Zarathustra* with him wherever he went, and once said that it influenced him more than any other book he had read.⁵ Similarly, both writers thought of themselves as loyal disciples of Strindberg.

Like O'Neill, Wedekind had little interest in formal education, but followed his father's wishes and began to study law, only to abandon it for literature, art, and the theatre. In the late 1880s, Wedekind worked in advertising and undertook various journalistic assignments, just as O'Neill for a time made his living as a reporter. When his father died, Wedekind received a sizable inheritance, and, in the summer of 1889, settled in Munich amidst actors, music-hall entertainers, and circus people. His fascination with the circus and the cabaret finds a counterpart in O'Neill's intimate acquaintance with vaudeville, for James O'Neill was famous for his endlessly-repeated role as the Count of Monte Cristo. O'Neill recognized the influence of his father's life as a well-known vaudevillian and once remarked, "I had known the theatre pretty intimately, because of my father's connection with it. But, with me, to know it had *not* been to love it! I had always been repelled by its artificiality, its slavish clinging to old traditions. Yet, when I began to write, it was for the theatre. And my knowledge of it helped me, because I knew what I wanted to *avoid* doing."⁶

O'Neill's search for new dramatic forms and innovative material parallels Wedekind's very similar quest. Dissatisfied with much of the prevailing theatrical fare in their homelands, the playwrights ignored--at times deliberately defied--their audiences; approval was never a primary concern. As a result, both struggled with censorship in their relentless attempt to show life unadorned by the panacea of illusion.

However, while personal resemblances are worth noting, my primary concern is to show that O'Neill had access to Wedekind's work. *Frühlings Erwachen* was available in an English translation in 1909, *Erdgeist* in 1914.⁷ According to

³ Compare, for example, the autobiographical *Long Day's Journey Into Night* with Gerhart Hauptmann's *Das Friedensfest*, which is based on Wedekind's family. See Frederick Heuser, "Gerhart Hauptmann and Frank Wedekind," *German Review*, 20 (Feb. 1945), 54-68.

⁴ For a discussion of Tucker and Carlin, respectively, see Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Playwright* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1968), pp. 102-106 and 335-338.

⁵ Sheaffer, p. 123.

⁶ Mary Mullett, "The Extraordinary Story of Eugene O'Neill," *American Magazine*, 94 (Nov. 1922), 116.

⁷ *Frühlings Erwachen* was translated by Francis Ziegler (Philadelphia: Brown Brothers, 1909.) *Erdgeist* was translated by Samuel A. Eliot, Jr. (New York: A. & C. Boni, 1914).

Doris Alexander, the fledgling playwright began to read the German dramatist's works in the spring of 1913 and especially admired the way in which sex was used as a force able to destroy individuals. As a result of his reading, O'Neill became dissatisfied with his own writing and remarked that he could no longer think highly of his recently completed *A Wife for a Life*, which was "aimed deliberately at a vaudeville audience."⁸ Alexander also quotes Corwin Willson, one of O'Neill's classmates at Harvard during the school year of 1914-15, who maintained that O'Neill "wanted to learn German ... so that he could read more Wedekind."⁹ A few years later, Pierre Loving recounted that in his discussions with O'Neill, the dramatist showed a keen interest in and familiarity with Continental drama. Loving does not specify the nationalities of the writers they discussed, but notes that O'Neill "launched into a brilliant analysis" of them and insisted "he had just read the newer men in their original tongue."¹⁰ It is also of interest that, in 1924, O'Neill's wife published an article in which she noted that the great experimentalists in the theatre were Strindberg, Ibsen, Kaiser, and Wedekind.¹¹ Clearly, Wedekind was no stranger to O'Neill.

What impressions of Wedekind would O'Neill have received if, in addition to reading his plays, he had consulted contemporary drama books? In *The Theatre of Today*, Hiram Kelly Moderwell remarked upon the "mordant brilliancy" of Wedekind's dialogue and felt he was "so strange, so perverse, so anarchic, and withal so talented and so courageous" that it was impossible to classify him. Moderwell placed Wedekind "at the head of the German dramatists of today."¹² Archibald Henderson noted, in *The Changing Drama*, that Wedekind's "characters speak out in the presence of others with such revolutionary frankness, such fathomless naïveté, that the harboring of secret thoughts seems almost to have disappeared...."¹³ In *Aspects of Modern Drama*, Frank Chandler commented upon Wedekind's "bestial world" and "fleshly eroticism." He went on to complain that for the German playwright "existence...is brutal and bad, and that which affords joy inflicts pain in larger measure. Men and women are pitiful creatures, the slaves of instinct, and the business of art is to show them convulsed by desire and battling one another."¹⁴ This was precisely the sort of dramatist who would appeal to O'Neill.

Could O'Neill have seen performances of Wedekind's plays? Evidence indicates that he could. According to Peter Bauland, the first of the German dramatist's plays to be presented in English in New York City was *The Tenor (Der Kammersänger)* on January 10, 1916, by the Washington Square Players.¹⁵ Not only was O'Neill in New

⁸ Doris Alexander, *The Tempering of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 184.

⁹ Alexander, p. 195.

¹⁰ Pierre Loving, "Eugene O'Neill," *Bookman*, 53 (Aug. 1921), 512.

¹¹ Agnes Boulton, "An Experimental Theatre: The Provincetown Playhouse," *Theatre Arts*, 8 (March 1924), 185.

¹² Hiram Kelly Moderwell, *The Theatre of Today* (New York: John Lane, 1914), p. 237.

¹³ Archibald Henderson, *The Changing Drama* (New York: H. Holt, 1914), p. 210. O'Neill's device of the "spoken thought"--which was to find its most pronounced expression in *Strange Interlude*--comes immediately to mind.

¹⁴ Frank Chandler, *Aspects of Modern Drama* (New York: Macmillan, 1914), p. 293.

¹⁵ Peter Bauland, *The Hooded Eagle: Modern German Drama on the New York Stage* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), p. 32. I am indebted to Mr. Bauland for subsequent dates of performances of Wedekind's plays in New York City.

York City at the time, but the date coincides with his first, feverish interest in the Players. Moreover, the subject matter of Wedekind's play--a philistine masquerading as an artist--would no doubt have appealed to O'Neill; he would treat the same theme a decade later in *The Great God Brown* (1926).

Shortly after *The Tenor*, the Irving Place Theatre produced *Erdgeist* in German. The critic for *The New Republic* (April 22, 1916) wrote that the play "strains our stunted receptivity to the breaking point" and is "utterly disregarding of our judgment of what a woman ought to be." In his analysis of Lulu, the reviewer would certainly have caught O'Neill's attention, for the description exactly fits O'Neill's yet-to-be-born Nina Leeds, the controversial femme fatale of *Strange Interlude*. "Lulu is sex attraction personified," the critic observed. "Everybody falls in love with her, everybody at some time or other has wanted to marry her.... She is destructive because she always finds out the inner instability of men towards the sex impulses. Ultimately the play is a dramatization of something in man for which the woman is only the external embodiment." The reviewer concluded, "Lulu is all things to all men, but she is also something very definite to every man she meets." The multi-faceted Nina and her constellation of men come instantly to mind.

Frühlings Erwachen was produced in March, 1917, when once again O'Neill was in New York City. Very popular when Max Reinhardt produced it in Berlin, the drama was scheduled to be presented to a selected audience under the auspices of a medical journal in support of the teaching of sex education in the schools. Nevertheless, the New York production was forbidden by the City Commissioner of Licenses, who declared the play unfit to be shown in public. An injunction was obtained by the State Supreme Court for one matinee, but no additional performances took place. Most New York drama critics condemned *Frühlings Erwachen* as prurient, disgusting, and offensive, and objected to its "gross realism" and the discussion of "adolescent sexual perversions."¹⁶ Only one reviewer expressed regret that this "powerful, masterly play" was not appreciated: "No other work in literature so sympathetically interprets the storm and stress of youth at the age when it is torn between its desires and the dread of the unknown...."¹⁷ Because this performance was limited to one engagement and was presented to such a small audience, it is doubtful that O'Neill could have attended. There is, however, a good chance that he heard about the controversy over the "sex drama."

The most likely occasion for O'Neill to have familiarized himself with Wedekind on the stage was offered in May of 1925 when Samuel Eliot, Jr.'s translation of *Erdgeist*, known as *The Loves of Lulu*, was produced in New York City. Starring the well-known actress Margot Kelly, the ill-fated production was reviewed extensively, prominently, and ruthlessly by the newspaper critics; it would have been nearly impossible for O'Neill to be unaware of the production. In the *New York World* (May 12, 1925), Alexander Woollcott reported, "The play and its performance was received with various manifestations of dull wonder, acute embarrassment, and unmannerly hilarity, scene after scene of hot, panting passion played to an accompaniment of titters." Stark Young (*New York Times*, May 12, 1925) concurred: "Between the actors and the audience the event was almost howlingly disastrous." Not interested, however, in beating an unmistakably dead horse, Young went on to point out Wedekind's "powerful and energizing gift, a view of life that is passionate, uncivilized and vehement, and shot through with strange and unforgettable surprises in subtlety and almost diabolical insight into the darker and more terrible obsessions of our natures." Young was alone in his attempt to salvage some meaning from the wreckage. Influential Burns Mantle, in an article entitled "*The Loves of Lulu* is Fervid and Ugly" (*Daily News*, May 13, 1925), confided to readers that the play "is nothing for us to work up a great resentment over. It is palpably done to attract the feverish continentals and their native imitators hereabouts. It is an ugly story of ugly people, with a nasty suggestiveness

¹⁶*New York Times*, April 1, 1917.

¹⁷*New York Globe*, April 3, 1917.

common to one type of German drama, and will neither appeal to nor harm a single soul worth worrying about."

O'Neill was an obvious exception to Mantle's assertion. During 1924, O'Neill shared the directorship of the Provincetown Playhouse with Robert Edmond Jones and Kenneth Macgowan. On the occasion of the production of Strindberg's *The Spook Sonata* (January 3, 1924), the young playwright wrote a brief essay for *The Provincetown Playbill* in which he acknowledged the important role Wedekind played in the development of modern drama: "All that is enduring in what we loosely call 'Expressionism'--all that is artistically valid and sound theatre--can be clearly traced back through Wedekind to Strindberg's *The Dream Play*, *There are Crimes and Crimes*, *The Spook Sonata*, etc."¹⁸ In August of the same year, O'Neill complained to Macgowan that nothing by Wedekind had been produced by the Provincetown Playhouse. He singled out for special consideration *Lulu*--the combination made by Wedekind himself of *Erdgeist* and *Die Büchse der Pandora*--and remarked, "It's the best thing of its kind ever written."¹⁹ In view of such comments, it is no surprise that Wedekind's influence can be discerned in O'Neill's own work.

II

In his "Proem for Prudes" which prefaces the 1909 English translation of *Frühlings Erwachen*, Francis J. Ziegler observes, "That it is a fatal error to bring up children, either boys or girls, in ignorance of their sexual nature is the thesis of Frank Wedekind's drama...."²⁰ The premise of *Ah, Wilderness!* is identical. Indeed, O'Neill's play may be perceived as an "answer" to the problems posed in the *kindertragödie*. The struggle to grow up is their common theme, although the playwrights approach the subject matter quite differently. Neither dramatist had a happy childhood, and in both plays it is tempting to identify autobiographical elements. Wedekind, whose tone is sharp and vision is black, confronts his past with bitterness, while O'Neill masks the truth of his own adolescent years. The American playwright referred to *Ah, Wilderness!* as "A Comedy of Recollection," but there is little recollection in it. The drama is a picture of the childhood that O'Neill would like to have had, not the one he actually experienced.²¹

Frühlings Erwachen and *Ah, Wilderness!* portray the suffering adolescent in the adult world. While O'Neill concentrates on one character, seventeen-year-old Richard Miller, Wedekind introduces three young people, Moritz Steifel, Wendla Bergmann, and Melchior Gabor. The first, hounded by extreme parental and academic pressures--

¹⁸Eugene O'Neill, "Strindberg and Our Theatre," in *The Provincetown: A Story of the Theatre*, Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau (New York: Farr & Rinehart, 1931), p. 192.

¹⁹Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 148.

²⁰Francis J. Ziegler, tr., *The Awakening of Spring* (Philadelphia: Brown Brothers, 1909), p. v. Subsequent quotations will be given parenthetically within the text. Ziegler's translation, which went through six editions between 1909 and 1920, was the first English version of Wedekind's play and the one which O'Neill would probably have used had he needed a translation. O'Neill would have found the introductory comments quite informative: Ziegler praises Wedekind as "the forerunner of the new drama" whose "language [is] almost bacchic" (p. ix). The translator thought Wedekind a welcome relief from the standard "lyric lemonade" found on the stage and urged American readers to appreciate its forceful realism, even though he conceded that the drama "may not be pleasant reading exactly."

²¹Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* (1962; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 762.

which are exacerbated by sexual confusion and fear--commits suicide; the second, naïve, trusting, and untutored in the ways of the world, dies as the result of an abortion. These two characters provide the background for Melchior, upon whom Wedekind focuses.

Melchior and Richard are quite similar. Both are intelligent, moody, poetic; they read "radical" literature, have "progressive" notions, and are curious about sex. In his mother's opinion, Richard tastes forbidden fruit when he devours Swinburne, Ibsen, and Omar Khayam. Richard's father, though, is tolerant and displays the same fair-minded attitude that Melchior's mother exhibits when she learns that her son is reading *Faust*: "I should have waited for one or two years ... [but] you are old enough, Melchior, to be able to know what is good and what is bad for you. Do what you think best for yourself. I should be the first to acknowledge your right in this respect, because you have never given me a reason to have to deny you anything. I only want to warn you that even the best can do harm when one isn't ripe enough in years to receive it properly." Mrs. Gabor concludes with words which O'Neill would have heartily endorsed: "I would rather put my trust in you than in conventional educational methods" (pp. 72-73). Both dramatists create an ideal parent who is open-minded, especially about literature. For Wedekind and O'Neill, the young adult's ability to choose what he reads is an all-important freedom.

We find other similarities between Richard's father and Melchior's mother. Both react in the same manner when their sons are caught writing letters about sex. Richard copies from Swinburne in his correspondence with Muriel ("That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat/Thy breasts like honey, that from face to feet/Thy body were abolished and consumed,/And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!"),²² and Moritz outlines the intricacies of the sexual act (twenty pages "On Coition"). Nat Miller confronts his son with the poetry, points out that it is "hardly fit reading for a young girl" (p. 207), but realizes that the sex is in the verse rather than in Richard's actions. Similarly, in her defense of Melchior, Mrs. Gabor asks her husband, "What did he write, then, after all! Isn't it the most striking proof of his harmlessness, of his stupidity, of his childish obscurity, that he can write so!" (p. 126). Melchior's mother is the only adult in Wedekind's play who empathizes with children and treats them as individuals who merit respect. She is alone in a drama in which parents bring "children into the world that they may be able to say to them: 'How happy you are to have such parents!'--and see the children go and do likewise" (p. 151).

This is not, however, to suggest that the Millers are infallible. Throughout, a very closed-minded Essie Miller comments on the unsuitability of the writings of that awful Oscar Wilde, that lascivious Swinburne, hedonistic Omar Khayam, revolutionary Carlyle, immoral Ibsen. But O'Neill never lets us forget that she is basically a good mother, and her comments provide much of the warm humor of the play. There is indeed genuine comedy in *Ah, Wilderness!*: Sid's tipsy escapades at the dinner table, the continuing saga of Nat's reaction to bluefish, Richard's histrionic declamations from his readings, Essie's bewilderment over a "Hedda" in her son's life. Yet these are the sort of antics found in *Father Knows Best* or *Ozzie and Harriet*. At no time does O'Neill let us forget that these are good parents with good children who are able to communicate in a way that Wedekind's characters never can. At the conclusion of *Ah, Wilderness!*, when Miller tells his son how beautiful the night is and how he used to court his wife, Richard responds: "Yes, I'll bet those must have been wonderful nights, too. You sort of forget the moon was the same way back then--and everything" (p. 297). The play is a wish-fulfillment with a fairy-tale conclusion; "they lived happily ever after" resounds as the curtain falls.

Nothing of the sort can be found in *Frühlings Erwachen*. Wedekind shows how adult refusal to answer honestly questions posed by children results only in more deception

²²Eugene O'Neill, *Ah, Wilderness!* in *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 205. Subsequent quotations will be given parenthetically within the text.

and eventual tragedy. The farcical actions of the schoolteachers during the trial and their lack of concern for either Moritz's death or Melchior's fate arouse no laughter. The tone throughout remains bitterly and biting serious.

[Concluded in the next issue.]

--Susan Tuck

O'NEILL SESSION AT MLA '81

A special session on "O'Neill and His Theatrical Children: The Split Character and Extended Monologue in O'Neill and Others" was held on December 28, 1981 as part of the Modern Language Association convention in New York City. The session's director, Vera Jiji of Brooklyn College, explained in her introduction that the chosen subjects are important because O'Neill's pioneering innovations are not sufficiently appreciated and "there is still much to learn from the master." Because of her own mastery in gathering a group of exciting and insightful speakers, Professor Jiji provided us all with a chance to learn a great deal, only a small part of which can be captured in this cryptic summary.

Albert Wertheim of Indiana University spoke on "O'Neill's *Days Without End* and the Tradition of the Split Character." After tracing the fictional and dramatic tradition of presenting "an inner voice separate from the external self," he pointed out the effectiveness of O'Neill's double casting of John Loving, the central character in *Days Without End* (1934), as "John" and "Loving," two halves that suggest, in O'Neill's complex presentation, "the Apollonian and the Dionysiac, the Faustian and the Mephistophelian, the Christian and the Satanic, the ego and the alter ego, the outer self and the inner voice.... John and Loving portray the eternal warfare between the creative and destructive impulses in man." He admitted that the "Doppelgänger device is a gimmick"--an "often unrealistic psychomachia"--but noted its brilliance in providing "dialogue as well as dialectic" and in permitting O'Neill to reveal "the way in which John Loving, the integrated character, is nearly obliterated by the disjunction of his two selves."

He cited, as a possible source, Alice Gerstenberg's play, *Overtones*, which had been produced by the Washington Square Players in 1915 and therefore would probably have been known to O'Neill. But to Gerstenberg's simpler, solely psychological conflict (a "dialectic of ego and id," in which "two characters ... are portrayed by four actresses all on stage at the same time"), O'Neill added philosophical conflict as well.

Noting that "contemporary American drama must be continually in debt to O'Neill," Professor Wertheim cited Sam Shepard's directions to the actors in *Angel City* (about looking on their characters as "fractured [wholes] with bits and pieces of character flying off the central theme"), and described a number of recent uses of the device O'Neill had employed in 1934. Among them were Adrienne Kennedy's *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964), which records the "fragmentation of a black woman, Sarah, through the tragic dilemma of being black, intelligent and sensitive in white America," and in which Sarah's "selves" are portrayed by five actors, two male and three female; and Marsha Norman's *Getting Out* (1977), in which two actresses play Arlie and Arlene, the earlier and later selves of the central character, who has just been released from prison. Among British analogues that he discussed are Hugh Leonard's *Da* (1978), and two plays by Peter Nichols: *Forget-me-not Lane* (1971) and *Passion Play*, the latter being the closest of *all* to O'Neill's own drama.

Given the praise lavished on these more recent works, Professor Wertheim speculated that *Days Without End* might not have received the panning it did if it had been produced forty years later. "Looking at it anew in terms of its place in a continuum of drama from Gerstenberg's *Overtones* to Marsha Norman's *Getting Out*, one can see that it may

merit more recognition and praise than it has received."

Michael Hinden, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, spoke on "Split Character and Extended Monologue in O'Neill and Peter Shaffer"--part of a longer paper, "When Playwrights Talk to God: Peter Shaffer and the Legacy of O'Neill," which has since been printed in the Spring 1982 issue of *Comparative Drama* and therefore needs less extended summary here. He compared O'Neill's Hickey, in *The Iceman Cometh*, with Shaffer's Antonio Salieri in *Amadeus*, and noted that Shaffer "expands upon O'Neill's perception [in *Iceman*] that man's disillusionment with God can poison the relation of the self to others." While he claimed no direct influence of O'Neill's play on Shaffer's, he noted remarkable similarities between the two protagonists, "the two great monologists of our theater." Both are murderers ("Hickey in fact, Salieri in spirit"); both are "uncompromising in their pessimism"; both are "plotters and manipulators" who peddle bum products (Hickey's salvation spiel and Salieri's music); both have "lost their trust in God, both suffer guilt, and both use the stage as a confessional"; but both, in their confessions, go unbelieved (Hickey by the roomers at Harry Hope's, and Salieri by history), and therefore neither "is permitted to atone, and in this sense the great monologues are failures." The similarities, in fact, extend beyond those already mentioned. Each has a rival (Evelyn and Mozart, respectively) for whom he feels a mixture of pity and contempt; each wants his rival to fail; and "both ... want to reach through their rivals to strike back at God."

Despite these many parallels, Professor Hinden considers *Amadeus* a lesser play, largely because Shaffer "seems to forget an important tenet of characterization that O'Neill incorporated most successfully in *The Iceman Cometh*." And that tenet seems to be a combination of character epiphany and authorial empathy. Hickey, at the end, "learns a terrible truth about himself," whereas Salieri, "a static character," remains "a disembodied eloquence floating on a cushion of wind." And the reason for this contrast, Professor Hinden suggests, may be O'Neill's "greater range ... and greater depth of feeling"--his "ability to live within his characters and to twist them inside-out on stage," whereas Shaffer "seems always to be holding back, transmuted passion into rhetoric and smoothing out some inner turmoil by a flow of words."

But Shaffer, Professor Hinden noted, is only in mid-career, and he has already shown himself to be "the playwright now writing in English who has benefitted most from O'Neill's legacy." (In the other major portion of his *Comparative Drama* essay, the author compares *Equus* and *The Great God Brown*, which share the theme that "modern life destroys our capacity for unity with divinity.")

The other participants spoke more briefly, but each made important points. Actor Nicholas Kepros, who plays Emperor Joseph II in the Broadway production of *Amadeus*, compared the "economy of means" in Shaffer's vocal brilliance--"not a syllable extra, and the payoff lines are beautifully hewn and crafted"--with the more "ponderous" dramaturgy of O'Neill, which he came to appreciate fifteen years ago at a performance of *Strange Interlude*. The first half of the play seemed "so rudimentary, so obvious," and he cared little about the characters or the situation; but by the second half they began to seem like real people, and by the end "you really care." Like Monteverdi operas, O'Neill's plays often begin ponderously, and "one expects no surprises," but at the end one emerges "changed after a profound experience." Mr. Kepros didn't consider one playwright better than the other; they are simply different. "If O'Neill is Monteverdi, Shaffer is Puccini," and if one prefers one or the other, "it's a matter of different tastes in music!"

Playwright Romulus Linney conceded that "O'Neill was very clumsy with language," but added that he "had a dramatist's heart and soul" and that, like all great playwrights, he "worked with flesh and blood, primarily, not with language." Besides, "eloquence and language can't do it all," and O'Neill used devices like the split

character and the extended monologue as "ways of doing *more* than language alone can." But it is "cleaving to a basic passion," not a set of rigorous devices, that is the essence of playwriting and the nature of O'Neill's genius. (The split character device, he suggested, O'Neill probably learned from his morphine-addicted mother--"one thing one minute, another the next: *there's* an education in split character!"--before it was buttressed by his reading of Strindberg.) "What O'Neill was doing in writing his plays was keeping himself sane"--and alive. In the early sea plays, for instance, "the central character is a sexually blocked young man with tremendous problems" and a strong drive toward self-destruction. It was only when O'Neill "pierced into the inner circle of his own life" that he gained the eloquence so evident in his last three plays. Linney urged the audience to "read voraciously *all* of O'Neill's work" and to trace therein his "struggle to find the great emotional roots of his life."

The last speaker, before a lively discussion among panelists and audience, was Virginia Floyd of Bryant College, whose labor on *Eugene O'Neill at Work* provided her with many insights into O'Neill's dramatic methods and their causes. Between 1924 and 1943, she said, he wrote a series of plays on the "good-evil duality of man's psyche," an obsession that "flowed from the inner core of O'Neill's own experience," particularly his relations with his older brother, to which source she traces his persistent use of split and contrasting characters. And when he has a split pair achieve fusion, as he did at the end of all versions of *Days Without End*, he was creating, in drama, "a unity that he dreamed of for himself." "What O'Neill celebrates," she concluded, "is the mystery of man, his eternally contradictory nature."

--Frederick Wilkins

NICHOLSON'S O'NEILL: A SURVEY OF CRITICAL REACTIONS

He didn't win the Oscar as best supporting actor, but Jack Nicholson, as Eugene O'Neill, was outdone only by Maureen Stapleton (as Emma Goldman) in bringing the spark of truth and a whiff of life to Warren Beatty's 1981 film, *Reds*. This is not the journal in which to argue the merits of the film as artifact or as biography of its leading characters--John Reed and Louis Bryant. But a survey of critical reactions to the portrait of O'Neill, as written by Beatty and Trevor Griffiths, directed by Beatty and acted by Nicholson, does seem appropriate, for the record.

And the record is an extremely positive one. Even Bruce McCabe of the *Boston Globe* (December 5, 1981, p. 7), who dismissed *Reds* as "a crock," praised the portrayal of O'Neill, who "has been given the best dialogue," whose "cynicism is refreshing, especially when contrasted to the piety, high-mindedness, nobility and idealism of all his friends," and who "seems like the sole voice of common sense in the film." This view was shared by Andrew Sarris (*The Village Voice*, December 2, 1981), who noted that, "when Nicholson's O'Neill sneers at Louise's worshipful mention of Russia, and then dismisses her Russophilia as the latest version of Roman Catholicism, the dramatic aptness of the conversation is uncanny" (p. 62); and by *Newsweek's* David Ansen (December 7, 1981, p. 84), in whose eyes Nicholson's "cynical, boozing O'Neill plays devil's advocate to the romantic revolutionaries--and almost steals the picture."

While David Harris (*Boston Ledger*, December 14, 1981) and Stephen Schiff (*Boston Phoenix*, December 1, 1981) expressed displeasure at the scriptwriters' stereotyping of O'Neill as drunk-in-residence who "invariably mutters, 'Where's the whiskey?'" (Schiff, p. 17), Harris nevertheless enjoyed O'Neill's role as "critical commentator on the ideals Reed and Bryant try to uphold," and he found O'Neill curiously contemporaneous--not with his fellow characters, but with us:

It's as though he were a person from the hard bitten Eighties plunked down in the rosy, rebellious, joyous Twenties, picking apart the crowds around him, soul by soul, when the style is to ignore the individual in favor of the mythical "masses" (Harris, p. 29).

And *Time's* Richard Corliss (December 7, 1981, p. 67) joined the near-unanimous chorus of those who approved of O'Neill's "denunciation of political commitment."

Aside from three scenes concerning O'Neill's intermittent affair with Louise Bryant--which Ansen describes as "razor-sharp" moments "in which hostility and lust mingle with caustic menace," but which McCabe believes were "developed inadequately and unsatisfactorily"--the most O'Neill-relevant moments are the Provincetown scenes, which look believable though they were not shot there, and especially the few tantalizing fragments of theatrical productions--*Where the Cross Is Made*, and a comic rehearsal scene which provided, in Vincent Canby's words (*New York Times*, December 4, 1981, p. C8), "a hilarious sequence ... in which Louise, not a born actress, plays the lead in ... *Thirst*. Says O'Neill to Louise: 'I wish you wouldn't smoke during rehearsals. You don't act as if you're looking for your soul but for an ashtray.'"

Except for a gregarious glibness, a self-deprecating softness, and a girth that Nicholson himself admits is not O'Neillian, the likeness to the playwright seemed quite apt and made one long for O'Neill to have a film of his own. Particular praise was offered by Schiff, who felt that Nicholson's performance suggested depths beneath the "stuffed," "pretentious" lines that the other actors delivered too rhetorically:

Only Jack Nicholson, wearing a thin, nasty moustache, plays them right, because for once he underplays. Slithering into each scene as if he intended to wind himself around someone's leg, he makes O'Neill such a tense, insinuating viper that every word has an extra twist. In *Reds*, O'Neill seems a man who could never find enough words for all the shades of meaning in his head.

Since O'Neill *was* such a man--the word-searcher, that is, not the viper!--Schiff's is high praise indeed, perhaps second only to that of Oona O'Neill. According to Nicholson, who was interviewed by Chris Chase for the *New York Times* (February 5, 1982, p. C8), she wrote him a letter, saying (in Nicholson's paraphrase), "After a lifetime of acquired indifference, the inevitable finally happened. Thanks to you, dear Jack, I fell in love with my father."

--Frederick Wilkins

REVIEWS OF BOOKS AND PRODUCTIONS

1. Normand Berlin, *The Secret Cause: A Discussion of Tragedy*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981. 208 pp. \$17.50.

Professor Berlin's "discussion" is the latest in a venerable line of works, beginning with Aristotle, that study the greatest of dramatic genres. And it is one of the best because it eschews easy answers, provides fresh and insightful looks at a number of major plays, and emphasizes that the essential mystery, the question mark, at the core of every great tragedy--indeed, of the genre as a whole--can never be replaced with an answer. For it is uncertainty--"a radical uncertainty" (p. 21), "a baffling uncertainty" (p. 119)--that is at the heart of tragedy, as it is at the heart of human life:

man has always been bewildered by the buffets of the world outside him, man has always been crying out against his precarious state in a world he did not make, man has always questioned the gods and injustice and the causes of his suffering. That he has dared to question, whether in a shout or a painful cry, is tragic man's dignity.... He questions and he receives no answer; there is no direct answer for mankind. The questions remain; the ambiguities remain; life's contradictions and injustices remain. (p. 171)

And the catharsis we experience--the tragic pleasure we feel--when confronting an authentic tragedy derives from our intuitive realization of its truth, both to our own situations and to the human situation as a whole:

the recognition that life is indeed based on mystery, on the question mark--that *we will never know* what shape our lives will take or how our lives are directed, if at all--is itself a catharsis. (p. 9) The art that affirms what we know, affords pleasure, even if it affirms a dreadful fact. Seizing terror by the hand, facing the unknown *as unknown*, provides its own special satisfaction. (p. 176)

In short, the catharsis that tragedy provides is "the kind ... that all men experience when they know that their true condition is controlled by a mysterious necessity" (p. 162).

The author does not aim at providing any capsule definition of dramatic tragedy, since "the value of a work of art ... is always limited by definition," and besides, "after 2,500 years of discussing tragedy no one definition or description has emerged as *the way to approach this complex genre*" (p. ix). Nor does he set out to refute the definitions and theories of the 57 predecessors to whom, in his preface, he acknowledges indebtedness (p. xi), though he does challenge the Hegelian view of tragedy as "a clash between two rights" (p. 14) and points out that view's inappropriateness to the very play that inspired it, Sophocles' *Antigone*. What he offers in place of a definition are a general discussion of the "essence," the "enduring substance" of tragedy--especially the eternal, insoluble mystery at its core--and an intensive and detailed study of seventeen plays, thirteen of which qualify, in terms of the above discussion, as tragedy,¹ and four others which, for various reasons, do not.²

The third chapter, "Passion: *Hippolytus, Phaedra, Desire Under the Elms*" (pp. 33-63), considers Euripides', Racine's and O'Neill's treatments of the Hippolytus myth and, like the other seven major chapters, is brilliant both in its study of individual works and in its revealing comparison of related plays. In all three Hippolytus dramas, "tragedy prevails," Berlin concludes (p. 53), because each playwright, however different his shadings and emphases, deals with the same basic theme--one directly involved in the mystery that is the "secret cause": "the precarious nature of man in relation to the power of terrifying forces not only beyond his control but beyond his understanding" (p. 37). Though O'Neill's use of the mythic source is more modern, "Dionysian passions are still seething, and the sources of passion and love remain mysterious" (p. 53). In O'Neill, however, it is not the gods but "the past"--and more specifically "the Mother"--that is the dominating, deterministic force. And that force is most evident in the "*sinister maternity*" of the "*two enormous elms*" that are "as visible [and as symbolically italicized] as the statues of Aphrodite and Artemis that frame the action of Euripides' *Hippolytus*" (p. 55):

whatever is happening in the play, stemming from many kinds of desire, is happening *under* the elms, physically under them as they hover over the house and symbolically under them as they represent clearly and forcefully the dominance of Mother: Mother as female principle, Mother as the demands of the past, Mother as avenging spirit, Mother as lover. (p. 55)

¹ In the order discussed, the thirteen are Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, Euripides' *Hippolytus*, Racine's *Phaedra*, O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *King Lear*, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Chekhov's *Three Sisters*, Ibsen's *Master Builder*, Durrenmatt's *The Visit*, the film *Easy Rider* and Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*.

² The four are Anouilh's *Antigone*, Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, and Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

Professor Berlin notes O'Neill's divergences from his mythic source in smaller ways as well: Eben is less chaste than Hippolytus; Abbie is more successful in her advances to her stepson than Phaedra had been, and suffers none of Phaedra's remorse of conscience over the desire; and it is not Ephraim, the play's Theseus, but Eben, who voices the fatal paternal curse. And he points out the abundance of elements that could have turned the play into melodrama--"greed, on-stage violence, sex, incest, adultery, infanticide"--but that do not undermine its tragic aims "because each of these elements is controlled by a larger frame of reference--the past determining the present and future" (p. 56). Ephraim is shown to be "the most complex and interesting character in the play" (p. 56), although it is Eben and Abbie, rising from greed, desire and vengefulness to love and going off together to a shared death at the end, who embody what the author elsewhere calls "the paradox of tragedy"--the fact that "victory and defeat come together" (p. 132). In short, *Desire Under the Elms*, embodying the playwright's "abiding vision of man fighting against an inescapable determinism [what O'Neill called the "Force behind"] and inevitably losing" (p. 63), is shown to be as grand, and as tragic, as *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra*.

We seem to have come a long way from Theseus with a bull in a labyrinth to Ephraim Cabot with a cow on a New England farm but the passions and needs of man remain dark and the causes remain deep and secret. (p. 61)

Professor Berlin says, in his preface (p. x), "I like to think that what is here presented emerges gracefully and genuinely from the specific plays under discussion." I can assure him that it does. The grace is inadequately reflected in the truncated quotations of a review, but the style *in situ* is consistently felicitous. As for the genuineness, I can attest that I have already found much, both in his general discussion and in individual analyses--particularly of Sophocles' *Antigone* and Synge's *Riders*--that has enhanced my teaching of the plays he covers, and I know that I will return to the volume regularly with pleasure and profit. I recommend it to all teachers and readers who are interested in tragedy as a genre, in any of the seventeen plays chosen for discussion, and in the human condition.

--Frederick Wilkins

2. Winston Weathers, *The Broken Word: The Communication Pathos in Modern Literature*. New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1981. xi+226 pp. \$35.00.

Mr. Weathers' volume--the first of a series, *Communication and the Human Condition*, edited by Lee Thayer--is divided into two parts. Five "introductory essays" posit a view of human history as a continuum punctuated by moments of crisis and alarm, each giving rise to some "governing preoccupation." He argues that the latest of these periodic preoccupations, because of a variety of influences in the late nineteenth century and later (Darwinism, industrialism, Freudianism, urbanism, militarism, relativity and the population explosion), is "the loss of faith in communication" (p. 28); and he emphasizes both the importance of modern literature as a record of that loss of faith, and the value of modern writers as the best diagnosticians of communication failure and as guides, in some instances, to its alleviation. In the second part of the book, five "exemplary essays" focus on the study of communication in the work of five writers--Melville, O'Neill, Joyce, Eliot and Salinger.

Mr. Weathers is a revealing anatomist of the modern world's "governing preoccupation," the "pathos of communication." However, since I am not a linguist or semanticist, and since the Newsletter is not the appropriate forum for assessing the overall study, I will consider only the chapter on O'Neill ("Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Word," pp. 93-108).

According to Weathers, O'Neill, whose "semantic awareness supports a tragic vision," and who "seems thoroughly aware of the part non-communication plays in creating and maintaining the tragic moment," has a "theory of communications that delineates a fundamentally tragic world" (p. 93). To oversimplify a lengthy and complex argument, the world is "fundamentally tragic" because communication is virtually impossible; and the impossibility is the fault of all three parts of the communication process--the communicator, the medium (both verbal and non-verbal), and, in the author's infelicitous phrase, the "communications receptor" (p. 99).

The would-be communicator, like Yank in *The Hairy Ape*, is driven by the compulsion to connect with others, "to escape ... the insular grief of non-communication" (p. 93). While the compulsion--whether its goal be therapeutic, penitential or aesthetic--is strong, the attempt to satisfy it usually fails. Sometimes the failure arises from "individual incapacity to articulate" (p. 98), as is the case with Edmund Tyrone and the fog people; sometimes it is the result of "special inhibition" (p. 99), as is true of the Mannons--an inhibition that, in characters like Orin Mannon (*Mourning Becomes Electra*) and Ned Darrell (*Strange Interlude*), is "encouraged by a sense of social propriety or decorum" (p. 99). At other times the compulsion to communicate is overpowered by "fear of articulation" or by "recognition of the uselessness of communication" (p. 105)--in which case the character frequently dons a mask, either literal or figurative, and achieves self-expression, if at all, only in the form of interior monologue.

As for receptor and medium, the former adds to the dilemma by failing--through "deliberate refusal" or "simple incapacity" (p. 100)--to play his/her part in the process; and the latter proves inadequate, either (as Nina Leeds notes) because of "the great discrepancy between symbol and meaning," or because of "our ... predilection to use meaningless labels" (p. 101). And so, "in spite of our desire and willingness we can never achieve a truly adequate language" (p. 101).

This is Mr. Weathers' summary of the theory of communications that he draws from references to nineteen of O'Neill's plays (p. 107):

Normal man has an innate desire to communicate, but the best he can do is simply strive toward communication and accept the imperfection of it. Because of his own incapacities and those of his receptors, and because of the inadequacy of the language medium, man can never achieve the perfect understanding via the perfect communication that he desires. The worst that can happen to man is that he may reject communication altogether--out of fear of what it will reveal, out of a realization of its imperfections and failures--and fall into the tragedy of silence that is our final separation from fellow man.

My first response was cynical: how much better O'Neill *himself* said all of this! But it is convenient to have the diverse and separate strands drawn so neatly together.

I have only three criticisms of Mr. Weathers' chapter on O'Neill. First, it is hard to agree with his assertion (p. 94) that O'Neill shared Brutus Jones's initial belief "that articulation without meaning, communication becoming non-communication, would suffice to preserve him in power (or would suffice to preserve a culture)." And yet Weathers claims, parenthetically, that this was something that "obviously O'Neill the modern man believed." (Perhaps he has himself fallen victim to what he calls "the inadequacy of the language medium"!) Surely a writer who, in Jean Chothia's words, "struggled throughout his career to forge a fully achieved language,"¹ would not endorse Jones's fallacious initial assumption about it.

¹ Jean Chothia, *Forging a Language: A Study of the Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 15.

Secondly, to cover nineteen plays in sixteen pages is to do full justice to none of them, even within the restricted scope that the author has chosen. (Nevertheless, it should be noted that four plays--*The Emperor Jones*, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*--do receive extended and significant comment.) And thirdly--certainly most important--the chapter is less than authoritative because it ignores all recent studies of O'Neill--studies in which the playwright's use of language has received increasing attention. A footnote reveals that the chapter is a revision of a 1962 article, but there is no reference to any work since the Gelbs' *O'Neill*, which appeared in the same year. To omit reference to the work of more recent scholars--of such important voices, to name but a few, as Carpenter (1963; 1978), Raleigh (1965), Sheaffer (1968; 1973), Bogard (1972), Floyd *et al.* (1979), and especially Chothia (1979)--is to run, *oneself*, the risk of failing as a "communications receptor"!

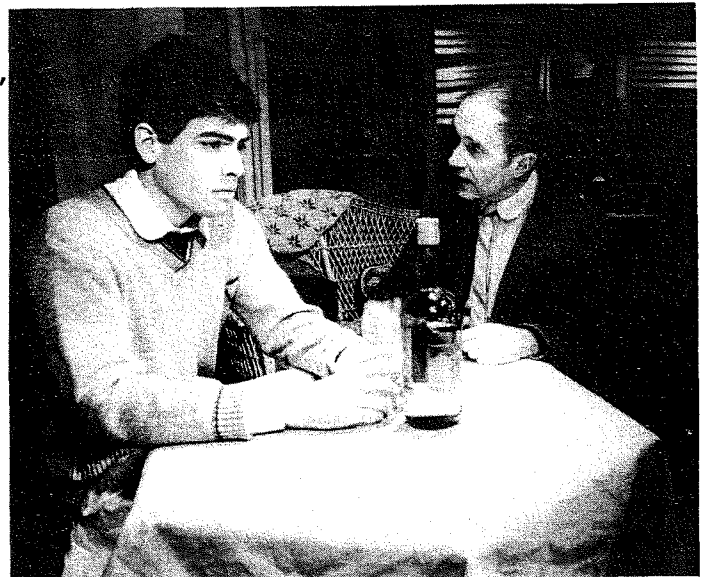
Nevertheless, Mr. Weathers' brief study makes a strong case for O'Neill's importance as an assessor and dramatizer of one of the major dilemmas of the modern age, and as such it deserves to be read. Its rather stiff price might make it unattractive to the individual collector, but it would be a worthy purchase for any institutional library. Were I not limited to the O'Neill coverage, I would discuss the Melville chapter, which, because it deals in depth with but *two* works, *Typee* and *Billy Budd*, is particularly fine.

--Frederick Wilkins

3. *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, dir. Marco Zarattini. Presented by the Nucleo Eclettico, Boston, MA. Closed on April 3, 1982.

The recent production of *Long Day's Journey Into Night* at Boston's Nucleo Eclettico was a refreshingly honest and intimate one. The acting, the set and the esprit de corps of the entire theatre staff all made for an evening of fine, memorable theatre. Theatre without preservatives or fixatives, at that. Theatre with a hearty sense of commitment not only to drama but to the community at large. Nestled on a narrow side street of the mostly residential North End section of Boston, the tiny Nucleo Eclettico is living proof that less can be more.

The acting, under the direction of Marco Zarattini, was solid and, in general, uncommonly good. Olivia Casey and Ed Sullivan, as the elder Tyrones, both turned in steady and effective performances. Miss Casey seemed a tad too hale-and-hearty for the role of fragile Mary but was more than right for the part when it came time to recall Mary's convent days; then, her performance had a decidedly eerie air about it, a remembrance of things past that was authentic as well as unsettling. Mr. Sullivan portrayed a Tyrone, Sr., who was more niggling than not: one sensed that his pettiness definitely overshadowed the grander aspects of his nature. Tyrone's disparagement over Edmund's reading material--all that Nietzsche, all that Swinburne--had a genuinely disgusted and confounded quality to it. It was all that Tyrone could do to *utter* those loathsome, unworthy names in his home, even if only to denounce them. And



David Berti (Edmund) and Jim Cooke (Jamie) in Nucleo Eclettico's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. (Photo by Cynthia Carlson)

it was in conveying such nuances that Mr. Sullivan offered something special to the production.

As Jamie, Jim Cooke provided a wonderfully sour and sardonic performance--which came as no surprise since Mr. Cooke did a superb Jamie in the New England Rep's *Moon for the Misbegotten* two years ago (see the May-September, 1980 Newsletter, pp. 26, 28). Hang dog looks, frayed psyche and rotten thoughts: everything Jamie is and was destined to be. So well did Mr. Cooke's Jamie dispense the straight dope about this or that Tyrone family failing, it was difficult to imagine him as anything but a jaded debunker of life's little white lies, on or *off* stage. When he told Edmund, "Listen, Kid, I know you think I'm a cynical bastard, but remember I've seen a lot more of this game than you have," the tone was worth a thousand pages of dialogue. Chummy, informative and cadaverous, this Jamie knew all the ins and outs of the American hick-burg dream of which he was a sad, twisted part. It was a pleasure to see Mr. Cooke again.

David Berti gave a fine, straight ahead performance as the younger brother Edmund. He dealt convincingly with all the other Tyrones and their piques, ailments, disorders, prejudices, memories, secrets, loves and hates. Edmund seemed young--but not too young--and the "healthiest" of the lot despite his recently diagnosed illness. Sympathetic towards his family, but at the same time tortured by them, Edmund, in Mr. Berti's playing, made meaningfully clear all his joys and sorrows despite the fog that shrouded all the members of the Tyrone family.

One of the production's unexpected delights was an inspired performance by Rosamond Lang Hooper, whose Cathleen was very funny and very obviously full of the devil. Armed with a rambunctious brogue, she whipped through the Tyrone household like a holy terror, creating more than a little necessary levity to break up the countless dank layers of Tyrone tension.

The set, designed by Marco Zarattini, Alex Okun and Ludmila Okun, was singular. Besides being intimate, it was accurate: it had the tacky feel of Monte Cristo cottage down pat. Upon entering the Nucleo Eclettico lobby, one directly encountered the cottage's summery front porch, complete with mailbox (with properly addressed mail in it, no less). To reach your seat, you had to walk across the porch and enter the theatre through the Tyrones' front door. You then encountered the living room--where all the action of the play takes place--which was level with the first row of seats. The audience formed an "L" around one corner of the square-shaped acting area. The theatre being quite small--it must seat only 50 or so people--the audience was more or less on top of the action, if not in the thick of it. Under these conditions, one most definitely felt a part of the moth-eaten Tyrone turf--the fading, dark red carpet, the chintzy lamps, the creaking chairs and tables, the small, dogeared library. It was impossible to escape the effects of the dark, frowsty atmosphere. Had the play actually been performed in Monte Cristo cottage *itself*, its set could not have been more effective.

It is no wonder that audience demand held over this interesting *Journey* for an extra month. No matter where one chose to look, it was evident that special care had been taken to ensure the quality and charm of the production. In doing so, the Nucleo Eclettico demonstrated that it is concerned with more than just O'Neill or theatre. First, and foremost, it cares about people.

--Marshall Brooks

4. "Miss Moonbegotten." *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, dir. David George. Barton Square Playhouse, Salem MA, February 26 - April 3; 1982.

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As performed by the Barton Square Players during their inaugural season, *A Moon for the Misbegotten* was a surprising affirmation of O'Neill's ability to

write boisterously comic dialogue, since the production seemed to stress the play's lightheartedness and frivolity. The despair that underpins so much of O'Neill's work, *Moon* included, was overwhelmed in a bucolic effervescence, and the jovial "Irishness" of the characters overcame the gathering penumbras of the latter part of the play.

The performance opened with distant echoes of pipe-like music--an effectively atmospheric lead-in. The set, designed by Ted Lamoreux, while impressionistic, featured a worthy structure whose rough boards and uneven planks were realistic enough to evoke the deteriorating shack that is the Hogans' farmhouse, while also offering a metaphor for the substantial but evasive relationship of its major inhabitants. David Fenn's lighting was fine--especially the moonlight and the blue-to-amber arrival of dawn--and David George's direction was thorough and largely effective.

There was, in addition, one massive timber that supported the entire production--the Josie of Judith Black, whose bravura dominated the entire evening. While Miss Black is far from the "oversized ... freak" that O'Neill describes, her dynamic power, both emotional and spiritual, overwhelmed the men in the cast. Her Josie, despite a tragic air about her, had a lilting quality that inspired sympathy, respect and admiration.



Michael McNamara's Hogan was a witching piece of wide-eyed deviltry with a heart so volatile that, when it leaped up, it seemed to pull his whole body up with it. Despite a wavering brogue (surprising that a Black should out-brogue a McNamara!), he sustained the twisted, gleeful soul of Phil Hogan with an appropriate mixture of warmth, bitterness and despair. The minor roles were generally well handled. Robert Burke added a note of feline imperiousness to the part of T. Stedman Harder, and Stephen Sena was effectively self-righteous in his brief turn as Mike Hogan.

However, the production did have one rather serious flaw: Kerry Brown's performance as Jim Tyrone. From the moment of his entrance through the audience, like a piece of sea-rejected flotsam wind-blown across a desolate beach, he appeared so washed-out and drained that there seemed nothing left to be wrung out of him, no lower depth that he could sink to. He stared determinedly at the ground--too broken, evidently, to face either his fellow players or the audience. And his most prominent gesture was the continual rubbing of his brow, a device he used so frequently that one began to wonder if he were planting seeds in its furrows. Because of Brown's playing, the performance failed to realize the script's potential as a wrenching drama of two tortured souls whose moonlit rendezvous is transformed, through Jim's confession, into a rite of contrition. (Hence the aforementioned lightness of even the later, more somber moments.) What emerged in its place was, essentially, a reworking of the play--and an interesting and revelatory one at that. The emphasis--

Judith Black (Josie), Robert Burke (Harder) and Michael McNamara (Phil) in Barton Square's *Moon for the Misbegotten*. (Photo by John Fogle)

the play's center of gravity--shifted to the relationship of Father and Daughter, between whom there was an exacting rapport. Josie and Phil formed a center that, like their house, could hold as things around them fell apart.

Which, though it is not fully true to the text, is not at all inappropriate. If we lose the impact and tragic implications of Jim's confessional speech, we gain a sense of hope--an image of human dignity's survival in the face of spiritual destruction. For this new intimation, the Barton Square actors and director must be commended. May their new playhouse flourish, and may they bring us many more O'Neill productions in the seasons ahead.

--Thomas F. Connolly

5-7. Three Productions from the Sunny Southwest, reviewed and introduced by Eugene K. Hanson.

It almost appeared as if Southern California were celebrating an O'Neill festival last Fall: three openings of O'Neill plays in as many weeks. But it was only the coincidental closeness of the three productions that was a trifle unusual, for the area is commonly treated to several O'Neill offerings in a typical season, at least one of which is usually professionally produced in one of the Southland's major theatres. Far from most of the playwright's traditional haunts, O'Neill is indeed alive and well and being played in Southern California.

5. *Before Breakfast*, dir. Barry Bartle. American Theatre Arts Conservatory, Los Angeles.

One doesn't expect to see this slight play--a monologue, really--when there is so much better O'Neill available. Perhaps, in the search for his dramatic roots, the minor and little-known plays are experiencing a sudden surge of popularity. But there was another reason for the ATAC's choice of *Breakfast*: it fit well, along with Tennessee Williams' *View from the Bridge*, into a program of "bedroom tragedies."

The lines of the play were followed well, but the development of the character of Mrs. Rowland seemed wrong. For all her tongue, unless the audience can feel a certain pathos toward her, the play fails as tragedy, and it is hoped that O'Neill was not just writing a bad joke with Alfred's suicide as the punch line. In turn, the suicide should derive from the tragic and seemingly hopeless context of failure in which Alfred finds himself, and not from a nagging wife. To understand this, and project it successfully, is to redeem the play from an otherwise deadly mediocrity.

The real failure in this production, however, lay in one major change: Alfred was no longer a looming off-stage presence. The single room of O'Neill's text became a divided stage with kitchen *and* bedroom, and Alfred, massive in build and scruffy in appearance, dragged himself, moaning and mumbling, through the whole play. W. H. Auden wrote, on the occasion of the death of Yeats, "The words of a dead man/ Are modified in the guts of the living." Surely the words of a playwright are modified in the conceptions of the director, sometimes--as here--with devastating results.

Alfred was given nothing to say; he merely grunted his way through the half-hour--after that first cup of morning coffee, which apparently he needed to start his mumbling. Where distance lends a kind of enchantment in O'Neill's text, Alfred's physical presence merely made for awkwardness. Where his silence in response to the taunts of Mrs. Rowland is understandable in the script, his response of either silence or grunts became unbearable. His presence changed the character from a sensitive, hopeful writer to a loutish bum. (Even the best of men look like the worst of men when drunk!)

Perhaps the director felt the change was an improvement; perhaps he was only answering the need of gore for gore's sake, for audiences that seem to demand *visual* violence. But he altered the play materially. His treatment of the text raises the question concerning the central character; it was unclear who *is* the main character of the piece. And, above all, the cleverness of O'Neill's device--the use of Alfred's hand and no more of him--was lost in the production. Nor were the audience permitted to use their imagination, in line with O'Neill's desire to involve the audience in his plays. (E.g., in *Where the Cross Is Made*, when he hoped the audience would share the characters' madness.)

What may be more unfortunate for the play is that the production introduced on stage melodramatic elements that are not inherent in the text. O'Neill has often been accused of writing melodrama, the same melodrama he rejected in his father's theatre. It may be that O'Neill attempted to keep such elements off the stage when he could not keep them out of his plays. Here the mumbling antics of Alfred brought more melodrama--almost farce--stage center, and O'Neill was the worse for it. Alfred's death, like the death of Don Parritt in *Ice-man*, is best left unseen.

Such tampering with a play raises questions about the validity of changing a text. Surely genuine improvements can be made in almost any play, but maybe such substantial changes ought to be attempted only by an author who is the playwright's better.

6. *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, dir. Henry Hoffman. McCadden Theatre Company, Los Angeles.

On a crowded stage, in a theatre not quite half the Equity-waiver plan's ninety-nine seat house, a cast of players who were no strangers to *Moon* made a heroic and largely satisfying attempt at a production of O'Neill's last play. The McCadden is in reality a converted woodshop, intimate almost to the point of discomfort. Yet the production overcame the cramped quarters, offering a commendable rendition of the story of Jim Tyrone's last visit to the Hogan farm.

Salome Jens and Mitchell Ryan first played Josie and Tyrone in the 1968 Circle in the Square production of *Moon*. In the national tour that followed, they were joined by the McCadden production's Hogan, Stefan Gierasch. For the most part, they still seemed quite comfortable with each other down on the Connecticut farm.

Ms. Jens--like Mary Welch, who had O'Neill's personal blessing for the original production--is not the over-sized, almost "freakish" woman the playwright called for in the text. Aside from possessing Josie's "large, firm breasts," she was far from the near-monstrous. But the voice was Josie's--big, brassy, and capable of commanding all the males who came within her ample range. As might be expected of Josie, Jens was convincingly chaste beneath the poseur's waywardness. She displayed a natural generosity that could never be mistaken for laxness of morals.

As Tyrone, Ryan seemed to have difficulty with an admittedly difficult role, that of an educated, not entirely uncultured man who is a bum. A quality of diffidence characterized the performance; he seemed to show little passion for Josie, as if he couldn't really care for her. Nor did he show much real passion for the bottle. The heights and depths were not there; it was more of a compromising mediocrity. One expects Tyrone to begin dully, then to develop. But in Ryan's playing the development didn't occur.

Phil Hogan received his due as a comic figure, though Gierasch did seem distracted at times, as if he knew the show must go on, and so on he went. And he was often very slow on the uptake, forcing Josie's sentences to trail off where they should have been interrupted. But his Irishness was unmistakable, and he created a Phil the audience could love.

The scene with Harder (played by Jay Donohue) was especially well-acted, with

its physical movements effectively coordinated for such a small stage. The play as a whole had good pace, and the humor came through well.

Any successful production of *Moon* makes one wonder how a disheartening failure in the author's own lifetime could become popular fare today. It may well be that today's audiences--and censors, for that matter--are more able to concentrate on the totality of the play rather than on those things in it which caused censorship problems in the earliest production. While O'Neill probably did not mean to shock, he surely knew the play might have that effect. Today's R- and X-rated audiences can laugh off what might have offended an earlier generation of playgoers. And the distance from the personal life of the playwright might help as well. It is embarrassing to have someone tell of the foul goings-on of his own brother, especially when they also involve his own mother. This could have made earlier audiences uncomfortable, but now that he belongs to the past any such personal element is gone. And perhaps its relation to *Long Day's Journey Into Night* has given audiences a warmer feeling for this play's "old sorrow," a kind of epilogue to the earlier play about the haunted Tyrones.

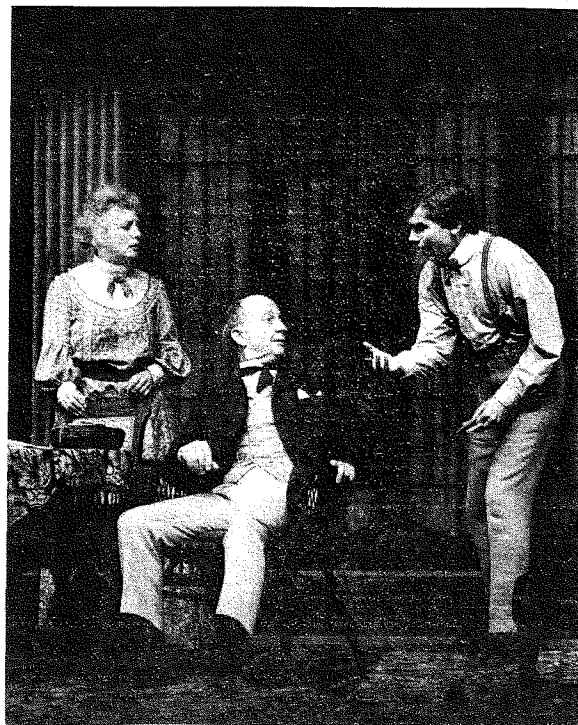
7. *Ah, Wilderness!* dir. Martin Benson. South Coast Repertory, Costa Mesa.

Southern California's "Broadway" stretches up and down the coast, and Orange County's South Coast Repertory has become very much a part of the Southland's Great White Way. In its eighteenth season, the company is enjoying its fourth year in a new two-theatre complex in Costa Mesa, where its fall production of *Ah, Wilderness!* was a rousing success.

One thing that production aroused was the delightful realization that O'Neill can still delight audiences and make them laugh heartily. The laughs came easy, as if it had been a modern audience enjoying Neil Simon at his very best. Indeed, the laughter may have come a bit too easily, where humor wasn't intended, as with the use of the words "gay" and "queer." But, no matter, for O'Neill could do no wrong, and the audience laughed just as well at Oscar Wilde's "bigamy" and at the mention of "Hedda." It was as if the situation were appropriate today, and not merely as a 1930's reflection of 1906. This was not just a period piece, like Restoration comedy or a Molière play: it belonged.

It was the director's intention to use the complete original text, avoiding changes and the temptation for short-cuts. The omissions that were made were well-made. No one knows any more what a "Sandow Exerciser" is, and only scholars would understand the reference to *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. "Wilbur and Lawrence," apparently the oldest of the five Miller children, are best left unmentioned. And to change Belle's "blow you" to "treat you" is best, else the same wags who chortled at "gay" and "queer" would have stopped the show. But why such arcane terms as "ructions" were retained is a mystery.

Generally, the casting was very good. At first flush Robert Cornthwaite's Nat Miller appeared downright grandfatherly although his acting made him seem younger and decidedly closer to Nat's fifty-seven years. James Gallery as Sid David was



(Photo by Jay Thompson)

Essie and Nat Miller (Anne Gerety and Robert Cornthwaite) are confronted by their son Richard (Joe McNeely) in The South Coast Rep (Costa Mesa, CA) production of *Ah Wilderness!*

certainly a caution; his was a gem of a performance. Essie Miller (Anne Gerety) seemed too tried and trying, only whining after her family rather than really caring. And Irene Arranga as Muriel McComber was too strident, and hardly beautiful enough for Richard to have been willing to give up everything for her love. Joe McNeely's Richard was the perfect combination of growing schoolboy intellect and childhood naiveté. In fact, the production caught that sense of the age of innocence--Richard's youthful innocence and America's own innocence of the period--an innocence O'Neill might have longed for, but surely never knew.

The real pity is that O'Neill could not have found more to laugh at, that he saw life almost totally through the tragedian's eyes. His comedy is so good!

--Eugene K. Hanson

8. "Eugene O'Neill: From the Sea to the City," a double bill of *The Moon of the Caribbees* and *Hughie*, conceived and designed by Harold Easton and directed by Rob Mulholland. Studio Theatre Productions, New York City, January 27-30, 1982.

[A background note. Messrs. Easton and Mulholland chose to present these two one-acts, so widely separated in time of writing (1916 and 1941), as a package because, according to Mr. Easton, they share, despite vastly different locales, the same theme: "the need for human contact in a hostile world." Accordingly, they attempted to be "faithful to O'Neill's vision" by presenting *Caribbees* as "a mood piece, done as an ensemble," whose "hero ... is the sea." They employed stylized audio-visual effects ("visuals to suggest island, ocean, beach and sky, coupled with a continuous sound track of the sea and the melancholy West Indian chant" mentioned in O'Neill's stage directions) both as atmosphere and as "glimpses into Smitty's thoughts, described in O'Neill's script, but rarely 'seen' by the audience." They used a similar device in *Hughie*--slides that "coincide visually" with a tape of street sounds--to convey the desk clerk's unspoken thoughts and feelings, the goal being "to give the audience both characters' points of view, as we feel O'Neill intended." Ed.]

The double bill, produced by Hal Easton, a doctoral candidate in Theatre Education at New York University, was presented at NYU's Studio Theatre, a storefront with large windows onto the street. Slides were used as backdrops for both plays, and Erie entered from outside the building so our first glimpse of him was through the large storefront window. Occasionally the characters in *Caribbees* froze, to emphasize a moment of silent or poetic contemplation. In other respects, the two productions were fairly conventional.

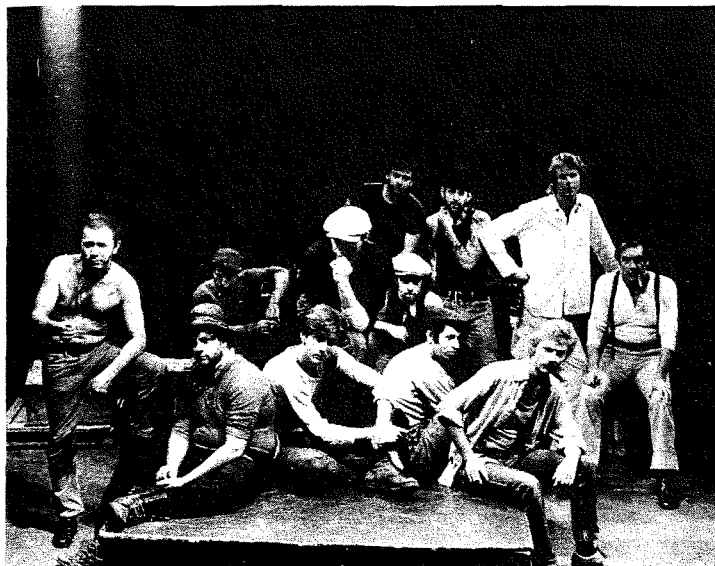
Moon of the Caribbees calls for a large cast, and it was evident that some members were theatre students, still a little shaky on their acting legs. Scrupulous attention had been paid to trying to get the varied national accents to sound authentic, but with differing degrees of success. The closeness of the audience to the staging area mitigated against our being able to lose the sense of where we were (i.e., in a storefront in Manhattan). The production, in short, seemed to me very well intentioned and highly acceptable on an amateur level.

However, the production of *Hughie* was beautifully acted, with Joseph Dobish as Erie and Harold Easton as the night clerk, and here the setting enhanced the sense of being in that kind of grimy, run-down anonymous "hell-hole" which is the warren of almost all O'Neill protagonists. While I felt that the slides, which were supposed to let the audience know what the desk clerk was thinking about while Erie was speaking, did not particularly aid the production, they were not too annoyingly distracting either, and Mr. Easton reported that he found that those audience members who knew the play did not like the slides, whereas those who had no previous knowledge of the work found the slides helpful. (Chacun a son goût!) Dobish's Erie

didn't have quite the degree of self-loathing and despair that Jason Robards brings to the part. He seemed a smaller man, a little punk, but the sense of the two coming together in a pathetic relationship was vivid and touching.

Easton had grown an O'Neill-style moustache for the production. Though his resemblance to O'Neill was still not great, I felt that he was making a silent statement of sorts for those who, knowing how O'Neill looked, might pick up the somewhat extraneous reference--extraneous in the sense that it is not given as part of the play.

The observation of the duality of the split characters in O'Neill's plays is a common one, but it is interesting to have it used here. The night clerk's spirits are lifted,



Crew of the S.S. Glenclairn in Studio Theatre production of *Moon of the Caribbees*. (Photo by Michael Fischer)



Hal Easton (Night Clerk) and Joseph Dobish (Erie Smith) in Studio Theatre production of *Hughie*. (Photo by Michael Fischer)

after all, by listening to the worn-out talk of a self-condemning charlatan. Perhaps Hughes' position, necessary to Erie, is essential to the creative artist as well. It's a side of Keats's negative capability which he might not have thought of, but might have accepted as a valid extension of his idea into the 1980's. The non-academic friend I took with me to the performance turned to me afterward and said, "It's been too long since I've read any O'Neill." It's always good to have a thoughtful, well-executed production of his work before us again.

--Vera Jiji

FEMINISTS AND OTHERS: THERE'S STILL TIME!

The Summer - Fall issue of the Newsletter will feature a special section on "O'Neill's women." Notes and articles received by the end of June will be considered for inclusion, so there is still time to pen your thoughts about the women in O'Neill's life and in his plays. We welcome anything, from quips to case studies, from diatribe to dithyramb.

THE EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY SECTION

I. OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

OFFICERS

President (two-year term, 1982 & 1983)

Albert Wertheim
Department of English
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47401

Michael Hinden
Department of English
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53706

Vera Jiji
126 East 92nd Street
New York NY 10028

Vice-President (two-year term, 1982 & 1983)

Frederick C. Wilkins
Department of English
Suffolk University
Boston, MA 02114

Sally Thomas Pavetti
Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center
305 Great Neck Road
Waterford, CT 06385

Secretary (four-year term, 1980-1983)

Jordan Y. Miller
Department of English
University of Rhode Island
Kingston, RI 02881

John Henry Raleigh
Department of English
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720

(This is the Society's official
business and mailing address)

Four-year term, 1982-1985

Travis Bogard
Department of Dramatic Art
University of California
Berkeley, CA 92260

Treasurer (four-year term, 1980-1983)

Virginia Floyd
Department of English
Bryant College
Smithfield, RI 02917

Eugene K. Hanson
College of the Desert
Palm Desert, CA 92260

International Secretary (1980-1983)

Timo Tiusanen
University of Helsinki
Hallitusk, 11-13

Adele R. Heller
Provincetown Playhouse
Box 477
Provincetown, MA 02657

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Four-year term, 1980-1983

Doris V. Falk
Box 165, R.D. 2
Califon, NJ 07830

Esther M. Jackson
Dept. of Theatre & Drama
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53706

Tom J.A. Olsson
Bergsunds Strand 27, V
117 38 Stockholm, Sweden

II. MEETING OF THE OFFICERS AND THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS. Report by Jordan Y. Miller, Secretary.

The Officers and Board of Directors of The Eugene O'Neill Society met in the Hilton Hotel, New York, on December 28, 1982. Present were: Winifred Frazer, Acting President; Jordan Miller, Secretary; Virginia Floyd, Treasurer; Board Members: Sally Thomas Pavetti, Frederick C. Wilkins, Eugene K. Hanson, Esther M. Jackson. Also present: Albert Wertheim, President-elect, and Michael Hinden and Vera Jiji, board members-elect.

Arrangements for the Third Annual Meeting to be held the same evening were discussed. It was decided that the main theme for any activity at the Annual Meeting and MLA Convention in December 1982 in Los Angeles should center around O'Neill and film. Appropriate blanks will be secured for submitting to MLA in order to schedule a special session. The Society is still under the blanket moratorium on recognition of new groups imposed by MLA.

Two items of business were transacted. The Board determined that ten members of the Society would be needed to call a Society meeting. This number should now be entered under Article VII, Meetings and Quorums, Section VII.1.d of the by-laws. The second item of business was to designate Michael Hinden as Chairman of the Board for such duties as may fall to that individual under the by-laws.

III. MINUTES OF THE THIRD ANNUAL MEETING.

The Third Annual Meeting of the Eugene O'Neill Society was held on Monday evening, December 28, 1981, at 5:30 p.m. in the Museum of Broadcasting, One East 53rd Street, New York. Acting President Winifred Frazer presided. Approximately thirty Society members and friends attended.

Before the formal meeting commenced, the group enjoyed a discussion by Andrew Harris, producer of last summer's experimental production of *Welded* at Columbia University, of some of the experiences encountered during the production.

Winifred then informed the group of President Horst Frenz's illness, with a progress report from Susan Tuck, who has worked closely with him. Recovery has been slow, Susan stated, but the Society does remain active in his thoughts. The membership then expressed its desire that greetings be sent to Horst, wishing him a speedy recovery.

Vera Jiji was also thanked by Winifred and the group for making the necessary arrangements with the Museum for the meeting, since the MLA still holds us under the established moratorium on recognition of new societies, preventing us from securing rooms in MLA facilities. Hopes were expressed that this moratorium would soon be lifted.

Greetings were conveyed from Barbara Gelb, who urged the Society to keep in touch with the committee on which she is serving concerning centennial activities.

The minutes of the Second Annual Meeting in Houston in December, 1980, were distributed and approved, with correction by placing the name of Vera Jiji to replace Esther Jackson as chairman of the annual meeting committee, and adding Virginia Floyd to the committee.

Virginia Floyd presented the Treasurer's report. Income for 1981, including bank balances, interest on savings account and membership fees collected, was \$2971.57. Expenses were \$1010.00, leaving a balance as of December 31, 1981, of \$1061.57. The report was accepted.

The following proposals for changes in the by-laws were presented:

Section III.1: *Terms of Membership*

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

- b) The membership year shall be from January 1 through December 31. Dues are payable as of January 1.
- c) Any member who does not renew membership by March 1 will be notified by the Secretary; if dues payment is not received by April 1, the Secretary will drop the member from the rolls.
- d) New Members joining before October 1 shall have their memberships credited as of the current year and shall receive the *Newsletter* as of that date.
- e) New members joining on October 1 or later shall have their dues credited to the following year, when they will begin to receive the *Newsletter*.

Section VIII.1: *Election of Officers and Directors*

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

Jordan Miller explained the rationale for these proposals in view of two years of experience as Secretary. The Section III proposals make for greater ease of membership record keeping, and the Section VIII proposal simplifies a presently cumbersome system which has proven during the current year to be virtually inoperable.

The proposed amendments were accepted for presentation to the membership at the next Annual Meeting, when they will be voted upon under procedures in the by-laws.

Winifred presented on behalf of the Board the decision to insert the number "10" in Article VII.1.d of the by-laws as the minimum number of members required to petition for a meeting of the Society. Passed by voice vote.

REPORTS. From Tao House, no formal report, except for Eugene Hanson's mention that access is still a problem and the house remains generally closed to the public. Sally Pavetti reported on behalf of Adele Heller and the Provincetown Theatre as well as on behalf of Monte Cristo Cottage. Provincetown still faces major financing problems connected with the erection of the new theatre in the face of rising costs. A new beginning to the whole project, replacing the present fund-raiser and board, is now under way. Adele will remain in Provincetown throughout the winter to supervise what will apparently be a smaller scale undertaking than originally planned.

Concerning Monte Cristo Cottage, Sally reported that problems exist--cellar leaks, need for authentic period furniture, and so on. To assist the budget, an admission charge of \$2.00 will now be imposed. The second floor is being turned into a library with the hope of making it an American Theatre Library and Museum.

Fred Wilkins reported on the *Newsletter*. He welcomes reviews of productions of O'Neill plays, including pictures, and any and all kinds of articles. Some discussion was held concerning the possibility of making the *Newsletter* into a Society journal with different format, but no action was taken. Members present expressed high praise for the increasingly excellent quality of the *Newsletter*, which is listed in the MLA and other scholarly bibliographies.

Jordan reported on membership and the difficulties in securing tax-exempt non-profit status from IRS in order to secure low-cost mailing privileges. A mailing of 600 names provided from ASTR is ready to go as soon as the permit arrives. Membership at the end of 1981 stood at precisely the same as 1980--82 members in all categories. Foreign membership includes three from Japan, two from India, and one each from Hungary, Korea, Sweden, France, Canada, Finland, and Australia. Renewals to date have been encouraging.

Michael Hinden, reporting for the Publications Committee, stated that the main accomplishment during the past year was making arrangements for the *Newsletter* to be a part of membership dues, thus becoming the Society's official organ while remaining a basically independent publication.

David Schoonover, successor to Donald Gallup as Curator of the Beinecke American Literature Collection at Yale, was then introduced. He discussed the Yale holdings, for which a checklist is being considered, with hopes to have it available in time for the centennial. Of special interest to Society members is the fact that the O'Neill material is catalogued but with some restrictions remaining as to use. (Carlotta's letters are restricted until 1995, for instance.) Manuscripts are being xeroxed, and correspondence under consideration for publication, including the Macgowan letters, which have recently appeared. David introduced Leslie Comens who covers the legal aspects. He stated that royalties from the O'Neill productions provide the most income for the Beinecke American Literature Collection. The library's preliminary edition of the poems is available free. The work diary in two volumes (library edition, transcribed by Dr. Gallup) may be ordered for \$10.50. The *Calms of Capricorn* scenario and reconstruction is available in two volumes, also for \$10.50 (Vol. I: scenario. Vol. II: play, prepared by Gallup.) Order from the Beinecke Library, Box 1603A, Yale Station, New Haven 06520.

David reported that the Random House-Yale project mentioned at last year's annual meeting is not quite accurate. There is hope now that the complete plays will be produced in the Library of America series distributed by Viking, with Time-Life handling direct mail. A three-volume Modern Library edition of O'Neill is scheduled for spring 1982. Also planned is a first edition of *Chris Christopherson*. There is also interest in doing cable TV productions of O'Neill plays, and the Circle in the Square has proposed a season of O'Neill beginning next year with *Iceman*, *Journey*, and *Wilderness* and the possible formation of an O'Neill repertory company.

OTHER REPORTS. Susan Tuck reported that she has completed the work which Horst Frenz began and hopes for release by Southern Illinois University Press late in 1982. Esther Jackson summarized her work on American drama in the classroom at Wisconsin. Michael Manheim stated that he hopes his book, *Eugene O'Neill's New Language of Kinship* (Syracuse University Press), will be available in 1982. Harold Easton discussed some of the problems and intentions of the Studio Theatre production of *Moon of the Caribbees* and *Hughie*, scheduled for production on January 26-30.

Eugene Hanson discussed ideas for the Los Angeles Annual Meeting in December 1982, which will be devoted to O'Neill and film.

The meeting was then turned over to the new President, Al Wertheim. He expressed a wish to upgrade the *Newsletter* to the status of a journal, and asked for ideas and suggestions from the Society concerning sponsorship of some kind of centennial publication, such as a collection of essays and criticism. Perhaps something, other than a mere *festschrift*, could be published at Indiana and dedicated to Horst. Also some possibility through ASTR and Southern Illinois for special volumes of the plays.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Jordan Y. Miller, Secretary

REVIEWERS NEEDED, WORLD-WIDE

In order to bring its subscribers news of all O'Neill productions around the world, the Newsletter needs as many reviewers as it can find. If you would like to serve as reviewer - reporter of productions in your area or country, and send production pictures for inclusion with your reports, contact the editor. While we lack the funds to pay for reviews, you can get free tickets for the productions you attend and a free subscription to the Newsletter.

NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. NEW AND IMPORTANT O'NEILL BOOK. "*The Theatre We Worked For*": *The Letters of Eugene O'Neill to Kenneth Macgowan*, edited by Jackson R. Bryer with introductory essays by Travis Bogard, arrived too late for a review to be readied for this issue. Published by the Yale University Press (292 pp., \$25.00), it has been highly praised by *Library Journal* ("a major contribution to the study of modern American drama") and *Publishers Weekly*: "O'Neill's [letters] ring with the accents of genius.... This book adds an important facet to our knowledge about O'Neill and the American theater in the first half of this century." A substantial review will appear in the Newsletter's next issue, but potential purchasers need not wait. This is a collection we have been eagerly awaiting for a long time. Congratulations to Professors Bryer and Bogard for their success in getting it to us.

2. DEVELOPMENTS IN AMERICAN THEATRE STUDIES. Two recent announcements suggest that the ideal American theatre of which Eugene O'Neill dreamed is coming closer to realization. On October 8, 1981, Larry D. Clark, President of the American Theatre Association, announced the first board of directors for an ATA-sponsored Institute for American Theatre Studies (IATS). Chaired by Walter J. Meserve, board membership includes Esther M. Jackson, John Ezell, Oscar Brockett, Stephen Archer, Gresna Doty, Yvonne Shafer, Don Wilmeth, Richard Moody, David Addington (*ex officio*), and Barry Witham (*ex officio*). The Institute, which will involve the cooperative efforts of ATA, IATS, and the college or university that is chosen as host institution, has much important work to do, as was explained in the February issue of ATA's *Theatre News*:

Theatre in America has existed for more than 300 years. That theatre, once meager and imitative, is now rich and innovative. Histories, therefore, must be written, styles of production researched, archived materials analyzed, plays and playwrights evaluated related to their times. Students of American theatre must be given the opportunity to learn of the past and to experiment for the future. Well-organized and aggressive research at IATS will satisfy these objectives.

The second announcement, in the February 21 *New York Times*, was the approval, by the Federal Commission of Fine Arts, of the initial design (by George Hartman of Hartman-Cox) for a four-level addition to the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The addition, which includes classrooms, practice rooms, faculty studios, a 600-seat recital hall and a 250-seat theater, will house an institute for the training of advanced graduate students in music and theatre. According to Thomas R. Kendrick, director of operations for the Kennedy Center, the institute's purpose "will be to bridge the gap between the academic world and the professional world." Since America's greatest dramatist will doubtless loom large in the work of both institutes, this double bill of news must be heartening to all O'Neillians.

3. TEARING TATTERED ENSIGNS, BROADWAY-STYLE. Care to see where the first Broadway production of an O'Neill play, *Beyond the Horizon*, was premiered in February, 1920? Or where *Long Day's Journey Into Night* first staggered the American consciousness on November 7, 1956? How about the sites of Broadway's two most recent O'Neill revivals--*A Moon for the Misbegotten* (December, 1973) and *A Touch of the Poet* (December, 1977)? Forget it, friends. Progress--a.k.a. the Portman Hotel project and a proposed pedestrian mall--has taken a merciless bite of the Big Apple, the choicest chunks being precisely the two theaters that housed those four productions: the Morosco (1920 and 1973) and the Helen Hayes (1956 and 1977).

Not that the demolition of so much American theatre history occurred without acknowledgement and resistance. On March 4, an army of theatre folk, organized by producers Joseph Papp and Alexander Cohen, demonstrated in front of the Morosco, a number of them reading scenes from major plays that had first been performed in the two houses. Among them was Jason Robards, who must have felt the imminent

wrecking ball most personally since he'd been *in* three of the aforementioned O'Neill productions. John Corry, reporting the event in the *New York Times* (March 5, 1982, pp. A1, C7), recorded that quintessential O'Neill actor's part in the proceedings:

by the reckoning of most people on the street, and of the other actors on the stage, Mr. Robards offered one of street theaters finest hours. Glancing only once at his hardbound copy of Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, he did the lengthy speech in which the father, an actor, tells his younger son that by surrendering to commercialism he had ruined his life. "I'm so heartsick, I feel it's the end of everything," Mr. Robards said. He was only reciting from the play, of course, but as he spoke he turned and glanced at the Morosco. ... When he finished, Mr. Papp three times shouted aloud, "O'Neill lives."

Sadly, the demonstration was unable to stop the "march of progress." (After all, folks, the big bucks are in the tourist trade, not the nostalgia traffic.) The Morosco and the Helen Hayes are gone, and from the dust of their destruction will soon rise a rather grotesque, gargantuan phoenix--a 50-story, 2,020-room hotel. It's fortunate that an Institute for American Theatre Research has begun--if it's not already too late. Given the ubiquitousness of the American bulldozer, there soon may be nothing left!

4. SHEAFFER REVIEWS *EUGENE O'NEILL AT WORK*. O'Neill biographer Louis Sheaffer reviewed *Eugene O'Neill at Work*, ed. Virginia Floyd, in the *New London (Connecticut) Day* (January 3, 1982) and in the Long Island paper *Newsday* (January 31). In the former, he hailed the volume as "an invaluable, indeed, indispensable book. Not that it is beyond criticism, for it contains some errors [such as O'Neill's charge, which was inaccurate but unrefuted by the editor, that Agnes Boulton stole his 1925 work diary] and at times the editor's judgment appears to me questionable. But despite these problems, the book is genuinely fascinating. While reading it, I felt as though I were looking over O'Neill's shoulder as he struggled to express himself." Sheaffer noted that the newly released materials give "important new insights into the creative workings of the author's mind," and that, since the book "provides specific evidence of the subjective nature of [O'Neill's] art," it "adds measurably to our knowledge of the man himself." One fact abundantly clear in both the book and in Mr. Sheaffer's review, was that the playwright never suffered from a lack of material or creative ideas:

O'Neill, unlike many of his calling, practically never suffered from writer's block or a lack of story ideas. His problem was the reverse; he couldn't write fast enough to keep pace with his mind. He used to say that he had enough ideas to keep him writing ten years, a situation that would remain true to the end of his career.

5. Michael Manheim, Chairman of the Department of English at the University of Toledo, delivered a paper on "O'Neill and Melodrama" for an English Department colloquium at the University of Hartford on April 22. The paper, he reports, "represents an early stage of an article I am working on."
6. *Desire Under the Elms* is one of the works discussed in Roger Asselineau's 1981 book, *The Transcendentalist Constant in American Literature*, published by the New York University Press. (189 pp. \$22.75, paperback \$9.10.) A summary of the discussion will appear in the next issue of the Newsletter.
7. Thanks to *Abstracts of English Studies*, I discovered an article not previously noted in the Newsletter: H. M. Leavitt, "Comedy in the Plays of Eugene O'Neill," *Players*, 51 (1975-76), 92-95. Here is the abstract provided by J. L. Disbrow: "Eugene O'Neill uses six elements of comedy in his plays: comic taboo, physical comedy, comic plot devices, verbal humor, comic characters, and comedy of ideas. These elements heighten the intensity of his later, more mature tragedies."

8. O'NEILL AND FILM is the subject of a special session tentatively scheduled for the 1982 MLA Convention in Los Angeles next December. Eugene K. Hanson, a Director of the O'Neill Society, will lead the session. To gain further information or make suggestions, contact him at College of the Desert, 43-500 Monterey Avenue, Palm Desert, CA 92260. And watch for more details in the next issue of the Newsletter.
9. JIM'S TEAR JERKER. When Jim Tyrone tells Josie Hogan, in the third act of *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, about his train trip east with his mother's body and his liaison with a "blonde pig" whose embraces brought no forgetfulness, he mentions that "the last two lines of a lousy tear-jerker song I'd heard when I was a kid kept singing over and over in my brain," and he quotes the last two lines of the refrain. The lyrics of the song, entitled "The Baggage Coach Ahead," recently appeared in the *Boston Herald American* (April 9, 1982, p. B14), and are reprinted here for scholars and sentimentalists:

On a dark and stormy night, as the train rattled on,
All the passengers had gone to bed
Except one young man with a babe in his arms
Who sat there with a bowed-down head.

The innocent one began crying just then,
As though its poor heart would break.
One angry man said, "Make that child stop its noise,
For it's keeping all of us awake."

"Put it out," said another. "Don't keep it in here,
We've paid for our berths and want rest."
But never a word said the man with the child,
As he fondled it close to his breast.

"Where is its mother, go take it to her,"
This a lady then softly said.
"I wish that I could," was the man's sad reply,
"But she's dead in the coach ahead."

Refrain:

While the train rolled onward,
A husband sat in tears,
Thinking of the happiness
Of just a few short years.

For baby's face brings pictures
Of a cherished hope that's dead.
But baby's cries can't waken her
In the baggage coach ahead.

10. BOOKS FOR SALE. Two subscribers are interested in selling books by and about O'Neill, some of them signed. John Von Foepfel, as was noted in the last issue, has a number of first editions for which his asking price is \$50 each, exclusive of signed copies whose price, like their value, is somewhat higher. For details, write him at 20 W. Lucerne Circle, Orlando, Florida 32801. And Peter Scott, a dealer in rare books, has a list of 48 volumes, including condition and price, which list any interested O'Neillian can have by writing him at Ridge Books, Box 58, Stone Ridge, New York 12484.
11. O'NEILL DOWN UNDER. *Long Day's Journey Into Night* will be a part of the 1982 seasons of two of Australia's major drama groups: the Melbourne Theatre Company (in Victoria) and the Queensland Theatre Company (in Queensland). Performance dates are not yet available, but subscriber Terence Watson hopes to provide reviews for a future issue of the Newsletter.

12. PLANS AT TAO HOUSE. The most important project that the Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, will initiate this year is the restoration and furnishing of the House's "heart": O'Neill's bedroom and dressing room and the study in which he "shut himself off from the world and produced ... *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*." The project is announced in the Foundation's February 1982 mailing to its members, in which it also states its goal "to completely restore Tao House by October 16, 1988, the centenary of O'Neill's birth." For this to be achieved, in a time of federal budget cuts, the Foundation is "presently seeking funds from corporate, business and private sources." The most important of the "private sources" are individual memberships in the Foundation. If you would like to join and be a part of this and many other important activities, write for information. The address: P. O. Box 402, Danville, CA, 94526.
13. SEVENTH GRADERS MEET O'NEILL. In the February 2nd *New York Times* ("A 7th-Grade Class Is a Stage for One-Act Play by O'Neill," p. B1), Laurie Johnston reported on the visit of Rob Mulholland and Harold Easton to a classroom in New York City, where they led the students in acting exercises and prepared them for a visit to the team's production of *Moon of the Caribbees* (which is reviewed in this issue). Joined by three actors from the NYU Studio Theatre company, Mulholland and Easton were so successful in introducing the class to the play and the atmosphere it evokes that the students were totally attentive when they later visited the production, and engaged in almost an hour of post-performance discussion with the company. A splendid example of theatre-in-education.
14. HUGHIE ON 42ND STREET. *Hughie* seems to be finding a number of dramatic partners these days. In addition to its performance with *Moon of the Caribbees* at NYU's Studio Theatre (reviewed in this issue), the play appeared last fall, at the South Street Theater, 424 West 42nd Street, in a double bill with Strindberg's *The Stronger*, the latter directed by Gene Nye, the O'Neill by Gino Giglio. Mel Gussow reviewed the production in the *New York Times* (January 1, 1982, p. 15) and praised the "compatible pairing of plays performed by an assured quartet of actors." (Michael Fischeti played Erie Smith, and Frank Geraci was the night clerk.) Why are the two plays so appropriate together? Because each pairs a garrulous lead and a silent or near-silent listener, and both plays, in Mr. Gussow's words, deal with "silence as a catalyst for confession": "The clerk says only a few words, but, as with the silent woman in *The Stronger*, his presence seems to encourage a catharsis from the speaker. Erie is irresistibly led into a one-man ocean of conversation...." And the message learned from the double bill? That neither play is a one-person show. "Friends and foes, the couples are allied, and in dramatic terms the silent partners are as much reagents as reactors. Each play seems like a soliloquy but is actually a mutually responsive two-character sketch."
15. REED À LA RUSSE. Work nears completion in Moscow on a Soviet version of the John Reed story, recently the subject of Warren Beatty's *Reds*. The Sergei Bondarchuk-directed film, a trilogy, is a Soviet-Italian-Mexican co-production. How extensive the O'Neill connection will be is not known, but John F. Burns, reporting from Moscow in the February 8 issue of the *New York Times* (p. C11), records the effect of the international situation on the choice of filming locales:

The Russian portion of the trilogy includes scenes set in Provincetown, Mass., where Reed, Louise Bryant and others collaborated in founding the Provincetown Players. Perhaps because of the freeze on cultural exchanges between the two countries, the Russians chose not to film in Provincetown but at a dacha on the Gulf of Finland, near Leningrad.

If placing O'Neill among the "others" reflects the Russian point of view, and not just Mr. Burns's, we may expect little from the Soviet answer to Jack Nicholson!

16. RECENT AND FORTHCOMING PRODUCTIONS.

- Ah, Wilderness!*, dir. Penelope Hirsch. NYU Tisch School of the Arts, Department of Undergraduate Drama, New York City, March 31 - April 3, 1982.
- Anna Christie*, dir. Cynthia Sherman. St. Nicholas Theater Company, Chicago. Closed on December 21, 1981.
- Before Breakfast*, dir. Barry Bartle. American Theatre Arts Conservatory, Los Angeles, CA, Fall, 1981. Reviewed in this issue.
- Beyond the Horizon*. Queens College Little Theatre, Flushing, NY, March 18-20, 1982.
- Desire Under the Elms*, dir. Sonia Moore. V. A. Smith Chapel Theatre, 656 Sixth Avenue, New York City. Opened on February 12, 1982.
- The Hairy Ape*, dir. Rob Mulholland and Harold Easton. Studio Theatre Productions, Washington Square (NYU), New York City, June 1982. (For information, call Mr. Easton at 212-598-3067.)
- Hughie*, dir. Rob Mulholland and Harold Easton. Studio Theatre Productions, New York City, January 26-30, 1982. (Double bill with *Moon of the Caribbees*.) Reviewed in this issue. [The production, "if all goes well," will be repeated at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in August. --Ed.]
- Long Day's Journey Into Night*, dir. Marco Zarattini. Nucleo Eclettico, Boston, MA. Closed on April 3, 1982, after being extended a week beyond announced closing date. Reviewed in this issue.
- A Moon for the Misbegotten*, dir. Henry Hoffman. McCadden Theatre Company, Los Angeles, Fall 1981. Reviewed in this issue.
- A Moon for the Misbegotten*, dir. David George. Barton Square Playhouse, Salem, MA, February 26 - April 3, 1982. Reviewed in this issue.
- A Moon for the Misbegotten*. 2nd Story Theatre, Newport, RI, March 9 - April 25, 1982.
- A Moon of the Caribbees*, dir. Rob Mulholland and Harold Easton. Studio Theatre Productions, Washington Square (NYU), New York City, January 26-30, 1982. (Double bill with *Hughie*.) Reviewed in this issue.
- "Six Plays of the Sea" (*The Long Voyage Home*, *Bound East for Cardiff*, *In the Zone*, *Ile*, *Where the Cross Is Made* and *The Rope*), dir. Skip Corris. Apple Corps Theatre Company, New York City. Closes on May 2, 1982.
- A Touch of the Poet*, dir. Gini Andrewes. ANTA presentation at Springfield (MA) College, January 8-10, 15-16, 1982.

17. MINUTIAE.

- a. "The Legacy of George Pierce Baker" is one of the programs that have been approved for the 1982 American Theatre Association convention in New York City next August.
- b. The January 26 *Staten Island Advance* reported the death of Hubertine Zahorska Robinson, 80, of Jerusalem, Vermont, a longtime Staten Island resident who had once been Eugene O'Neill's private secretary. Born in Liverpool and a graduate of Simmons College in Boston, Mrs. Robinson had many notes and reminiscences of O'Neill which she provided to several of his biographers.

18. ODD ADDENDA.

- a. Fowl play! Richard Lederer reported the following student blooper in the Winter 1982 issue of *The Leaflet*, a publication of the New England Association of Teachers of English (p. 22): "In 1957, Eugene O'Neill won a Pullet Surprise."

- b. Thanks to *The New Yorker* for sharing with the world the following comment by Gary Gregory in the *Centerville (Ohio) Times*; "Strangely enough, O'Neill's death provided a momentary hiatus in his distinguished career." *The New Yorker's* reply? "Oh, it happens all the time." (*The New Yorker*, December 28, 1981, p. 74.)
- c. Thanks to Edwin Lee for sharing a ghastly gaffe in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of November 21, 1981. L. M. Boyd, in his "Grab Bag" column (a title particularly infelicitous in this instance), responded to a reader who sought verification that "Eugene O'Neill was another one of those impetuous fellows who proposed marriage on the first night he met his wife-to-be." Boyd's response: "Quite so. In a Greenwich Village saloon, he sat down beside Agnes Boulton, and shortly thereafter he said to her, 'I want to spend every night of my life with you from now on. I mean this. Every night of my life.' Their marriage lasted until her death ten years later." Lee's response to Boyd's: "Seems as though Louis Sheaffer and the Gelbs will have to correct their biographies! How do errors such as this occur?" Good question.
- d. Alan Stern, compiling a list of local productions in the *Boston Phoenix* (February 23, 1982), "warned" potential attenders that the current production of *Long Day's Journey* "runs just short of four hours: evidently O'Neill believed in truth-in-advertising."

PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

MARSHALL BROOKS, essayist and printer, is the editor of *Nostoc* and associate editor of the *Eugene O'Neill Newsletter*, whose pages are enhanced by his art and layout direction.

THOMAS F. CONNOLLY, an English major at Suffolk University, is spending the present semester in work on the *Eugene O'Neill Newsletter* as part of the career-related internship program sponsored by the Department of English.

PETER EGRI, Professor and Chairman of the Department of English at L. Eötvös University in Budapest, is spending the current academic year in research in Leeds, England. His book, *Chekhov and O'Neill: The Uses of the Short Story in Chekhov's and O'Neill's Plays*, will soon be published. A review will appear in the Newsletter soon thereafter.

EUGENE K. HANSON, a charter member of the Eugene O'Neill Society, teaches drama at the College of the Desert. He is a member of the Society's Board of Directors, and is organizing the special session on "O'Neill and Film" for the 1982 MLA Convention in Los Angeles next December.

VERA JIJI, who teaches drama at Brooklyn College, is a member of the Board of Directors of the Eugene O'Neill Society, and organized and directed the special session on O'Neill at the 1981 MLA Convention in New York City. (See report in this issue.) She also earned the gratitude of Society members by arranging for the 1981 annual meeting to be held at the Museum of Broadcasting.

MICHAEL MANHEIM is Professor and Chairman of the Department of English at the University of Toledo. He read the paper that appears in this issue at an MLA Convention special session on "Chekhov and Twentieth-Century Drama Outside Russia" in New York City last December. Professor Manheim's book, *O'Neill's New Language of Kinship*, will soon be published by the Syracuse University Press.

SUSAN TUCK is co-editor with Horst Frenz of *Eugene O'Neill's Critics: Voices from Abroad*, which is due for imminent release by the Southern Illinois University Press. Her many O'Neill-related studies are listed in the Winter 1981 issue, p. 40.

DAVID WHEELER, sculptor, playwright and actor (the last a reluctant career that will end when other performers adopt his one-character plays), began his evolving artistic career in his home town of St. Albans, VT, where, in the absence of other artistic sources, he copied comic books (*Little Lulu*, *Popeye*, *et al.*). While pursuing a B.F.A. in art education at Pratt Institute (he eventually caught it), he moved to abstract painting; and he moved yet again, to "plastic sculptures ... as narrative in nature," as an M.F.A. candidate at Tufts University. While a fellow of the Fine Arts Works Center in Provincetown (1975-1977), he began work in performance art, from which have come a series of monodramas: "An Evening with Benvenuto Cellini" and "Crabbing with Paul Gauguin" (1979), "Nadia" and "The Raft of the Medusa" (1980), and the O'Neill play (1981), which is first published in this issue. More recently, in New Orleans, where "Here Before You...Eugene O'Neill" will be performed as part of the Spring 1982 season at the Theatre Marigny, he completed work on a new play, about John James Audubon. Groups interested in hiring Mr. Wheeler to perform the O'Neill play, or any of the others, may reach him c/o Biohydrant Publications, R.F.D.#3, St. Albans, VT 05478. (Tel. 802-524-6307.)

FREDERICK WILKINS, Professor and Chairman of the Department of English at Suffolk University, is editor of the *Eugene O'Neill Newsletter*. He hopes to host an international O'Neill conference at Suffolk University in the Spring of 1984--about which more anon. Individuals interested in participating should contact him c/o The Newsletter.