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### The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter vol. 7, nos. 2, 1983

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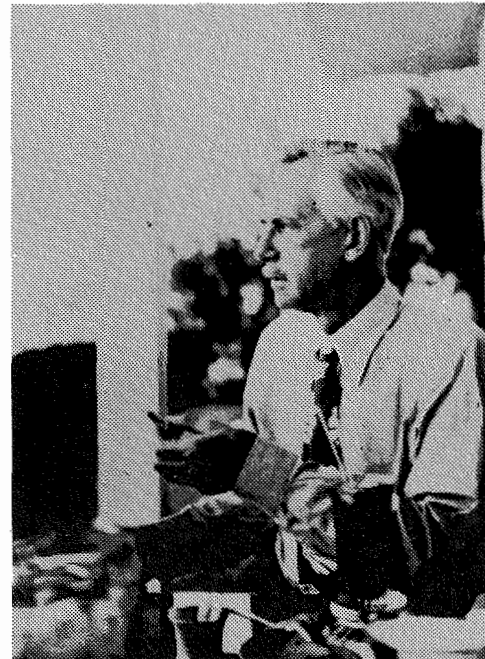
# The Eugene O'Neill Newsletter

SUMMER-FALL 1983

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Autographed photo in the collection of the editor. See note #1 on page 36 for attendant query—and prize.

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## EDITOR'S FOREWORD: MORE ON THE MARCH CONFERENCE

Response to the Spring issue's details (pp. 32-34) about the March 1984 conference on EUGENE O'NEILL--THE EARLY YEARS has been substantial and enthusiastic. Lacking the space to repeat those details here, I now offer only information that was not then available, but will happily send a copy of the aforementioned pages to anyone requesting it. The Winter issue will, I hope, include a complete list of conference events and the times of their occurrence. I itch to reveal other probable features but will prudently await confirmation!

1. KEYNOTE SPEAKER. It is an honor to announce that Barbara Gelb, coauthor of the biography *O'Neill*, will deliver the keynote address, at either the Thursday dinner or the Sunday brunch, depending on the exigencies of her own spring schedule. Anyone familiar with *O'Neill*, the product of six years of exhaustive research, is aware of how valuable Mrs. Gelb's contribution will be to our examination of the playwright's early years.
2. ADDITIONAL SPEAKERS. The following have joined the roster of speakers on p. 33 of the Spring issue. In some cases, the title of the paper has not been determined; in others, the editor has ventured a tentative one that the speaker may well alter.

Haskell Block, SUNY-Binghamton, co-editor of *Masters of Modern Drama: "O'Neill and German Expressionism: A Reassessment."*

Virginia Floyd, Bryant College, editor of *Eugene O'Neill: A World View* and *Eugene O'Neill at Work: Newly Released Ideas for Plays*.

Joyce Flynn, Harvard University: "O'Neill, Paul Green, and the American History Play."

Richard Hornby and Barry Witham, Ohio State University: co-panelists with Yvonne Shafer in the previously announced discussion of "European Influences on O'Neill."

Jordan Y. Miller, University of Rhode Island, author of *Eugene O'Neill and the American Critic* and editor of *Playwright's Progress: O'Neill and the Critics*.

Brenda Murphy, St. Lawrence University: "O'Neill's Early Experiments with Realistic Form."

Robert K. Sarló, University of California-Davis, author of *Jig Cook and the Provincetown Players: Theatre in Ferment: "Dionysus in Provincetown."*

3. STAFF ADDITIONS. Steven F. Bloom of Emmanuel College will serve as assistant director of the conference, joining the beleaguered editor in the manifold tasks of creating a smooth and efficient operation come March. Thomas F. Connolly, a graduate student at Boston University, will join Bloom and Wilkins as activities coordinator.
4. MEMBERS OF PANEL ON TEACHING O'NEILL. Three educators have thus far volunteered to participate in the discussion of O'Neill in the classroom, to which the first paragraph on the last issue's 34th page was devoted: James R. Harris, John Jay High School, Katonah, NY; Kristin Morrison, Boston College; and Gary Vena, Manhattan College. More are welcome to join this pioneering triumvirate.
5. HOTEL: PARK OR PARKER? The Spring "update" listed the Parker House as the reduced-price hotel for conference registrants, while the hotel mentioned in the preregistration form was the Park Plaza. An explanation is in order. The Park Plaza, while somewhat farther from Suffolk University, offered better rates and was chosen—but after the update was printed. Apologies to those who prefer the Parker House—which is of course available to registrants, but not at reduced rates and not via the preregistration form. (The quoted Park Plaza rates do not include a Massachusetts tax of 5%.)
6. NOTA BENE: PRICES RISE AFTER 1983. The next issue will be accompanied by "Preregistration Form B," reflecting a \$5 increase in conference fees after December 31st. I.e., he who delays, pays. Ergo, best "sign on" ere uncorking the bubbly!

## O'NEILL'S REALISM: A STRUCTURAL APPROACH

Eugene O'Neill once wrote that he considered *In the Zone* "a conventional construction of the theater as it is," and *The Moon of the Caribbees* an attempt to achieve a higher plane of bigger, finer values."<sup>1</sup> The essence of O'Neill's notion of realism emerges from his contrast of the two plays:

Smitty in the stuffy, grease-paint atmosphere of *In the Zone* is magnified into a hero who attracts our sentimental sympathy. In *The Moon*, posed against a background of that beauty, sad because it is eternal, which is one of the revealing moods of the sea's truth, his silhouetted gestures of self-pity are reduced to their proper insignificance, his thin whine of weakness is lost in the silence which it was mean enough to disturb, we get the perspective to judge him—and the others—and we find his sentimental posing much more out of harmony with truth, much less in tune with beauty, than the honest vulgarity of his mates. To me *The Moon* works with truth ... while *In the Zone* substitutes theatrical sentimentalism.<sup>2</sup>

This statement is a good summary of realism's aesthetic ideals in revolt against the conventional notion of drama that prevailed in the American theatre of the teens. While the traditional forms of tragedy, comedy and melodrama tend to emphasize, to exaggerate, to inflate the piece of human experience being represented, the impulse of realism is to deflate it by emphasizing the context of the larger rhythms of human life within which it occurs. This notion of realistic form was to become a preoccupation of O'Neill's, as he consistently tried to find more effective ways of setting the action of his plays into the larger rhythms of life. A second preoccupation, the dramatization of character, is also evident in this early statement, for Smitty's character is O'Neill's central consideration in both plays. From the realistic point of view, his whole career was a development of these two early impulses—the search for a dramatic form that would give true shape to his realistic dramatic action, and the search for theatrical ways to depict the deepest reality of his characters within the dramatic forms he discovered. He was to find the fulfillment of these two impulses in the fully developed realism of his last four plays, *The Iceman Cometh* (1939), *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1940), *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1943) and *A Touch of the Poet* (1946).

In calling O'Neill's later method "dynamic realism,"<sup>3</sup> Timo Tiusanen refers to the dynamics of the psyche, the unmasking of which had been the focus of O'Neill's experiments in expressionism and masked drama, and that his later realism manages to externalize. But there is a "dynamic realism" in the form and structure of the plays as well, and it is the form and structure that provide the underpinning for the characters. Because of spatial constraints, I will discuss only the first of the fully developed realistic plays, *The Iceman Cometh*.

*Iceman* is the most suitable example of O'Neill's structural realism, I think, because it gives the clearest idea of his structural principles and because its structure has been the subject of a good deal of comment, objection, and manipulation since its opening night in 1946. The first-night reviewers generally called the play "long-winded" and "unstructured." Closer critical study yielded the suggestion that its structure could be compared variously to a wave, a pendulum, or concentric circles.<sup>4</sup> A more useful, though not fully

<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Barrett H. Clark, *Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays* (New York: Dover, 1947), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup>Clark, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup>*O'Neill's Scenic Images* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 278-79.

<sup>4</sup>See Eugene M. Waith, "An Exercise in Unmasking," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 13 (October 1961), 189; Tiusanen, p. 272; Tom F. Driver, "On the Last Plays of Eugene O'Neill," *Tulane Drama Review*, 3 (1958), 13-14.

developed, suggestion is that followed by José Quintero in his famous production of the play at the Circle in the Square in 1956: "My approach in directing *The Iceman Cometh* was different from that used in any play I had ever done. It had to be for this was not built as an orthodox play. It resembles a complex musical form, with themes repeating themselves with slight variation, as melodies do in a symphony."<sup>5</sup> Quintero's notion is echoed by Tiusanen in his critical study: "*The Iceman Cometh* is, in its orchestral organization of the material, O'Neill's *The Three Sisters*."<sup>6</sup>

The most developed, and most influential, view, however, has been Eric Bentley's idea that *Iceman* is an example of Ibsenesque "analytic exposition": "The crucial events having taken place before the curtain rises, he lets them leak out so slowly that we are still discovering them in the last act."<sup>7</sup> The problem with Bentley's approach is that he is so taken with the Ibsenesque method of O'Neill's exposition that he assumes the entire form and structure of the play must be Ibsenesque as well. Thus he sees it as two intertwined plots: the story of Hickey's murder of Evelyn and subsequent confession, and the story of Parritt's betrayal of his mother and subsequent suicide. By his own description, Bentley's production of the play was an attempt to fit it into his notion of its structure by cutting away vast amounts of material that didn't fit the mold of the typical Ibsenesque one-issue discussion play. Thus, he decided, "one can cut a good many of Larry's speeches since he is forever re-phrasing a pessimism which is by no means hard to understand the first time."<sup>8</sup> Bentley finally condemned O'Neill for not meeting Ibsen's standards for form in realistic drama: "His sense of theatrical form is frustrated by an eloquence that decays into mere repetitious garrulousness.... Within the tyrannically, mechanically rigid scenes, there is an excessive amount of freedom. The order of speeches can be juggled without loss, and almost any speech can be cut in half."<sup>9</sup> His attitude is the logical conclusion for one who sees only half of O'Neill's technique in the play.

O'Neill's later plays are supremely important documents in the development of dramatic realism, not because, as the cliché goes, they mark his "return to realism," but because they demonstrate his final achievement of a realistic form and structure in which to represent his dynamic realism of character while maintaining the illusion of reality in all elements of the representation. O'Neill's later plays advance the technique of realism in two major areas: characterization, and form and structure.

Character is the more obvious of the two developments, for it is the central interest in his later plays as well as the focus of his more daring experiments. From masks, asides, and alter-egos, he had finally arrived at the simple device of alcohol to allow his characters to reveal the truths of their psychological depths while maintaining the mimetic illusion in the representation. All of the last four realistic plays use the device to similar effect. As one astute critic has remarked, "if it weren't that thin tea looks like Bourbon, not one of the plays could proceed beyond the second act."<sup>10</sup>

The formal innovation is more complicated, but develops from the state of the characters. The form is O'Neill's familiar cycle, suggesting his notion of the recurrent

<sup>5</sup> "Postscript to a Journey," *Theatre Arts*, 41 (1956), 88.

<sup>6</sup> Tiusanen, p. 270.

<sup>7</sup> "The Return of Eugene O'Neill," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 178 (November 1946), 65.

<sup>8</sup> "Trying to Like O'Neill," *The Kenyon Review*, 14 (July 1952), 479.

<sup>9</sup> "Trying to Like O'Neill," p. 483.

<sup>10</sup> Robert F. Whitman, "O'Neill's Search for a 'Language of the Theatre'," *O'Neill: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. John Gassner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 160.

rhythms of life. *Iceman* begins and ends with the drunks in Harry Hope's saloon trying to forget their pain through their sustaining illusions and the oblivion of drink. O'Neill uses the form to stress the play's realistic world-view by *not* ending it, as Ibsen would have done, with emphasis on the death of Parritt and the defeat of Hickey, but easing the dramatic tension off into Harry's invention of the pathetic new illusion that Hickey was crazy, and the drunks' celebration of their liberation from his truth-telling. With its mixture of pathos and humor, the harmony of the group's celebration and the cacophony of its singing, O'Neill is careful to avoid any easy formal conclusion that the play is tragic, comic, or melodramatic.

This cyclical realistic form with its slow deflation of dramatic tension is not new, of course. It's as old for O'Neill as *The Moon of the Caribbees*. What *is* new in *Iceman* is the evolution of a tightly controlled structure within the form, creating and dispelling dramatic tension without violating the illusion that the play's events are those of objective reality. Each of the four acts of the play is a series of conflicts between characters, building, with ever greater duration and intensity, toward a peak of tension that ends in one of Hickey's four disturbing announcements: that he is on the wagon, that Evelyn is dead, that Evelyn was murdered, and that it was he who killed her.

In Act I, before Hickey arrives, the building tension is pleasurable—proceeding from the anticipation of Hickey's coming—and the conflicts are mostly mock conflicts, the ritual battles that are part of the characters' pipe dreams: Harry's complaints about the bartenders, the taunting of Hugo about The Movement, Harry's complaints about Willie's singing, Lewis and Wetjoen's re-fighting of the Boer War, Chuck and Cora's argument about where to buy a farm. Underlying the mock conflicts, however, is the building tension that arises from the "mistakes" that the characters make by trespassing on each other's pipe dreams, such as Lewis's comment on Joe's blackness and Pearl's calling Rocky a pimp.

In Act II, Harry's birthday party, the tension becomes unpleasant, and begins its slow build-up toward the simultaneous shattering of illusions and destruction of the sense of community in the saloon. It begins with the short quarrels between minor characters—Chuck's with Cora over the flowers, and Rocky's with Pearl and Margie over the cake. The tension slowly escalates as the characters move in closer and closer on each other's dreams. Margie and Pearl make fun of Cora's notion of her wedding; Cora calls them whores; they call Rocky a pimp; Rocky slaps them. While each of these flare-ups ends in apology and reconciliation, each also leaves a residual tension which gradually increases after the short relief when Hugo and Larry restore harmony to the scene. Joe raises the race issue with a defiance bred of Hickey's reminders; Hickey prods Larry about his "grandstand" attitude. After Willie provides a short interruption in the tension, Parritt makes his hypocritical confession to Larry; Lewis and Wetjoen, and Mosher and McGloin, have short quarrels touching on each other's pipe dreams, and then become reconciled. Into this atmosphere of tension bred of conflict, Harry makes his entrance, and proceeds to increase the tension with his verbal abuse of everyone in the room. Hickey's toast provides a temporary respite, until Harry's speech, from which he cannot keep his bitterness, sets it mounting again. And again, in a series of quick reversals, his apology deflates it; Hickey's speech inflates it; the iceman joke, in which everyone joins, deflates it; and finally Hickey's announcement that Evelyn is dead sends it to a climax as the act closes.

A nearly identical pattern occurs in Act III, when the drunks are setting out on their Hickey-inspired attempts to face tomorrow today; only this time the tension increases in line with what's at stake, as does the physical action. Rocky and Chuck fight physically over Chuck's impending marriage. Joe pulls a knife when they call him a nigger, and Rocky counters with a gun. Lewis and Wetjoen openly fight, as do Mosher and McGloin. Punctuating the building tension are Parritt's sporadic attempts to confess the truth to Larry and the rebuffs of Willie as he attempts to be a lawyer. The tension

builds to Hickey's confrontations with Harry and Larry, his own revelation that Evelyn was murdered, and the ominous observation that Harry is not recovering from his disillusionment as Hickey had expected him to.

In Act IV the tension is internalized in Hickey, as the other characters sit more or less paralyzed by their disillusionment while he enacts his psychodrama through his famous fifteen-minute modified monologue. The tension here begins within Hickey, then centers between Hickey and the others—who try to avoid this further confession of disillusionment—and finally erupts between Parritt and Larry. Hickey's confession of the murder reaches a peak, followed almost immediately by Parritt's confession that he hated his mother, and then Hickey's inadvertent confession that he hated Evelyn. Larry's advice to Parritt precipitates Parritt's suicide, a counterturn to the general deflation of tension in the saloon which proceeds from Harry's announcement that Hickey was crazy and that their reality was merely his illusion.

O'Neill's balance and manipulation of tension here is as neat as that in a Pinero problem play, a Molière comedy, or a Greek tragedy, and understanding his realistic structure is crucial to understanding his realistic form, or indeed his notion of art in realistic drama. *The Iceman Cometh* depends upon subtle manipulation of the internal and external psychic conflict in a series of confrontations to build the tension and to provide the necessary exposition in a way that provides greatest support for the modified monologues in which the characters reveal themselves. O'Neill's realistic form and structure in his last plays was developed to serve his great interest—the portrayal of character. His realistic drama is primarily a drama of characters revealed through conflict, with each other and within themselves.

—Brenda Murphy

#### BENEATH *THE CALMS OF CAPRICORN*: O'NEILL'S ADOPTION AND NATURALIZATION OF EUROPEAN MODELS

The expansion of the dramatic mold, so characteristic of O'Neill's late plays, assumes a special form in *The Calms of Capricorn*, a drama representing a point of departure for what ultimately turned out to be the playwright's all-encompassing eleven-play cycle plan, *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed*. Whereas *A Touch of the Poet* incorporates the pattern of the short story into the fabric of drama, and *More Stately Mansions* effects a synthesis of novelistic and dramatic strategies, *The Calms of Capricorn*, cast into a<sup>1</sup> detailed scenario by O'Neill in 1935 and recently "developed" as a play by Donald Gallup, moves in the direction of the epic chiefly through the heterogeneity of its dramatic make-up. *The Calms of Capricorn* is a drama which includes a number of plays, indeed various types of plays, in its framework, and, due to its embryonic form, offers a unique insight into the creative process of the cycle plays. The present essay will suggest its multifarious dramatic ancestry.

##### I. Shakespearean Drama.

G.B. Shaw once called O'Neill "a fantee Shakespeare who peoples his isle with

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene O'Neill, *The Calms of Capricorn*. Developed from O'Neill's Scenario by Donald Gallup. With a Transcription of the Scenario (New Haven and New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1982). An earlier edition was published in two volumes by the Yale University Library in 1981, Volume I comprising the scenario, and Volume II the play. Subsequent page references to the play will refer to the Ticknor & Fields edition and will be given in the main text. In all but three instances the citations appear one page earlier in the 1981 Yale edition.

Calibans,"<sup>2</sup> and the Shakespearean dramatic model indeed casts a perceivable shadow on the world of *The Calms of Capricorn*. The protagonist, Ethan Harford--who starts his career as the third mate of the clipper ship *Dream of the West*; makes his fortune through the misfortune and death of his superiors; rises to the positions of second mate, first mate, and captain; murders the old captain (Payne) with the help of Payne's wife (Nancy), whom he subsequently marries; does not accept fate but makes fate (p. 79); and tries, tests and proves himself by forcing his will on the sea and by effecting a record passage from New York to San Francisco in 1857-58 even at the cost of virtually ruining the ship--has a frame of mind, possesses and is possessed by an ambition not unrelated to those of Richard III or Macbeth. A number of other figures in the play are also characterized by self-assertive and self-assured individualism. Ethan's younger brother, Jonathan, maintains that "There is no luck. One makes luck with one's will" (p. 50), claims that "One sees one's goal, fixes on it, then devotes one's life to reaching it. Happiness or unhappiness are by-products of one's striving" (p. 51), and celebrates Ethan's victory by declaring: "You should want and get what you want. The end justifies the means" (p. 100). Warren, the owner of the clipper, reproaching his skipper, Payne, for being unable to fight his way out of the calm, does so in terms favoring the stance of Ethan: "There's always a way, if you have will enough, concentration, drive to go ahead, if you're not too old and tired" (p. 66). Leda Cade, one of the passengers, a cynical tart who proclaims and practices unbridled, self-willed egotism, praises Honey, the youngest of the Harford brothers, because he promises people the moon and gets them to give it to him (p. 65). She is also attracted to Sara, the Harford boys' mother: "You're a real woman. You want to get what you want" (p. 77). In addition, the sequence of short scenes forming larger units through a dynamic drive also reveals Shakespearean affinities.

And these Shakespearean parallels are neither echoes nor coincidences: they are consequences of a historical parallelism (by no means an identity or congruence) between the individualism of the English Renaissance and that of American adventurousness at the time of the gold rush. The convergence of aspirations does not, of course, imply any similarity of stature. O'Neill's protagonists are not Shakespearean giants, and the play harbors expressly non-Shakespearean models of drama as well. Ibsen's example, for instance, looms large.

## II. Ibsen.

The influence of Ibsen is manifest on the thematic level. Explaining to Sara his attraction to the sea, Ethan says: "I want to break away, to experience all the freedom of the spirit. I'd like to go onto the conquest of high mountains, to tear their gold from them as a gesture of conquest" (p. 14). His heated zest, stubborn quest, somewhat nebulous and illusory goal, and fervent idealism symbolizing values and incurring disaster: these strike the reader as analogous to the aspirations of Brand, Gregers Werle and John Gabriel Borkman, while the practical aim of making a record voyage strengthens the *American* flavor of Ethan's endeavor.

Realizing that his ship is leaking badly, Warren has this to say: "Ethan has wracked my ship to bits, she won't be worth a damn, but I can have her tinkered up to run okay and on the strength of this record, depression or no depression, I can sell her to England for a good price" (p. 99). The thematic motif reminds one of Ibsen's *Pillars of Society* (as indeed it anticipates its Ibsenite transposition in Miller's *All My Sons*). At the end of the play Ethan and Nancy punish themselves by jumping into the sea

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill: Son and Artist* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 252; Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O'Neill* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 474-476.



in a way not unlike Rosmer and Rebecca expiating their sin by seeking death together in the millstream (*Rosmersholm*). If, however, the sin and the self-inflicted punishment are similar, the relationship between the sinners is different: Ethan does not really love Nancy.

Ibsen's influence can also be felt on the level of dramatic composition--the way in which significant pieces of information are initially intimated to the audience by subsidiary characters (here Cato, the Harfords' servant) setting the scene and introducing more important figures.

The Ibsenite spirit also informs O'Neill's method of minute motivation. A case in point is the death of Hull, the first mate. Ethan wishes Hull were dead; he has long been eager to oust him. So, when the first mate reports himself too weak to undertake the voyage, he raises Ethan's hopes. Captain Payne, in fact, appoints Ethan first mate to replace Hull. But Ethan's gloating jubilation comes to a sudden end when Hull appears after all and declares himself fit enough for the job. Hull's unexpected and unwelcome reappearance fatally wounds Ethan's vanity. He even orders Ethan out of his cabin--an insult that takes place in the presence of a woman (Leda), and exposes Ethan to the risk of losing the esteem of another woman (Nancy). Leda even incites Ethan's anger by mocking his servility. Ethan hits Hull viciously in a sudden flash of anger, but he does not commit an intentional and premeditated murder: Hull, when hit, knocks his skull against the steps, and his weak heart does not survive the shock. As a result of all these partial causes, what Ethan had wished for becomes fulfilled. This is comparable to the way in which Solness's secret desire that his house should burn down materializes through the good offices of the helpers and servants of his magic imagination in *The Master Builder*.

Ibsen's analytic method is adopted in the gradual unfolding of the truth about the past relationship of Leda and her rich, elderly traveling companion, Graber;<sup>3</sup> and Ibsen's symbolic leitmotif-technique is used throughout the play (the song of the gold-seekers, the sea chanty, "what shall it profit a man," a touch of the poet, etc.).

### III. Well-Made Melodrama.

Here too a parallel with Ibsen is evident. While Ibsen created a dramatic form whose range, height and depth far surpassed the scope of the contemporary well-made play, he could not help embodying some aspects of that kind of play in his dramatic structure (e.g., Krogstad's intrigue, his letter, sudden turns in the plot, and the climactic scene in *A Doll's House*). Similarly, O'Neill, while he sharply opposed his father's sort of theatre, nevertheless employed to a certain extent some of its procedures.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, *The Calms of Capricorn* on occasion resorts to the technique of the well-made melodrama (Nancy prevents Ethan from suffocating Captain Payne with a pillow and then does it herself; Leda is indefatigable in weaving her strands of intrigue; Ethan and Nancy are threatened with being tossed overboard to pay for their sin and to put an end to the calm). Recourse to technical solutions of this kind can be explained by the diminished stature of the characters and their situations: Ethan may have aspirations which suggest Richard III, but he is, at best, a pale and distant relative of Richard III, from whom he lives at a great historical distance. It is not

<sup>3</sup>The importance of the past is also emphasized in the words of Elizabeth to Reverend Dickey: "Everything is dead. There's no present, no future, only the past, and that is dead too" (p. 67). In Elizabeth's complaint Mary Tyrone's observation is in the making: "The past is the present, isn't it? It's the future, too." [Eugene O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 87.] Jim Tyrone in *A Moon for the Misbegotten* is also a captive of his past, which wells up in his confession to Josie Hogan.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. John Henry Raleigh, *The Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), pp. 179-185, 191-194, 214.

a realm he desires to possess but a ship; his aim is not to obtain the crown but to beat a record and subjugate the sea; his rivals and victims are not powerful noblemen but the second mate, the third mate and the captain. When he is starting upwards, he proves only an upstart, and the dramatic form he sets in feverish motion is in some measure commensurate with his stature.

#### IV. Well-Made Farce.

More surprisingly, but not illogically, O'Neill also makes use of the technique of the well-made farce in *The Calms of Capricorn*. The comic effect here does not depend on incidental gibes, as it does in his early one-acter, *The Movie Man*; nor is it based on a "well-made" caricature of youthful attitudinizing, as in his youthful comedy, *Now I Ask You*. It does not blend into a sentimental comedy, as does *Ah, Wilderness!*; nor is it a mere coefficient of tragic irony, as it appears to be in *More Stately Mansions*; and it is not an aspect of tragicomedy, as in *A Touch of the Poet*. In Act Four, Scene One of *The Calms of Capricorn* the comic spirit attains the relative independence of a farcical dénouement, and it reaches its peak in what at this point of the action seems to be a three-fold happy ending: Ethan marries Nancy; Warren gives his daughter, Elizabeth, to Ethan's brother, Jonathan; and Leda sets her cap at Wolfe, another of Ethan's younger brothers. For the time being, Wolfe appears to be indifferent, but Leda, Elizabeth thinks, "will make him human. She did me and I was as cold as he is, almost" (p. 102). It is only in Sara's momentary forebodings and Nancy's passing fear that a presentiment of grimmer events can be captured.

#### V. Wildean Comedy.

The refined, Wildean version of the well-made comedy enters the stage of *The Calms of Capricorn* and the deck of the sailing ship *Dream of the West* with the entrance of Leda Cade and Wolfe Harford, both of whom reject the moral norms of everyday life. Leda lives life with an unscrupulous *savoir vivre* and an undisguised gusto; Wolfe keeps a fastidious "aesthetic" distance from the game of life, and is only interested in the pure game of cards, chiefly in the form of solitaire. Together they make a Wildean figure, related to one another as Dorian Gray is to his portrait--two polar incarnations of a similar attitude; two separate, even opposed dramatic characters who belong together, Leda being, as it were, Wolfe's alter ego. "He and I'd be a perfect couple," Leda says, observing their similarity, and she expresses her fascinated attraction to Wolfe: "He gives as little a damn about anything as I do" (p. 73).

Their Wildean affinities trigger off a number of witticisms, puns and paradoxes. When Ethan has knocked Hull down, and the first mate dies, Elizabeth is upset, and Warren prevents her from seeing the corpse, wishing to spare her the sight. Leda objects: "It might do her good. There's nothing like the sight of death--to wake people up and start them living" (p. 42). Absurdity "verified" by cynicism has the flavor of a veritable Wildean paradox. Professing himself to be "humane" rather than "human" (p. 118), Wolfe is just as unmoved by the death of Hull as Leda is. Taking a glance at the first mate's body, he shrugs his shoulders with cool indifference and returns to his solitaire. When the captain reproaches him for having no respect for the dead, Wolfe answers with a disdainful pun: "Sorry, Captain. You think he cares? It seemed to me the dead are so entirely indifferent to our little games" (p. 44). When Wolfe guesses that Ethan may have murdered Hull to obtain his position and Leda remarks that he does not really care, Wolfe answers with a characteristic witticism: "No--except I'm interested in seeing Ethan get what he thinks he wants in order to watch him throw it away" (p. 47). Wolfe's nonchalance arouses Leda's interest. Their ensuing dialogue is not without Wildean turns and inflections:

Leda: And what do you want, Wolfe?  
 Wolfe: Nothing.  
 Leda: Not even me?  
 Wolfe: Not even you.  
 Leda: I'll make you want me before we're through. Want to bet?  
 Wolfe: I never bet, I only play for nothing.  
 Leda: Afraid you'd lose?  
 Wolfe: (*Stung.*): I'm not afraid of anything! I'll take any bet you like. But I have nothing.  
 Leda: You have yourself.  
 Wolfe: That is the greatest and commonest illusion.  
 Leda: Eh?  
 Wolfe: But if you accept it, all right. I bet myself.  
 Leda: Against myself.  
 Wolfe: Done!  
 Leda: Done. (pp. 47-48)

In the meantime, Leda is satisfied with becoming the mistress of Honey (and of practically every man on the ship), and she praises Honey for finding genuine pleasure in lovemaking: "You're the only one on this ship who doesn't want everything to be more than it is and doesn't blame himself because it isn't" (p. 65). Leda also tries to convert Elizabeth to her profession and way of thinking, suggesting to her that what Elizabeth really wishes is not that men should seek her for her money: "that's not what you want them to want. You don't want to buy them. You want to make them buy you" (p. 87). At first Elizabeth despises Leda's behavior and maintains that a woman of honor should be reticent. She even censures Nancy with a petulant pun for displaying her love for Ethan so openly: "She's a fool, that woman--a silly fool to show so plainly she's a fool" (p. 52). Later, however, Elizabeth proves a perceptive disciple of Leda, arouses Jonathan's masculine interest and sexual appetite with the age-old bed-trick, and expresses her gratitude to Leda because "She makes everything so simple and innocent" (p. 101).

#### VI. Shavian Comedy.

O'Neill's irony is audible. For this very reason, he can use the Wildean idiom for satirical purposes, ironically satirizing even Wilde in the Shavian spirit. To split the Wildean dandy into a figure of aristocratic disdain (Wolfe) and vulgar prostitution (Leda) and to point out their shared indifference to moral values in general and to murder in particular are tantamount to a satirical exposure.

Shavian touches abound in the play. When Warren realizes that Honey was only pretending he had seen land to humor him and to save Ethan from his wrath, the owner of the ship comments with the professional esteem of a cheated cheater: "He'll wind up in the Senate, if he doesn't look out!" (p. 110).

The dialogue between Warren and Elizabeth about marrying Jonathan undercuts parental

sentimentality in a way comparable to the conversation between Mrs. Warren and her daughter in Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*:

Warren: Well, I'll be sorry to lose you, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: Rot! Don't introduce sentiment. You'll be glad to get rid of me and I'll be glad to get away from you. I gave myself to Jonathan deliberately. I wanted a husband. He's got brains, ability, he'll make good. You'll give him a good opening. He doesn't want any money.

Warren: Yes, it's better than I thought. And if he doesn't make good, you can always divorce him.

Elizabeth: Exactly. (p. 114)

Here not only is the nature of Mrs. Warren's profession revealed, but also the calculating toughness of the daughter. Accordingly, while Shaw's irony spares Vivie Warren, O'Neill's satirical attack challenges Elizabeth, too. He makes her think (in a thought-aside reminiscent of the technique of *Strange Interlude*): "I can't forget the joy of shame when Father called me a dirty little trollop" (p. 112).

With an anti-heroic Shavian thrust reminiscent of *Arms and the Man*, Jonathan ridicules Ethan's record passage as "a last romantic gesture" (p. 100), explaining (as does Yank to Paddy in *The Hairy Ape*) that sail is dead and steam is the future. Jonathan also ridicules Graber's and Wolfe's attitudes in playing cards--"One happy if he loses, the other indifferent to winning" (p. 111)--while O'Neill satirizes Jonathan's profiteering greed by making him reverse a Biblical phrase: "I know nothing of the soul--what shall it profit--?" (p. 51). The blasphemous paradox of the reversed statement is one of the intellectually conceived satirical leitmotifs of the play. Ethan rebukes Sara's possessiveness with it: "What can it profit a man if he own the world and pay his soul for it? But I can see that for a woman the reverse is true, what could her soul profit her if she paid the earth for it?" (p. 14). Even Reverend Samuel Dickey, the hypocritical priest of the adventurous passage, has this to say to Leda: "What shall it profit a man if he gives you up for a supposition like his soul? I shall visit you again tonight, if I may" (p. 88). The leitmotif is one of the intellectual bonds<sup>5</sup> linking the play to the basic concern of the cycle, *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed*.

Reverend Dickey is a constant target of O'Neill's Shavian wit. In the days of the oppressive calm, Dickey prays repeatedly to God for wind, but the wind does not start blowing. Dickey supposes it is God's punishment, because his heart is no longer pure--he has been to Leda's stateroom. Saint Joan possessed the magic power to control the elements, she could make the hens lay eggs and she was able to turn the wind. But Dickey cannot work miracles; he is hardly important enough, Elizabeth claims, to elicit God's vengeance; he is only "half a man" (p. 85), which she proves by noting that, when Dickey was pawing her arm, she was not flattered, only annoyed. (Leda must have felt the same way.) Dickey is immensely relieved: "Then you think it wasn't important? Oh, thank you, I am so glad, so glad!" (p. 85). It takes a "superman" (p. 98) to arouse the wind; Ethan can do it, although when he becomes too conceited, and declares that,

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Barrett H. Clark, *Eugene O'Neill: The Man and His Plays* (New York: Dover Publications, 1947), pp. 152-153.

having beaten the sea, he is going to give her up, even the wind becomes ironical--it dies down, peters out, and is only willing to blow again when Ethan makes a special effort to bring it back.

The Shavian (and O'Neillian) aversion to happy endings asserts itself in the very presentation of a *semblance* of happy ending: in Act Four, Scene One, Ethan and Nancy are happily united, but the cost of the wedding is murder ["The Reverend Mr. Dickey married Ethan and Nancy right after he had said the burial service over Captain Payne, almost like a double ceremony!" (p. 99)]; Jonathan's and Elizabeth's marriage is arranged, but it is a mere business partnership; Leda decides to yoke with Wolfe, but for the moment the desired match is but an undecided draw between vanity piqued and indifference challenged. On the face of it, the scene is a treble happy ending of the well-made play type; but in its deeper layers, it is a satirical rejection of happy endings. In some of its hints, in fact, it is a symbolical portent of tragic Fate.

#### VII. Symbolist Tragedy.

Paradox (in comedy) and symbol (in the Symbolist Movement) are polar opposites: one usually evokes laughter, incites the intellect, and implies dissociation; the other arouses emotion, electrifies imagination, and presupposes empathy. Nevertheless, they branch out from the same stem: both double the plane of artistic perception into what is regarded as appearance and essence; both confront the two planes; and both consider and evaluate the former from the viewpoint of the latter. A paradox is either an apparent or a "verified" absurdity; a symbol is not primarily the sign of the thing it is the image of, although it is the image of the thing it is the sign of. The nature of a symbol--as it appears in the Symbolist Movement--can be outlined by a paradox because the stratification and structure of a symbol resemble those of a paradox.

This constellation explains why the paradoxical comedy of Wilde and Shaw grew out of the social soil of the same period of world history as did the symbolist plays of Hofmannsthal, Maeterlinck and Yeats; why Wilde's symbolism (in *Salomé*) could develop into the paradoxical view of his later social comedies when his position in relation to the world he depicted became more external; why Shaw's paradoxical satire came to be studded with luminous symbols at periods of uncertainty (*The Doctor's Dilemma*, *Heartbreak House*); why Maeterlinck could alternate symbols with paradoxes (in *Aglavaine and Sélysette*); and why O'Neill in *The Calms of Capricorn*--besides approximating the Wildean and Shavian kinds of paradoxical comedy--also wrote a symbolist tragedy.

Ethan suggests the nature of this tragedy in symbolic terms. When he explains to Sara his aim of gaining victory over the sea, and, through that, of attaining freedom and rebirth, he uses the emotional and imaginative language of symbols:

I speak to you in symbols which neither of us can think but which our hearts understand, because I love you, and because I love and hate the sea, which you can understand, being also a mother. For the sea is the mother of life, is a woman of all moods for all men, and all seductive and evil--devil mother or wife or mistress or daughter or waterfront drab. And it is a sign and symbol of freedom to me that someday as a captain of a ship I shall fight her storms and calms and fogs and crosscurrents and capricious airs and make a faster voyage around the Horn to the Golden Gate than ever man has made--as a last gesture of victory, now when the era of American triumph over the sea is dying from this money panic of the greedy earthbound. And if I smash the ship to pieces under me in the victory, well, one always pays for victory with one's temporal life that the soul may win freedom. I

want this chance to accept the sea's challenge, that's all. If I win, I possess her and she cringes and I kick her away from me and turn my back forever. If I lose, I give myself to her as her conquest and she swallows and spews me out in death. (p. 15)

Sara is too earthbound to understand this raving of a Sea-Mother's son, or to comprehend how the sea in his eyes can change from a navigable route to wealth into a sign and symbol of freedom. Of Ethan's American blend of high-minded idealism and practical-minded empiricism, she appreciates only the latter. But her husband Simon understands his son, and assesses his aspirations in a cryptic and terse paradox: "I think you will lose, that if you win, you will have lost most of all. But I also know that your losing will be your final victory and release" (p. 19). The seeming contradiction of the paradox confronts the plane of possession with that of human values: victory in one plane is defeat in the other. Its concise contrast expresses the external position of a wise visionary and the internal insight of a kindred soul. Such a measure of compassion excludes the possibility of the comic, and implies an understanding, indeed a prophetic premonition of what awaits Ethan at the end of his pursuit of spiritual pride, lust for power and possession.

The ultimate meaning of Sara's presentiment is illuminated by the last symbol of the play. When Ethan has won a Pyrrhic victory over the sea by being "as unscrupulous as the sea" (p. 19), and decides to atone for his crimes by giving himself and Nancy over to the sea, he says: "We'll swim out together--until the fog lifts. And then the sea will be alight with beauty forevermore--because you are you" (p. 123). The cleansing effect of fog in *Anna Christie* and the end of worldly suffering in death conveyed by the lifting of the fog in *Bound East for Cardiff* are here enriched by the overtone of moral catharsis.

#### VIII. The Morality Play.

*The Calms of Capricorn* also reveals some traditional features of the morality play. It offers a story of sin and retribution, and to a certain extent (mainly in its dramatic framework) it treats its theme in a quasi-allegorical fashion. Simon tells Ethan not to call him Father but "brother--or simply, man" (p. 18), and he himself addresses Ethan as "man" (p. 19). Nancy's question to Ethan before their suicide ("Up those stairs?" p. 122) and Ethan's answer ("Yes, that must be the way") are fraught with allegorical overtones of the thorny path to salvation. Even the names of several of the characters are chosen to suggest a trait or fate (Payne, Graber, Leda, Dickey, Hull). Yet this aspect of Everyman's quest is not of the medieval type; it is more characteristic of the dramatic vision of a certain sector of the Symbolist Movement (Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird*), and of the late Strindberg (*To Damascus, A Dream Play*), or indeed of the concept of O'Neill's *Dynamo* and *Days Without End*. The bulk and basis of *The Calms of Capricorn*, however, is not allegorical.

#### IX. Chekhov.

The Chekhovian dramatic model did not leave the dramaturgy of *The Calms of Capricorn* untouched either. A thematic link is forged between the attitudes of Firs in *The Cherry Orchard* and of Cato in O'Neill's play. Just as Firs considers the liberation of the serfs a most unfortunate event, Cato, the black servant of the Harfords, also deplors that Master Simon, a "most interfering man" (p. 5), has bought his freedom from slavery. Thus the motif crops up appropriately in the context of American history.

More important than this would seem to be a compositional similarity. The end of Act Three, Scene One, and the whole of Act Three, Scenes Two and Three of *The Calms of Capricorn* are written in the short story-oriented mosaic pattern, a version of which

is so typical of Chekhov's late plays, where attention shifts from one mosaic piece to the other with a sudden, revealing turn. The short story-like quality of this sort of fragmentation is especially clear in Act Three's third scene, where Warren reproaches Graber for cheating against himself in their card game and losing deliberately (p. 82). When, despite his wish to lose the money he has stolen for Leda and thereby free his conscience, Graber has cleaned Warren out of all his cash, he offers to give it all back so that Warren may have a chance to win (p. 88). The gesture anticipates Erie's in O'Neill's late, short story-slanted one-acter, *Hughie*, in which Erie regains his shattered self-confidence by staking the impecunious Night Clerk in a game of craps, and then, cheating against both himself and the Clerk, emerging the "winner." Whether the dramatic figure becomes a loser or a winner, staking the adversary in a make-believe game is tantamount to the dramatization of a short story-like turn.

In *The Calms of Capricorn* O'Neill employs the Chekhovian mosaic pattern with autonomy and independence. He uses the pattern--itself expressing capillary oscillations in a state of benumbed hibernation between past and future; in fact, in a world historical calm--to depict an actual calm. The mosaic design befits the dramatic situation in the bulk of Act Three, but the increasingly nerve-racking oppressiveness of the situation does not call for, and does not allow, the coupling of the design with an elegiac, Chekhovian, lyric mood. (Such a matching *is* in order, and takes place, in *Hughie* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*.) In *The Calms of Capricorn* the oscillation of the design is hysterically heated, incessantly increases, reaches the level of a sort of vibrating, hectic simultaneism, and culminates in the murder of Captain Payne.

#### X. Strindberg.

Strindberg is another tutelary figure over the dramatic world of *The Calms of Capricorn*. The relationship between Nancy and Captain Payne, her instinctive joy at her husband's indisposition and illness, the prolongation of the captain's death and the cruelty of the unsatisfied and emotionally starved wife evoke the grimly surcharged atmosphere of Strindberg's *The Dance of Death*, even if Nancy is a much more impressionable and vascillating character than Alice, and Payne lacks the vindictive viciousness of Edgar. The war of the sexes (enlarged to a cosmic level in Ethan's consideration of the sea as feminine); the disturbances of alienated egos; the symptoms of monomania; the rapid rise of hysteria; love and hate as the two sides of the same psychological make-up; emotional instability; life as stations of a desperate quest; elements of superstitious "super-naturalism;" dramatic structure as a dynamic chain-reaction of scenes--all are indicative of the haunting spirit of O'Neill's revered Swedish predecessor in whose mirror, for social, psychological and biographical reasons, the American dramatist beheld his own reflection. This, of course, implied and required a thorough modification of the Strindbergian model: O'Neill's characters in the cycle are not rooted in the metaphysical myth of Swedenborgian transcendence, but are firmly anchored in American reality.

#### XI. Expressionist Drama.

The feverish increase of tension so characteristic of Kaiser's expressionist drama, *From Morn to Midnight*, and of O'Neill's expressionistic plays--*The Emperor Jones* (the crescendo of the *basso ostinato* of the tom-tom), *The Hairy Ape* (mechanical noise effects), and *Lazarus Laughed* (Lazarus' laughter)--is unmistakably present in *The Calms of Capricorn* (the agitated surge of emotions in Act III, the goldseekers' song, the sea chanty whose expressive force is more dynamic than that of the Negro chant in the early and fine mood piece, *The Moon of the Caribbees*). The wild undulation of stepped up emotions, however, has a restricted application and a modern realistic motivation in the conditions of the more and more disquieting calm; the goldseekers' song is used

functionally as the leitmotif of ambitious possession, and is dramatically counterpointed by the sea chanty, the ingeniously composed counter-voice of dispossession by the capricious power of the sea and the wind.

### XII. Absurdist Drama.

In short but significant scenes, *The Calms of Capricorn* sometimes anticipates the Theatre of the Absurd. A case in point is the closing of Act Three. In the last phase of a successful, if dangerous, passage made in record time, and after a long spell of calm followed by a favorable wind, Ethan boasts of giving up the sea, and the wind suddenly stops blowing. It is only a streak of calm; Ethan commands the wind to return, and it does. As Ethan himself admits, a momentary calm is not unusual in the region. The moment of calm, however, poses a critical threat. Nancy flies into Ethan's arms, terrified. Reverend Dickey, who not long before had expressed the view that it would be difficult to justify God's means (p. 100), for a moment doubts God (p. 104). Looking at Nancy and Ethan together, Sara feels a "chill of horror" (p. 104) run down her spine. At Nancy's touch, Sara involuntarily shrinks. Still frightened, Nancy admits: "For a moment in Ethan's arms then I felt so guilty. It was absurd" (p. 103). The mingling of the playful and the threatening, the mixing of the farcical and the fateful, the alloying of the natural and the unnatural, the rational and the irrational, the merry and the satirical, the light and the serious, the purposeful and the purposeless: these *are* absurd, and open up a grimly grotesque vista beyond the passing sense of nonsense. Naming absurdity, O'Neill precedes the theatre that adopted that word as its name. Evoking absurdity, as he does in the final dialogue between Sara and Nancy, he anticipates it. (The lines follow Nancy's statement that her momentary feeling of guilt was "absurd.")

Sara: Of course, dear! Why in the world would you feel  
guilty? You are lovers and love is worth all it costs!

Nancy: Of course! (p. 104)

In view of the fact that Nancy murdered her husband, and made *him* pay for *her* love, the passage reads like an absurd parody of Nora's self-sacrificing love in *A Touch of the Poet* and of Sara's loving care for Simon after her unselfish resignation of possessions in *More Stately Mansions*.

The ultimate preservation in Ethan and Nancy of the moral core of personality, with its discriminating ability and disposing power, suggests that the fleeting moment of absurdity in *The Calms of Capricorn* points more to Dürrenmatt's and Albee's use of absurd effect than to Pinter's or Beckett's brand of absurdism. The aspect of absurdity in O'Neill's play modernizes, rather than dissolves, the traditional forms of realism.

### Conclusions.

O'Neill's contact with dramatic movements after him explains the nature of his relationship with dramatic trends and models before him. As in the former case there can be no question of imitation, in the latter case there is no question of any "borrowing" or mechanical "influence" either. Similarities are the manifestations of typological parallels and are based in parallel historical developments. The European dramatic models from Ibsen to Dürrenmatt which crop up in the dramatic texture of *The Calms of Capricorn* reflect, cope with, and crystallize various aspects of, and reactions to, alienation, so it is quite natural that they should appear in that comprehensive and thoroughgoing analysis of alienation which O'Neill attempts in his cycle plays. O'Neill's originality does not lie in avoiding or evading these models, but in transforming them by subjecting them to the requirements of the crucial conflict



treated in the cycle of possessors self-dispossessed, a systematic analysis of why the "Harfords are aliens" (p. 13), why it is that they, like Yank in *The Hairy Ape*, "can never belong" (p. 13). O'Neill's dramaturgy did not dodge the problem, but naturalized it--Americanized it.

All the same, it was impossible to keep twelve different dramatic models within the dramatic mold of a single play. It was inevitable that they should pull the play in twelve different directions, and the result was an epic, indeed a novelistic, broadening of the original idea. The twelve divergent kinds of drama incorporated in *The Calms of Capricorn* needed twelve diverse sorts of motivation. The well-made melodrama could not be launched in the same way as the Shavian comedy. The Shakespearean type of drama speeds up action, while the Ibsenesque kind of analytical submersion into the past holds it back. The expressionistic impulse drives the plot forward; whereas the symbolist framework is much more static in character, embodies a reflective pause, and carves out appropriate scenes for its contemplative attitude.

It follows from the foregoing that while *The Calms of Capricorn* displays points of contact with a great variety of dramas by European playwrights as well as by O'Neill, it shows the greatest affinity with the other cycle plays whose novelistic dimensions and proportions it shares. Like most of the dramas in the cycle, *The Calms of Capricorn* had novelistic ambitions. Even the embryonic rough draft of the play ("developed" from the scenario), which is no more than a dramatic sketch, runs to 124 pages. Like the other cycle plays, it contains several stories told by the protagonists (e.g. Leda's life story which she summarized for Nancy) and certain narrative reminiscences are engendered by the cyclic pattern. Catching the ship bound for San Francisco occasions Sara to remember how her father had nearly missed the boat when he was coming to America from Ireland. Her words are prompted more by the structure of the cycle, and the epic milieu of the situation, than by her character, as they are at two other moments. Ethan's duel with the sea makes her remember what a great duellist her father had been. When Honey tells her that Wolfe keeps winning in his card game and suggests that she persuade him to start a gambling house, she is reminded of her father having been a great gambler, though one who always lost. "It would be only right for Wolfe to win it back" (p. 118), she comments.

Like Sara, O'Neill himself also has a cyclic memory. His is fearfully competent and comprehensive, approaching an epic totality of objects. References to possessing the quality of "a touch of the poet" link *The Calms of Capricorn* with *A Touch of the Poet* and *More Stately Mansions* in a closely-knit network. Elizabeth uses the bed-trick with Jonathan in *The Calms of Capricorn* as did Sara with Simon in the plot of *A Touch of the Poet* and as Nora had done with Con Melody in the prehistory of the same play. Warren first pretends that he will not agree to the marriage of Elizabeth with Jonathan, but, being reminded that it is too late to think of waiting, at once understands "the hot blood of youth" (p. 102) and, rather than cursing Elizabeth, gives his consent cheerfully--an attitude that strikes the reader as a parody of Con Melody's stance at the end of *A Touch of the Poet*. Elizabeth's idea that she, Nancy and Leda should be like sisters constitutes a cyclic continuity, a rebirth and rejuvenation of the three sisters who were to appear in *The Greed of the Meek*, *And Give Me Death* and *A Touch of the Poet*, and were supposed to die in *More Stately Mansions*.

In these cases the cyclic pattern relates existing scenes in separate plays and thereby reinforces the epic tendency of objective totality in the sequence. In other cases the compositional claims of the cycle create new scenes whose main function is to establish and safeguard narrative continuity. This is the role of the first two scenes in *The Calms of Capricorn*, which are set on Harford's farm, form part of the play's multiple exposition, carry on the story of the epilogue of *More Stately Mansions*, and correspond to Scene One of *its* full typescript, which connects the last scene of *A Touch of the Poet* to the beginning of the action of *More Stately Mansions*. The

start of the main plot is preceded both in *More Stately Mansions* (Scene One in the typescript) and in *The Calms of Capricorn* (Scene Two) by a wake (Cornelius Melody's and Simon Harford's, respectively). Connective scenes of this sort also fulfill the function of epic episodes, as does a deviation of the action even within the main body of *The Calms of Capricorn*, where Sara first intends to marry Ethan to Elizabeth (the future sea captain to the rich shipowner's daughter), but later Ethan marries Nancy, and it is Jonathan who takes Elizabeth as wife. Such episodic detours are more common in novels than in plays. The swarming out of motifs, motives, scenes, strands, networks and generations from the mold of *The Calms of Capricorn* to the rest of the cycle was so uncontrollable that the drama shifted from the position of first play in the early four-unit cycle to the rung of seventh play in the final eleven-unit project.<sup>6</sup>

Thus to the centrifugal energy of twelve European dramatic models was added the novelistic stretching force and explosive power of cyclic expansion. That was obviously too much to cope with. O'Neill foresaw the possibility that his work might remain incomplete. Sara's words about Simon's book ring prophetic: "He'll never finish it, I'm thinking. He's all the time finding more he wants to put in it. It'll be in fifty volumes if he ever does finish it" (p. 10). *The Calms of Capricorn* is not heterogeneous because it is unfinished; rather, it is unfinished because it is heterogeneous. The<sup>7</sup> novelistic expansion and diversity of the raw material proved dramatically unwieldy.

But even in its incomplete version, the play--like the whole cycle it belongs to--is an invaluable document of the heroic--indeed, the epic--wrestling of America's foremost dramatist with the generic consequences of alienation. Without this experience, he could hardly have created his late masterpieces.

--Peter Egri

## LAWSON & COLE REVISITED

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of Eugene O'Neill's death on November 27, 1953, it might be of at least historical interest to exhume and review one of the first major public responses to that event—"The Tragedy of Eugene O'Neill," an article by playwright John Howard Lawson that appeared in the March 1954 edition of *Masses and Mainstream* (pp. 7-18)—and a response to the article by film writer and playwright Lester Cole that appeared three issues later (June 1954), coupled with a reply by Lawson under the collective title "Two Views on O'Neill" (pp. 56-63).<sup>1</sup> The triptych

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Donald Gallup, "Introductory Note" to *The Calms of Capricorn*, pp. vii-xiii.

<sup>7</sup>It would, of course, be totally unjustified to blame O'Neill for the heterogeneity and raw quality of *The Calms of Capricorn*. After all, he never claimed to have finished the play, and was cautious enough to insert a leaf even into the much more accomplished typescript of *More Stately Mansions* with the warning words: "Unfinished Work. This script to be destroyed in case of my death! Eugene O'Neill." [Cf. Donald Gallup, "Prefatory Note" to Eugene O'Neill's *More Stately Mansions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), p. x.] O'Neill philology was honor-bound to disregard this warning and to make even the unfinished plays accessible for research, interpretation and appreciation.

<sup>1</sup>*Masses and Mainstream*, a combination of two earlier periodicals, *New Masses* and *Mainstream*, appeared monthly from March 1948 to August 1956, from offices at 832 Broadway. Marxist in emphasis, it provided a forum for the work and views of "progressive" writers, scholars and critics, and Lawson (along with W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson) was on its board of twenty-eight Contributing Editors. Readers wisely choosing to consult the complete works here summarized will find the Lawson essay in Vol. 7, No. 3, and the Cole-Lawson exchange in Vol. 7, No. 6.

does not provide a complete assessment of the O'Neill legacy—none *could* as early as 1954—nor do its authors, given their political stance, offer unbiased judgments. (Myron Matlaw, in his *Modern World Drama: An Encyclopedia* [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972, p. 452], describes Lawson as "intransigent in his Marxist commitment.") But the Lawson article, and the exchange which arose from it, do give us a representative view of the mixed feelings toward O'Neill of the "progressive" segment of the American artistic community at the time of his death.

#### I. "The Tragedy of Eugene O'Neill."

Lawson's opening paragraphs, which explain his title and clarify his point of view, deserve quoting in full, since it is on their foundation that his subsequent survey of the then-known works of O'Neill is based.

When Eugene O'Neill died last December [sic], the time of his greatest fame and influence was so long past that it was half-forgotten. There were respectful obituary notices. The newspapers gloated over the broken remnants of his personal life—the suicide of his eldest son, his rift with his daughter Oona on account of her marriage to Charles Chaplin, his quarrels with his third wife, his painful illness. There was journalistic speculation concerning the state of his finances.

These ghoulish comments express the attitude of our society to a richly endowed and sensitive artist. The society which had hailed O'Neill as a monumental genius was wholly insensitive to the real tragedy of his career. The truth is that when O'Neill the man died, O'Neill the artist had been dead for twenty years. The more profound truth is that the responsibility for the tragedy lies with the society which damaged his art and paralyzed his creative will.

O'Neill was destroyed because his passionate quest for creative values could not be satisfied within the limits of the dominant culture. Yet he could not go beyond these limits because he was bound by the viewpoint of the class that destroyed him. The very intensity of his artistic feeling betrayed him into regarding art as a thing-in-itself and the artist as a lonely pilgrim seeking truth and beauty outside the "vulgarity" of contemporary life.

O'Neill aspired to creative freedom. Yet his deepest difficulty lay in his inability to think independently. His ideas tended increasingly to conform to current fashions in bourgeois philosophy. At the same time he retained his creative zeal, his desire for artistic fulfillment.

When the contradiction between his sterile mode of thought and his passion for creative life became intolerable, he lost the power to communicate with people. After 1934 he wrote nothing that was published or produced on Broadway except the prolix allegory of despair *The Iceman Cometh*. Yet throughout these years he worked feverishly, writing much that he destroyed, making large plans that were never realized. In spite of a muscular disorder that made it impossible for him to write, he continued work almost to the day of his death. He left at least three plays in manuscript.

In the 1920's, O'Neill won three Pulitzer prizes, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1936. But the great lesson of his life and art lies in his failure. For almost two decades, in one of the most portentous periods of history, he was wholly isolated. No one can measure the pain of his loneliness or the bitterness of his unceasing struggle to create.

Whether or not O'Neill's plays will be treasured by posterity, his tragedy deserves to be remembered as a symbol of the fate of the artist who loses contact with the living forces of his time. The roots of his failure may be traced in the whole course of his work. (pp. 7-8)

Given the unavailability in 1954 of *Long Day's Journey*, of *Moon for the Misbegotten*, and of the two plays of the uncompleted cycle that were later published and produced; and given the comparative obscurity of the playwright at the time of his passing, it is not surprising that a critic, at least a Marxist critic, would see O'Neill as the protagonist of his own greatest tragedy. (Nor would a knowledge of those works necessarily have affected Lawson's attitude, since they *too* "conform ... to bourgeois philosophy.") Had they been available, however, a less "intransigent" reader might have seen them as a vindication of O'Neill's creative path—as evidence that "isolation" was the source, not of his tragedy, but of his triumph, since two of them deal pointedly with the socio-economic facts of American life past and present, and the other two wrestle relentlessly with his "family ghosts" and far transcend any one family or any one ideology. But it is best, herein, to relinquish later-won knowledge and note that Lawson at least treats O'Neill sympathetically and sees him more as victim than as villain. (In Cole's hands, the emphasis will be reversed.)

Lawson divides the then-known O'Neill oeuvre into four periods—

1915-1919: dramatic apprenticeship; the short plays of the sea;

1920-1924: experimentation with social themes;

1925-1928: metaphysical speculation; and

1929-1934: religious mysticism—

and then discusses at length a number of the major plays from each period, blending positive and negative attitudes, but largely tracing what his introduction calls "the roots of [O'Neill's] failure" (p. 8).

The one-act sea plays of the first period are praised for their introduction of new subject matter to American drama and of a realism "that exerted a strong influence ... especially on the working-class plays of the thirties" (p. 8). Of the two he mentions specifically, Lawson prefers *The Long Voyage Home* to the "chaotic ribaldry" of *The Moon of the Caribbees*, since the later play "achieves the proportions of tragedy because it has social meaning" and in it "O'Neill reflected the feeling of anger and betrayal, the increasing social consciousness, the search for new values that stirred American intellectuals in the time of the Versailles conference and the Palmer raids" (p. 8). The quotation evidences one of the greatest values of Lawson's essay, his relation of plays to major events that occurred at the time of their creation. However, since it is hard to find all that Lawson does in the *text* of *The Long Voyage Home*, one wonders how much rereading preceded his assessment. Today, surely, *Moon* is far more highly valued than *Voyage*.

Of the plays of the second period, an era marked by "intense productivity, a bewildering diversity of styles and themes" (p. 8), and "prodigious energy" (p. 9), Lawson's approbation is increasingly qualified. *Beyond the Horizon* is praiseworthy for its adherence to "naturalistic method" and its "avoidance of theatrical contrivance" (p. 10), but it is also "a sort of confession, a troubled statement of the author's artistic dilemma" (p. 9), since Robert Mayo, "intellectual and dreamer" and the O'Neill in the play, "is incapable of solving the social situation in which he finds himself" (p. 9). Given the determinism inherent in Marxist belief, such a criticism of Robert's powerlessness is initially surprising—but not for long: Robert's "defeat is *subjective* and *psychological*" (p. 9, italics added), two words clearly anathema to "progressive" minds, which resist and decry "Freudian emphasis" (which, says Lawson, reveals O'Neill's desire "to escape from the class struggle") and resent the suggestion that "the intellectual is an ineffectual dreamer, while brutality and greed achieve practical results" (p. 10). (Again, one searches the script for corroboration. Certainly *both* Mayo brothers are "brutalized" by having made choices incompatible with their temperaments. But "practical results"? Where, in *Beyond the Horizon*, are they?)

Desiring "to avoid the fate that befell Robert Mayo," O'Neill turned directly to the "compelling social questions of the time" (p. 10) in his two expressionist works, *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*. Lawson approves of his wish "to find reality, to 'see the world'" (p. 10), but he is disturbed by the results. He relates the first play to the "reactionary drive that swept the United States in 1919 and 1920" (p. 10), and concludes that its "chauvinistic nonsense is based on theories that are still the stock-in-trade of apologists for imperialism" (p. 11); and he draws a parallel between Yank's search for belonging in the second play and Jones's flight through the jungle in the first:

The worker and the Negro are both "primitives." They turn away from the reality of class struggle to a half-animal acceptance of their own "inferiority." *The Hairy Ape* reveals a conflict in the author's mind which is far more dramatic than anything in his play—the struggle between a passionate love of humanity and an arid doctrine that regards the human personality as sex-ridden, retrogressive, incapable of rational action. (p. 12)

Three other plays from the second period are treated: *Anna Christie*, which, despite its "superficial realism," "fails to rise above the level of melodrama because it fails to explore the social forces underlying the action" (p. 12); *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, which, despite its superiority to *Jones* and *Ape* because it eschews the "exotic setting" of the former and the "abstract symbolism" of the latter, is undermined by its "dependence on a meretricious 'psychological' approach" (that word again! p. 12); and *Desire Under the Elms*, which begins promisingly with "emphasis on economic factors," "the pressures of an acquisitive society," but fails once that emphasis is "dissolved in the fury of a woman's 'acquisitive' love, which can find 'fulfillment' only in the murder of her child" (p. 13). Lawson deplores the "direction of O'Neill's dramatic thought" that the last play reveals: its "emphasis chiefly on passion and violence, as the only means by which the human personality can escape from the drabness of repressed and barren lives" (p. 13). This, plus the "influence of psychoanalysis" (p. 13) and a "contempt for women" (p. 11) that he finds emerging as early as *Beyond the Horizon*, tends to stifle any praise Lawson may have for the productive, thirteen-play second period. Actually, *Elms* doesn't fit the period as Lawson labels it, since it is his claim that *Chillun* constituted O'Neill's "last attempt to deal with a social theme" (p. 13).

The third period, comprising "a new quest, not for social reality, but for metaphysical certitude, for some sort of lyric affirmation of life" (pp. 13-14), is heralded by "two historical fantasies," *The Fountain* and *Marco Millions*, whose "complacent lyricism ... and ... dependence on lavish scenery seem to reflect the temporary 'stability' of the Coolidge period," a stability that O'Neill shared, having "won wealth and fame" (p. 14). (The tacit condemnation there—the inference, far stronger in Cole, that affirmation equals complacent complicity—is disquieting, as is the omission of any reference to the obvious social satire in the latter play.) *The Great God Brown* (1926) earns greater approval despite its "confused plot and pretentious use of masks," and Lawson perceptively delineates its parallels, as "autobiographical allegory," with *Beyond the Horizon*, Robert and Andrew Mayo reappearing, respectively, as Dion Anthony, the artist and intellectual, and William Brown, "the representative of the bourgeoisie" (p. 14). The play's prime merit, for Lawson, is its revelation "that O'Neill was still engaged in an agonized artistic struggle" (p. 14). While Anthony and Brown, as the "juggling of masks" suggests, are now, unlike the Mayos, "two aspects of the same personality" (a mirror, Lawson infers, of O'Neill's own inner state by 1925), Brown "is guilty because he is the representative of a society which kills the creative spirit," whereas Anthony, despite defeat, "is stronger even in his death than the complacent business man" (p. 14). And so the play, with its assertion of O'Neill's "faith in the creative personality" and its concluding "affirmation of the glory of life" (p. 14), "testifies to the urgency of O'Neill's search for affirmation, for faith in life and man" (p. 15).

"Faith," Lawson says, "can be achieved in two ways—through confidence in man's ability to shape his own destiny, or through reliance on supernatural power. O'Neill was approaching a decision between these two courses" (p. 15). And the "abstract quality" and the "lack of human warmth and concrete drama" in his next play, *Lazarus Laughed*, "make it evident that O'Neill was not able to envision man's hope in terms of contemporary social understanding" (p. 15). Having so chosen, O'Neill cannot retain the respect of his "progressive" assessor, and the remaining plays, until *Ice-man*, are accorded disdainful brevity. Nina Leeds, the "symbol of the life-spirit" in *Strange Interlude*, "is an unreal and passive figure. She is totally lacking in intellectual stature. Her secret thoughts are as dull as her drawing room conversation" (p. 15). The "startling change" from that play's "mood of resignation" to the "hysterical religiosity" and "evangelical fervor" of *Dynamo* is noted but not explained, though Lawson attributes O'Neill's subsequent "return to Freudian pessimism in *Mourning Becomes Electra*" to "the impact of the great depression and world crisis" after the stock market crash in the fall of 1929 (pp. 15-16). "In accepting the cult of violence," says Lawson (in reference to the "abnormal passions and wanton murders" in the trilogy), "O'Neill acknowledges his defeat as an artist." And it is but a small step from the "sterile emotionalism" of *Mourning Becomes Electra* to the "sterile placidity" of *Ah, Wilderness!*, in which "O'Neill seems to make his peace with the bourgeoisie" (p. 16). But *Days Without End*, where he "turned again to the consolations of religion," showed that, although "O'Neill's art was dying," "his troubled spirit could not rest" (p. 16).

"Then came the long years of isolation. O'Neill was silent during almost two decades" (p. 16). But silence, Lawson implies, was preferable to the activities of several of O'Neill's contemporaries:

He could not become a facile political propagandist like T. S. Eliot, or a commercial hack like John Steinbeck, or an open advocate of reaction like John Dos Passos. (p. 16)

Throughout his analyses, Lawson weaves a course among three entities—the man, the artist, and the work—and the distinctions are nowhere clearer than in his lengthy treatment (pp. 16-18) of the only post-1930's play produced during the author's lifetime, *The Iceman Cometh*. As a "confession torn from the author's soul" (p. 16), it reveals that O'Neill "the *artist* remains incorruptible" because he "continues to grapple with real problems of life" (p. 17, italics added). But as a work it is "an incredibly bad play" because O'Neill the *man* "has lost all real contact with life" (p. 17)—specifically with proletarian life, despite his setting the play in the 1912 period, during which "he himself felt the stirrings of working class protest" that had been "the source of his early strength as a writer" (p. 18). As a negative act, an exposé of "bourgeois decadence," it succeeds, Hickey being "obviously the descendant of 'the Great God' William A. Brown, the representative of the bourgeoisie whose 'way of life' leads to murder" (p. 17). But it lacks any counterpoise of affirmation because the play's "radicals" are "fantastically unreal":

these neurotic, hysterical "anarcho-syndicalists" bear no relationship to the historical development of working class activity in the year in which Debs received almost a million votes for President of the United States. (p. 17)

And so Lawson, who respects the artist, and pities the man, but deplores the work because it endorses "the sterile ideology of the bourgeoisie," offers the "tragedy" of O'Neill as "a lesson and a warning to the artist, and especially to the young artist beginning work under the increasing pressure for conformity and formalism" (p. 18).

## II. "Two Views on O'Neill."

Lawson's essay suggests that there is some accuracy in David Daiches' claim that "Marxist criticism has been on the whole ... content either to explain literature in

terms of its social origins, or to account for a writer's attitude in terms of his position in the class structure, or to pass judgment on a given work or writer in accordance with the tendency it or he displays to favor the political and economic cause favored by the critic."<sup>2</sup> Still, he must be admired for sparing the playwright from the brush with which he tars his plays—for acknowledging that O'Neill had been, and had remained, "a richly endowed and sensitive artist" (p. 7). The same can not be said of Lester Cole, who came, three issues later, like Antony after Brutus (but with less devious intent than his Shakespearean counterpart), to bury O'Neill, not to praise him. Cole admires the "penetrating analysis" of O'Neill's plays that Lawson's "critical scalpel" had produced (p. 56), but he takes sharp exception to Lawson's distinction between artifact and artist, scorns his failure to be as "objective" about the latter as he is about the former, and challenges his contention that O'Neill's fate can be called tragic. Unfortunately, Cole has no critical scalpel of his own: nowhere in his 4½-page response does he refer to a single play, except in a snide aside about whether "Mourning ... becomes *Masses and Mainstream*" (p. 60)! In its place he draws repeatedly from a quiver of barbed rhetorical questions that provide more bile than illumination as he attempts to refute Lawson's "sympathetic" treatment of O'Neill as man and artist. Take, for instance, his response to Lawson's assertion that O'Neill "remained incorruptible and therefore [continued] to grapple with the real problems of life": "is it possible that an artist can remain 'incorruptible' when all of his work is steeped in ideological corruption?" (p. 57) Then he tackles Lawson's praise of O'Neill's enduring sincerity: "who has not heard 'sincerity' claimed for the author of that once widely-read autobiography, *Mein Kampf*?" (p. 59) His basic disagreement, of course, is with Lawson's aforementioned distinction between man, artist and work: "can one separate the influence of his literary work from the man himself—much less from the artist in him?" (p. 58) And so he cannot, considering the man's financial success and the artist's literary prizes, share Lawson's sympathy for the pains that O'Neill suffered in his later years:

Why sing sad songs for him who, surrounded by his trophies and rich rewards, suffered "spiritual" discomfort while continuing, actively or passively, to defend the *status quo*, explaining little else than its inevitability in images of God, Freud and "dat ole davil sea"? (p. 60)

Not only did O'Neill defend the status quo, says Cole; "he gave the American people not one hero with whom they can identify, not one character in whom they can find the representation of the best of themselves, in whom they can find the inspiration to achieve that which will make them happier, stronger, more purposeful" (p. 60). How fortunate for America that Cole's views sound so quaintly dated; and how fortunate for its drama that O'Neill did *not* subscribe to his detractor's socialist-realist criteria for artistic merit!

Cole's only really plausible or rational challenge is to Lawson's charge that O'Neill "lost the power to communicate" because his "passion for creative life" overruled his tendency "to conform to current fashions in bourgeois philosophy." On the contrary, says Cole, O'Neill never changed, never rejected "the weight-removing embrace of the Church and that latter day Saint of the Libido, S. Freud" (p. 58). It was bourgeois thought that changed, and it was O'Neill's "failure to continue the tendency to conform which did him in."

With the depression of 1932 ... the problem of man's relationship to man came to the fore with a vengeance. There was lessening interest in man's relationship to God among cut-rate theatre ticket buyers, who were seeking answers to the deep contradictions in their lives, who wanted solutions to crucial problems not of their *id*, but of the way out of social crisis. O'Neill, steeping himself ever deeper in mysticism ... moved farther and farther away

<sup>2</sup> *Critical Approaches to Literature* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1956), p. 374.

from the "current bourgeois fashions" to be replaced by the Sidney Howards, the Maxwell Andersons, the Steinbecks and those who became aware of the existence of the working class in the scheme of things. (p. 59)

The *tragedy* of Eugene O'Neill? No, says Cole. Zola, Gorky, Ibsen, Shaw, O'Casey, Twain: the deaths of such artists were felt by people as tragedy "because the art of those men was indivisible from their life," and because each "identifies himself either by his actions or through his characters with the hopes and aspirations, the joys and agonies which are both his and theirs" (p. 60). But O'Neill, both divided within himself and alienated from the working class whose cause his earliest works had espoused, is not in their company. (Of course this is hardly a refutation of Lawson, who was referring to the tragedy of O'Neill's *career*, not of his *death*!)

Ironically, so vicious is Cole's blind and unsupported attack that Lawson, in responding to it, is forced to become even more O'Neill's apologist than he had been three months earlier! He is not too "intransigent" to disagree with Cole's gleeful expectation that O'Neill would soon become a mere "footnote in the history of America's dramatic literature" (p. 56). On the contrary, says Lawson, his "theatrical inventiveness" and "craftsmanship" deserve the attention and study of "progressive writers" (p. 63), and the body of his work has a complexity of tensions that it is the duty of criticism to clarify and not (like Cole) deny or overlook:

When we examine O'Neill's career in terms of class pressures and the shifting balance of class forces, we cannot regard him simply as a "defender of the *status quo*," nor can we ignore the contradictions and conflicts which are so subtly and richly expressed in his plays. (p. 62)

Given the venom in Cole's tirade, one must admire the grace and restraint of Lawson's reply. He simply says that Cole has "raised fundamental questions of theory and method in Marxist criticism" (p. 60) and that "there are grave weaknesses in the field of Marxist criticism in the United States" (p. 62). The two he mentions are "over-simplification" and a "doctrinaire or one-sided approach." Since he had already noted how Cole "*over-simplified* the system of ideas in O'Neill's works" and treated "*one-sidedly*" the concepts of "Mysticism, Freudianism, Godism" (Cole's phrase) in the plays (pp. 61 and 62, italics added), he makes tacitly clear what a splendid demonstration of both weaknesses Cole had himself provided! Cole's contribution to the debate is an embarrassment, but the initial Lawson essay, despite its inevitable incompleteness, deserves more attention than it has heretofore received.

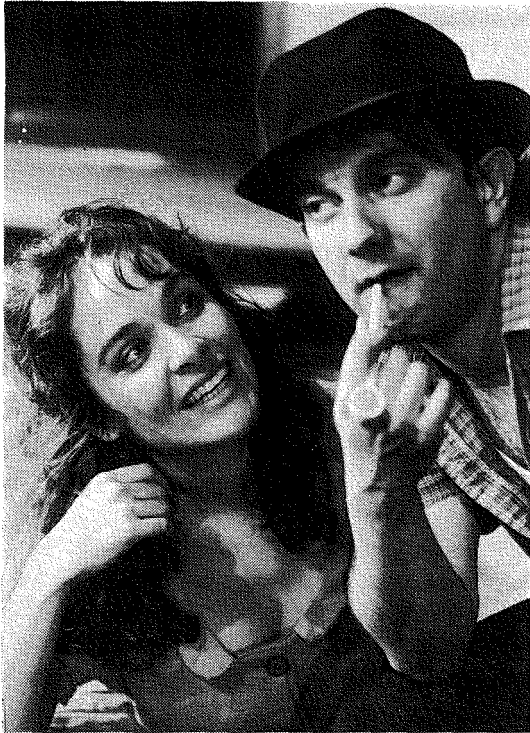
—Frederick C. Wilkins

## REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

1. *A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN*, dir. Jeff Perry. Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago, IL, May 11 - June 5, 1983.

The decision by Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre Company to offer *A Moon for the Misbegotten* in repertory was a brave and rewarding one. O'Neill's epilogue to *Long Day's Journey Into Night* and elegy for his brother Jamie has had a very uneven critical reception, at least in this country. The play premiered in Columbus, Ohio, on Feb. 20, 1947, and closed the following month, on March 29, after a tour of Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. Comments by Columbus reviewers on opening night are representative of the emphatic "all or nothing" reactions the play has elicited. Bud Kissel, for example, christened it "*Tobacco Road* with an all-Irish cast" and felt the actors had wasted their time on an "unimportant play" in which "action occurs only when somebody picks up a bottle and drinks" (*Columbus Citizen*, Feb. 21, 1947). Diametrically opposed was Mary McGavran, who believed





Steppenwolf's Hogans: Moira Harris & Alan Wilder. Photos on 24-25 by Lisa Ebricht.

revival on Broadway for the 1973-74 season, starring Colleen Dewhurst and Jason Robards, was greeted with raves, the first major production in the United States to garner uniformly positive reviews.

Why has *A Moon for the Misbegotten* elicited such diverse reactions? One reason concerns the curious blend of comedy and tragedy that infuses the play. Act I is entirely broad comedy: the rapier wit of Phil and Josie as they battle each other, followed by the verbal slaying of Harder as father and daughter join forces to vanquish this figurehead of Standard Oil aristocracy in the name of their pigs' territorial rights. As staged by Steppenwolf, the barnyard scene captured exactly the absurd, posturing tone of the mock-epic, and I found myself thinking of Chaucer's "Nun's Priest's Tale," which I haven't read for years. Steppenwolf's masterful handling of Act I showed unmistakably the acute sense for the comic that O'Neill possessed.

Just as the perennial problem in staging *Desire Under the Elms* concerns the sinister and maternal elms that rest their sagging breasts on the Cabot farm, so the inevitable difficulty in casting *Moon* is Josie, that oversized, club-wielding female Hercules who is both farm-girl and saint. Mary Welch, who played Josie in the 1947 production, recollected O'Neill's willingness to overlook his own impossible specifications for Josie—nearly six feet tall, one hundred eighty pounds, huge warm breasts, stronger than two men but "all woman"—and the dramatist's feeling that the ability to capture Josie's emotional

*Moon* "represents all the art that is theatre" and showed O'Neill's genius for "stripping the comic mask from life and revealing it naked and afraid" (Columbus *Ohio State Journal*, Feb. 21, 1947). Being banned in Pittsburgh as a slander on motherhood did little to enhance the play's reputation, and its Broadway debut was postponed for a decade. Though *Moon* achieved critical acclaim in always-sympathetic Stockholm in 1953, when it was finally produced in New York in 1957, the venture was again ill-fated. While Richard Watts found it "moving and shattering ... [a] haunting emotional experience, further proving O'Neill was a titan of the theatre" (*New York Post*, May 3, 1957), his was the minority view. Far more common were the verdicts of Brooks Atkinson—"prolix and uneventful and tired" (*New York Times*, May 3, 1957)—and Walter Kerr—"O'Neill seems to have lost his sense of the theatre" (*New York Herald-Tribune*, May 3, 1957). *Moon's*



Rick Snyder (Jim) with Harris & Wilder.

quality was more important than the size of the actress playing the part. Steppenwolf also disregarded O'Neill's directions, and Moira Harris's authentic Irish brogue and touching mask of vulnerable invincibility more than made up for her being an average-sized woman endowed with less than spectacular breasts. Barefoot, ragged, feisty and capable, she never faltered for three hours. Josie is O'Neill's most demanding female role—I say that in full awareness that many will ask, "What about Mary Tyrone?"—because she must be so many contradictions at once: funny, serious; ashamed, proud; ordinary, symbolic; lusty, maternal; whore, virgin. Harris's Josie was both individual and symbol. Thus, her pathetic attempts to make herself beautiful for her date with Jim at the beginning of Act II are typical and completely believable; she is every woman trying to look her best. Yet later in the play she is also Woman, who can offer Tyrone the peace and absolution he craves.



Above & below: Josie (Harris) & Jim (Snyder).

Alan Wilder as Phil Hogan, a mixture of James Tyrone, Sr. and Con Melody, was a worthy opponent for Harris's Josie, convincingly combining his desire to be his daughter's boss with a grudging admiration for her because he fails so completely. Josie and Phil's mutual insults must be acid and barbed to show their verbal acumen, yet the tone must be sufficiently light to reflect the great fun they are having. They must make it clear that their exchanges are a ritual of their everyday life:



HOGAN: A fine curse God put on me when he gave me a daughter as big and strong as a bull, and as vicious and disrespectful. *(Suddenly his eyes twinkle and he grins admiringly)* Be God, look at you standing there with the club! If you ain't the damnedest daughter in Connecticut, who is? *(He chuckles and sits on the boulder again)*

JOSIE: *(Laughs and sits on the steps, putting the club away)* And if you ain't the damnedest father in Connecticut, who is?

Josie and Phil are two of a kind, instinctively understanding each other:

HOGAN: Sure, you're strong enough to reform [Tyrone]. A taste of that club you've got, when he came home to you paralyzed; and in a few weeks you'd have him a dirty prohibitionist.

JOSIE: *(Seriously)* It's true, if I was his wife, I'd cure him of drinking himself to death, if I had to kill him.

Steppenwolf's Josie and Phil worked so well together, in fact, that I realized *they* are two of a kind, not Josie and Jim, as critics are so fond of pointing out. Moreover, watching this production made me realize that Jim Tyrone is *not* the central character, nor is he even the second most important; those roles are filled by Josie and Phil. We can feel immense pity for Jim, but our admiration and interest must go to father and daughter. Jim is merely a catalyst for Josie; he comes into the play with no hope of change or dramatic development. We do not expect character development in Hamlet's father, and the same is true with Tyrone. He is static—and well he should be, because he is dead, like the ghosts he talks about so often. In Josie's own words, he is "a dead man walking behind his own coffin." Rick Snyder delivered a moving performance as Tyrone, combining banter and despair in equal measure. The most effective scene, in retrospect at least, occurs in Act I when we see how immediately Jim "belongs" in the company of Josie and her father; he speaks their language, he possesses their verbal acuity and their sense of humor. But it is all in vain. He has simply come too late.

Tom Irwin (Harder) was perfect as the stuffy, impeccably jodhpur-clad aristocrat whose "*four undergraduate years will always be for him the most significant of his life.*" Irwin fulfilled O'Neill's requirements exactly—pudgy, immature, lethargic, a bit stupid—and Josie and Phil simply overwhelm him with their indignant accusations that his pond is a health hazard to their pigs, who are dying by the score of pneumonia and cholera. Tyrone's action throughout this scene is emblematic of his position throughout the play: hidden in the ramshackle farmhouse, he watches, clutching his drink, laughing, but not participating—an observer only, detached and apart. Indeed, he has an air of detachment throughout *Moon*: *he* knows how it will end.

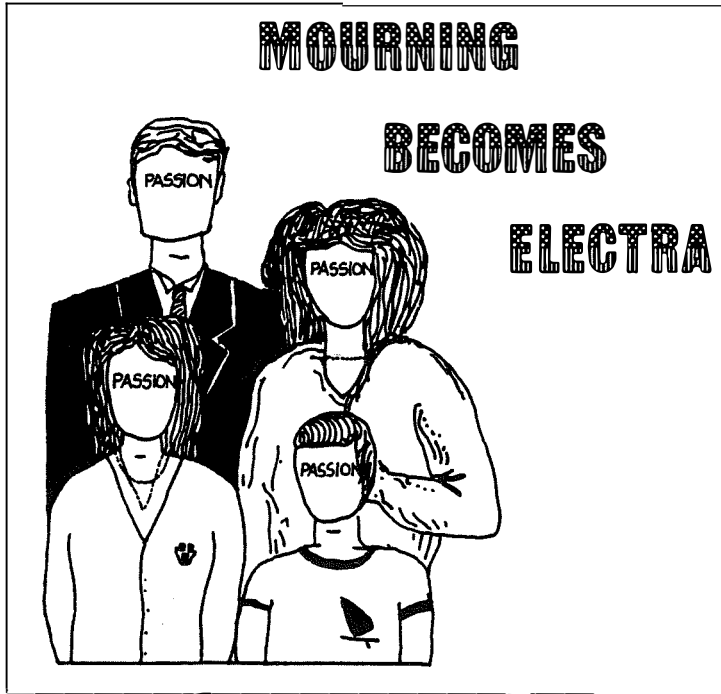
Deb Gohr's set was faithful to O'Neill's directions, and the dilapidated farmhouse was a stark reminder of the poverty in which Josie and her father live. Most effective, however, was Steppenwolf's use of a train whistle to indicate those times when Jim is not in the present but is a ghost haunting the past, when he is in the train with a blonde pig while his mother's body is "in the baggage car ahead." The train whistle is first used at the very end of Act II. Josie is in the house getting whiskey; Tyrone waits alone in the darkness outside. Trying to light a match for a smoke, he shakily succeeds at last, and at that instant—his face illuminated and tortured—the train whistle sounds. We see his face for only a split second, then the match goes out and the train whistle stops. It was a breathtaking moment, absolutely riveting.

—Susan H. Tuck

2. *MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA*, dir. Jonathan Magaril. The Harvard-Radcliffe Summer Theatre, Loeb Drama Center, Cambridge, MA, July 20-31, 1983.

When the cats of Robert Brustein's American Repertory Theatre vacate Harvard's Loeb Drama Center for the summer months, the undergraduate mice have their day—and the day they had with *Mourning Becomes Electra*, in the "black box" behind the Loeb's mainstage, during the Boston area's hottest July on record, was itself something for the record books. Gone were the evocative Grecian columns of the Mannon house; gone, in fact, were all exterior settings except the last; gone was "Shenandoah"; gone were the Mannon portraits and all but one resemblance between living relatives (Ezra and Adam being played by the same actor); gone were Amos Ames, Louisa Ames, her cousin Minnie, Josiah Borden, Emma Borden, Rev. Hills, Mrs. Hills, Dr. Blake, the Chantyman, Ira Mackel, Joe Silva and Abner Small; and gone were increasing numbers of the audience, especially at the two intermissions mercifully provided in the 3½-hour marathon which seemed, at one performance, to have been survived only by the cast and crew, one dutiful critic avec friend, and a convention of international visitors who, one hopes, knew nothing of the O'Neill original and understood little of what they heard.

Program illustration, Harvard-Radcliffe  
production of *Mourning Becomes Electra*.



Since there was no curtain, the spectator got an immediate inkling, even before the taped disco music that introduced each of the three "acts," that something was ludicrously amiss—if, that is, the star-spangled letters and cartoon figures on the program, and the somewhat incongruous slogan on the posters ("MEET THE MANNONS—AN ALL AMERICAN FAMILY!"), hadn't aroused his uneasiness before entering. Lynn Jeffries' set—the epitome of tacky minimalism—comprised three rooms with no walls between them, but with a few yellow flats at rear and sides, between which characters could enter and exit as though through doors. At our left, a kitchen: a table, four chairs, and a Kelvinator refrigerator with a table radio atop it (yes, something was definitely amiss!). At the center, a small student desk surmounted by a silvery, fluorescent desk lamp (the kind whose awkward, elbowed arm has aspirations

of being a dentist's drill), before which two sofas faced each other with just the ill will that Ezra Mannon would have felt if this were his study! And at the right, a smallish fourposter sans canopy but sporting a jolly blue spread. (And the minimalism grew: for the second "act," the flats and bed were gone; for the third, the kitchen was removed, along with the black coffin which had replaced the sofas at stage-center; and for the last scene (Act Four of *The Haunted*) everything was removed, effectively replaced by a web of bars and shadows created by lights above the room's grilled ceiling. (Ironically, perhaps, that last scene, when Oren Michels' lighting took over for Lynn Jeffries' grab bag of dormitory goodies, was the best of all.)

But could this have been the legendary House of Mannon? Kelvinators, radios and fluorescence at the end of the Civil War? Well, yes—and no. The Mannon house it was, but the director had chosen to move the play to the end of a different conflict—the Second World War—which we learn from the first voice we hear, a radio newscaster (hence the radio sur le fridge), who informs his Connecticut audience that a bomb just dropped on Japan has brought the war to an end. Would it had brought the *play* to an end (I almost wished the bomb had fallen on this fictional Connecticut!): it would have spared us innumerable incongruities. Not just temporal ones, like Adam Brant's 1945 idea of settling an affaire d'honneur with a duel (incongruous surely, in 1945, for anyone except a clipper skipper); but many later and totally inexplicable ones, like several characters' comments on the appearance of the dead Ezra Mannon as they stare down at the solid, opaque lid of his *closed coffin*! (And we *know* it's closed: Orin had banged his fist on it shortly before!)

Why the temporal transplantation? We've learned from many modern Shakespearean productions that such tampering can, if skillfully handled, have two values: it can suggest the universality of the story and characters, and it can make the dramatized conflicts more accessible to contemporary playgoers who are ignorant of history and leery about "the classics." Indeed, O'Neill's trilogy had *itself* been a masterly act of transplantation. But in this instance there was no new illumination, and the play, which was already a step down from its Aeschylean prototype, sank to the level of a semi-serious sitcom. (One assumes that the choice was dictated by the production's miniscule budget.)

Take Lavinia. O'Neill's heroine, when first seen, is dressed in black, looks older

than her twenty-three years, is stiff of movement and grim of speech, and consciously avoids any "feminine allurements" in the mask-like expression of her face. But the Lavinia of Amy Brenneman, who is the first character we meet in this pared-down production, looks younger than her years. Seated at the kitchen table, dressed in a white blouse, beige bermudas, white bobbysocks and loafers, she describes, in an interpolated speech, the members of the family by likening them to a group of utensils that lie before her: a large metal peppermill with the mien of a Teutonic helmet (Ezra), a small glass salt shaker (Orin), a wooden rolling pin (Christine), and a knife (herself). Clever (except for the fear it aroused that we were in for 3½ hours of story theatre), but wrong. Lavinia holds things in; she keeps as tight a rein on her feelings as on her hair; she would never treat her troubles with sardonic wit. (And certainly, even in soliloquy, she would not resort to visual aids!) Where was "the pride of the Mannons," of which Vinnie has more than her share? Sunk, alas, to puling petulance, to a gawky Frankie Addams tomboyishness, which Ms. Brenneman accentuated with a mélange of early-adolescent ticks—rubbing her nose with the back of her hand, digging one foot into the floor while standing awkwardly on the other, etc.

Still, it was Lavinia who saved the show. As she changed from boy-girl to woman, and from herself to a reincarnation of her mother, she completely won us over. Granted, it was not O'Neill's Lavinia, but it was an ultimately moving portrayal that earned our full sympathy when, in the last scene, she announced her retirement from the world. None of the other performers brought their characters to more than two-dimensional life. Christine (Debbie Wasser) was a hip-swinging hussy, given to stomping loudly about in her high heels and swallowing the ends of sentences; effective in her fiery confrontations with Lavinia, but hardly in character when required (evidently in an attempt to bring back the "good old days") to lie on the kitchen floor and help Orin try a handstand on her upraised arms. It cannot be denied that Ezra and Adam (both played by Benajah Cobb) looked alike, but neither's death came as anything but relief, and Cobb was doubly ill-served by costume designer Anne Higgins: Skipper Brant wore the most wrinkled white shirt I have ever seen, and General Mannon's army jacket was totally devoid of insignia or medals, making the man a poor second to the opening scene's imposing peppermill. Orin (Alek Keshishian) wore no head bandage (though his silly grin at arrival suggested *internal* injury!), and his whining quickly cloyed; but he made believable the slow descent to suicide of a boy whose dis-ease, spawned by the war experience, is exacerbated by the troubles he finds back home. Peter and Hazel Niles (Ted Osius and Maud Winchester) had an Osmond Family sweetness (but O'Neill's to be blamed for that; and how could normality look otherwise when juxtaposed against the madness of the Mannons!), though Ms. Winchester brought another dimension to Hazel when she stalked Lavinia amid the shadows of the trilogy's last scene. As for Seth Beckwith—well, what can one say when a "man of all work" of 75 turns out to be a female maid in her 20's—especially when she has the reddest hair in the cast and the closest of all to O'Neill's description of *Mannon* tresses? Holley Stewart did what she could with an earthy gardener turned solemn soubrette—though, unless "Seth" is a diminutive of Samantha, the sudden fidelity to the original was a surprise in a production that took such liberties everywhere else.

The glowering family portraits, for instance. There were none. In their place, on a metal catwalk high above the rear of the stage, we had life-size cutouts of black-and-white photographs of the actors—just Abe and David Mannon at first (both "played" by Mr. Cobb), the number growing as deaths occurred in the narrative. The device was effective, especially when family members addressed them from below; but it was jarring when a stagehand carried on and deposited Orin's cutout immediately after his suicide—and one wondered how many of the Mannons were *worthy* of posthumous ascent.

Naturally, a production limited till near the end to a tripartite interior is in trouble when the wharf-and-shipboard scene arrives in the fourth act of *The Hunted*. The solution here attempted was to have Lavinia and Orin swing open two massive doors

at the rear of the central study and eavesdrop on the conversation of Christine and Adam, who are "discovered" in the shallow space beyond. Mention had of course been made of Adam's ship, moored in East Boston; and the scene is too integral to be deleted. But because we have never previously left the Mannon house, because we witness the door-opening, and because no nautical props are provided, an uninformed spectator could easily assume that the adulterous lovers have been caught on the porch, and that Adam, when he is shot offstage by Orin, has attempted a getaway through the back yard! Of such stuff are nightmares made.

I'd long felt that any production of a great play, however amateurish or manipulative it might be, and however limited its technical resources, could provide some illumination—some insight into a character, a relationship, a conflict, that the reader-spectator had not discerned before. I was wrong. All I learned from this production was that, unless its characters are played in the grand manner, and unless they are separated from us by a period of more than forty years, *Mourning Becomes Electra* becomes tedious and bizarre. For that lesson at least, and for Amy Brenneman's Lavinia, I am grateful.

—Frederick C. Wilkins

3. NORMAND BERLIN, *EUGENE O'NEILL*. New York: Grove Press (Evergreen paperback), 1983. xiv+178 pp. \$9.95. ISBN: 0-394-62318-1.

First published in London by Macmillan in 1982, and now available in the U. S. as part of the Grove Press Modern Dramatists series, Professor Berlin's book is one of the handiest and, more importantly, one of the most thorough short companions to the life, thought, work and theatre of Eugene O'Neill. The last deserves emphasis, since this volume far outdistances many of its predecessors in its treatment of O'Neill's plays as *theatrical* entities, works designed for performance by an artist whose reading, training and instinct equipped him to use to the full (and sometimes beyond) the devices of his chosen medium of expression.

Professor Berlin acknowledges that Strindberg is O'Neill's only rival as "the most autobiographical of dramatists" (p. 26), and he notes that that fact, plus "the difficulty of discussing O'Neill in ... New Critical terms," explains why his plays "are often approached by way of biography" (p. 26). But he chooses, instead, to stress O'Neill as "a man of the theatre, ... always aware of the stage's possibilities" (p. x), with a shrewd "instinct for what works in a theatre" (p. 15). His goal, in short, is to provide, "if not a theatrical criticism, then a theatrical adaptation of literary criticism" (p. xi).

Accordingly, he precedes his second chapter, a succinct but judicious twelve-page biographical survey, with a 23-page discussion of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, in which he treats the play "in as 'pure' a way as I can manage, making no reference to O'Neill's life, making many references to theatrical performance" (p. xi). And the "purity" pays off (as it does *throughout* the book), freeing him to analyze the play "as both process and artifact" (p. xi)—i.e., as vehicle for performance and as literature. In the first area, he delineates O'Neill's genius as a craftsman, his "close attention to sound and lighting and props and the gestures and movement of the characters" (p. 16); in the second, he highlights the play's "rhythm of accusation-regret, harshness-pity, hate-love" (p. 20), its conformance to the classical unities, the significance of its abundant quotations ("like the masks that O'Neill is fond of using, they allow the speaker to hide behind another persona"—p. 17), and the play's universality—"the Tyrones are Everyfamily" (p. 23)—a universality that is less discernible when the Tyrones are too rigorously related to the O'Neills. From its opening paragraph, a word-by-word dissection of the "ripples of significance" in the play's title, to its concluding comparison of the 1956 and 1971 New York productions, the chapter is a model of astute analysis. Not a word is wasted, and few of the play's literary and theatrical "ripples" escape mention.

Five chapters following the biographical sketch trace the evolution of O'Neill's development as a playwright, admirably blending the sweep of a survey with detailed examination of from two to four plays in each of the five periods into which the career is divided: a striking combination of breadth and depth that is uncharacteristic of books this brief. Of the pre-1920 plays, *Bound East for Cardiff* and *Beyond the Horizon* receive the lengthiest treatment (4 and 5 pp. respectively); of the early 1920's, *The Emperor Jones*, *The Hairy Ape* (5 pp. each) and *Desire Under the Elms* (12 pp.); of the late 1920's, *The Great God Brown* (4 pp.) and *Strange Interlude* (7 pp.); of the 1930's, *Mourning Becomes Electra* (10 pp.) and *Ah, Wilderness!* (4 pp.); and of the later plays, *The Iceman Cometh* (15 pp.) and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (4 pp.), the masterwork having been thoroughly assessed in Chapter One. (I offer these numbers simply to assure potential purchasers who balk at current paperback prices that this is no superficial overview; it merits acquisition!)

The book bristles with information and insights, and each reader will have his favorites. These are mine: the state and "business" of American drama and theatre when O'Neill began (pp. 37-42); the "profound difference" between *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape* despite the expressionism they share (p. 64), and between *Ah, Wilderness!* and *Long Day's Journey* despite their common setting (pp. 118-121); the parallels and differences between O'Neill's "Greek" tragedies and their sources in Euripides (pp. 71-72) and Aeschylus (pp. 108-111); the effectiveness "in the theatre" of O'Neill's supposedly inadequate language (pp. 82-83 and 156-158); the failure of the mask device in *The Great God Brown* (it "produces much thought, but little emotion"—pp. 87-88) and of the leitmotif of laughter in *Lazarus Laughed* ("The laughter that affirms an idea we do not feel seems mere noise"—p. 95); the overarticulated Freudianism in *Strange Interlude* (pp. 99-102); the similarities between O'Neill's late plays and those of Shakespeare (p. 129); the striking kinship between *Iceman* and *Long Day's Journey* (both presenting a "family," in an enclosed "world," whose "past ... produces the dreadful present"; both "pointing the realistic toward the symbolic"—pp. 130-131); and the "common characteristics" that unite and enhance the last four plays (pp. 152-153). In addition, counting the cover illustration (Laurence Olivier as James Tyrone), there are nine well chosen production photos, including close-ups of the three performers (Gilpin, Wolheim and Huston) whom O'Neill felt had served his work best. And the last chapter surveys the "critical reception to O'Neill," citing the five most frequent negative charges (pp. 156-158) and O'Neill's four greatest strengths (pp. 158-165), the last being his brilliance as "a dramatist of the emotions." As for the others, I'll not spoil the suspense. Buy the book!

Professor Berlin shows that brevity, besides being the soul of wit, can also reveal the soul of Eugene O'Neill. And readers familiar with the stylistic grace and incisive analyses in his previous book, *The Secret Cause: A Discussion of Tragedy* (which was reviewed in the Newsletter's Spring 1982 issue, pp. 38-40, and will soon be available in paperback), already know his gift for what Horace called "delightful teaching." He concludes *Eugene O'Neill* with praise for the playwright's "astonishing accomplishment." Much the same can be said of this book.

Let me add a note to teachers. If, like me, you periodically seek a background text to assign in an O'Neill course, this is a worthy candidate. It won't steal *all* your thunder, and it will free you (and your students) from a lecture on the basics, start them thinking about the major plays, and leave you more time for the works that here receive but passing reference. Among paperbacks, only Michael Manheim's *Eugene O'Neill's New Language of Kinship* and the anthologies of Gassner, Griffin and Miller are major competitors; and the first, with its exhaustive examination of the plays' autobiographical elements, would make a splendid companion

volume—if you have the time and your students have the money. Until we get an "O'Neill Handbook" or a "Companion to O'Neill Studies," these would be my choices.

—Frederick C. Wilkins

4. JOHN ORLANDELLO, *O'NEILL ON FILM*. Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson U. Press, 1982. 182 pp. \$27.50. ISBN: 0-8386-2291-7.

[The following comprises a review by Gerald Dorset which the editor, now preparing for the film festival touted on this issue's back cover, wished to augment. Both endorse the book, but the review was not communally constructed. Since it is not possible to indicate whose views are being expressed at a given moment, each suggests that, if you find fault with any passage, the other is to blame. —Ed.]

There is no other American writer whom Hollywood has adapted as often and as thoroughly as Eugene O'Neill. Which is small wonder, since his plays have run so often and so long on Broadway, and filmland, by far the junior medium, has always been in awe of its elder, "legitimate" cousin. So a book on the movie versions of O'Neill's plays was definitely in order, and John Orlandello, whose respect and affection for the master dramatist are apparent throughout, covers their first half century in marvelous detail.

The succinct introduction makes it clear that the author is well-versed in the contrasting techniques of stage and screen and is free of any rigid viewpoint about how best to effect transference from the former realm to the latter: "it seems impossible," he writes, "to insist on a single model for effectiveness in adapting stage works to the screen" (p. 14). Accordingly, he offers no wholesale endorsement of the general feeling "that film versions of plays must 'open up' the stage work," but he does insist that filmed plays "remain ... faithful to the spirit of the work on which they are based" (p. 15).

The fascination of the book is really twofold: (1) its painstaking study of the minutiae in the eleven screen versions of twelve O'Neill plays (twelve, since *Anna Christie* and *Ah, Wilderness!* were both cinematized twice, but one film, *The Long Voyage Home*, combined the contents of four of the one-act sea plays); and (2) its grand overview of fifty years of Hollywood evolution—the advent of sound, changing trends in public taste, censorship's dominating fist, the star system, and technical advances in the medium itself. Some will value the book for its thirty-five clear and well-chosen illustrations from the films discussed; others for its detailed filmography; others for its study of O'Neill's changing attitudes (mostly downward) toward motion pictures; and others for the grist it provides for the currently popular trivia mill. What, for instance, would have been the result if Greta Garbo and Katharine Hepburn had played mother and daughter in *Mourning Becomes Electra*? (Theresa Helburn had suggested Hepburn for Lavinia, and O'Neill liked the idea, but Louis B. Mayer's "Over my dead body" torpedoed the plan; and Garbo, offered the role of Christine, refused to come out of retirement.) Of such what-ifs are film-lovers' dreams woven! Equally interesting as a tangential tidbit is the story of the rediscovery of the earlier *Anna Christie* (1923), starring Blanche Sweet. The first film version of an O'Neill play, and a towering success with public and critics alike, it dropped from sight and was feared lost forever until the Museum of Modern Art learned of its presence in a Soviet archive, acquired a print, and had its Serbo-Croatian titles translated back into English. So all the O'Neill films are now available—except for one, which will be mentioned later.

In his capsule descriptions of the original plays, Orlandello says nothing new, generally settling for pat phrases that make O'Neill sound simpler than he is; but his film analyses, rich in detail, make one eager to see the pictures again, even



the bad ones. In comparing the two *Anna Christies*, he points out how much more faithful to the play the first is, because of the "concession to morality" and the softening of the characters in the more famous Garbo version. *Strange Interlude*, though it seems ideal for the screen, if only for the movies' voice-over capability, fails because Robert Z. Leonard's screenplay "strips the play of most of its complexity, its reverberation of themes [one of those aforementioned pat phrases], and most of its poetry" (p. 39). (Page 43's act-by-act list of deletions is startlingly long; even the title phrase, originally spoken by Nina, bit the California dust!) *The Emperor Jones* also pales beside its source, because a tight, expressionistic narrative becomes a ten-year realistic one—a ponderous dog whose tail (O'Neill's own play, tacked on at the end) refuses to wag. Each film is afforded careful scrutiny—production details, individual performances, camera work, etc.—the only omission being the William Bendix-Susan Hayward *Hairy Ape*, which Orlandello could not assess "since the film is currently unavailable through either film archives or film rental." Aside from the first *Anna Christie*, the best adaptations are shown to be *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (an example of the wisdom in not "opening up" some plays for the screen), *The Iceman Cometh* (because of the ensemble performance of a superb cast—even Lee Marvin, whom the author defends at length against the almost unanimous panning of the critics), and, above all, *The Long Voyage Home*. O'Neill called it "the best picture made from my stuff," and Orlandello agrees, attributing much of its success to the brilliant direction of John Ford: "O'Neill was obsessed with the profound poetry of the sea, in both its romantic and its brutal aspects, and Ford's film captures these qualities both verbally and visually" (p. 101).

*O'Neill on Film* may not satisfy a long-felt need, and it adds nothing to previous critical commentary on the plays, but it deserves a place in any library whose collections include the history of American cinema, and O'Neill aficionados will find much to enjoy, especially those who will be attending the O'Neill film festival at the Boston conference next March. (And there's no question about who wrote those *last* words!)

—Gerald Dorset and Frederick Wilkins

5. ALAN CHEUSE, *THE BOHEMIANS: JOHN REED AND HIS FRIENDS WHO SHOOK THE WORLD*. Cambridge/Watertown, MA: Apple-wood Books, 1982. 358 pp. \$12.95. ISBN: 0-918222-32-X.

Why was this novel written? And why was it accepted by Apple-wood Books? Their splendid job of printing, binding and jacketing—crimson title slashing across John Sloan's view of "The City from Greenwich Village"—suggests far more than a modicum of perceptiveness and taste and makes one eager for work more worthy of their commendable craft. Critics, of course, should answer queries, not raise them; but this critic, given this book, *has* no answers.

Purportedly the personal jottings of John Reed from his boyhood adventures amid the wild natural beauties around Portland, Oregon (the book's best section), through Harvard, New York, Provincetown and Europe (a 31-page postscript by Louise Bryant taking us the rest of the way), it is ungainly and choppy, though it steers a fairly even course among the extremes of opacity, sentimentality, and tastelessness. Not that I dislike the genre; quite the reverse. The historical novel has a long and noble heritage, its best artisans outdistancing historians in bringing the feel of life to figures from the past; and Sharon Kay Penman's monumental, revisionist treatment of Richard III & Co., *The Sunne in Splendour*, shows that, in capable hands, it has lost none of its vitality and value in the 1980's. Granted, *The Bohemians* has vitality from time to time; but I search in vain for the second quality.

Most disturbing is the demeaning treatment of Reed's fellow "shakers," especially Mabel Dodge, with whom he had a tempestuous affair. However large her size, questionable her behavior or bizarre her poses, she doesn't deserve transformation into the monstrous grotesque, the bloated caricature, that Cheuse makes her. Take two excerpts from their initial sexual encounter. First, its onset (p. 116, italics added):

"Tonight, dear boy," she declared, *as though announcing a concert or a dance*, "we must cross the threshold! Are you ready, my darling, for the travail?" Mabel was much broader beneath her gauzy gown than I had imagined. She leaped onto my couch, knocking aside the volumes of Byron and Marx which I had taken for my own late-night bedtime reading.

(A characteristic passage, that: the flaccid attempt at Wildean or Waughesque social satire in the italicized phrase, and the symbolic tomes symbolically toppled by the pounce of the maenadic Mabel.) Then, the aftermath (p. 117):

Gently, she released me and lay back against the couch, her body a pale continent against the oceanic darkness of the room. I took a breath, sat forward, then began. [Began, we find, to recite a poem! (At least he didn't light up a cigarette.)] . . . .

"Jack..." She was weeping. "It's a bronze. A piece of...of...eternity!" [The reader may not share her rapture.]

Like Reed (read Cheuse), she reaches for the grand phrase and comes up with laminated marshmallow. (The other end of the Cheusean stylistic continuum is the tight-lipped staccato, the imitation—parody, one hopes—of Hemingway, as in the first meeting of Reed and his future wife, Louise Bryant: "'Hello,' was all she said when I emerged from the pawnshop. 'Do I know you?' I asked, licking the lightest tinge of salt from my lips. 'Possibly.'") Bryant, William James, Walter Lippmann, Max Eastman, Lincoln Steffens, Edna St. Vincent Millay and the others fare better than the artful Dodge; they, at least, are not trashed. But none emerges as anything more than a stick-figure, a label attached to some walking dialogue. Hence my query, why this novel?

And why, you might retort, does a review appear in this journal? Because, on 32 of its 358 pages, Eugene O'Neill is mentioned or appears—as he must, having been a friend of the Reeds in both Greenwich Village and Provincetown, fellow worker at the wharf theatre, and sometime lover of Louise—and whenever Eugene O'Neill appears, the Newsletter is there to cover the event. While not here the *main* event, O'Neill's part in the saga comprises six rounds: (1) Provincetown, in the summer of 1916, from the trio's first meeting on the dunes through the rehearsals of *Bound East for Cardiff* (during which "Gene raged about the hall waving a bottle and cursing us all for mucking up his drama"); (2) O'Neill's arrival with Louise (first inkling of the incipient romance) at Reed's New York apartment that fall, to discover Reed staring dumbly and Edna St. Vincent Millay cowering timorously in the bathroom; (3) a scene with the recuperating Reed in a Manhattan hospital the following winter, when O'Neill, a fulminator in all his appearances, fulminates against doctors and fathers and recalls his own, much longer stay in such a "monkey house.... Hospitalized for half a year! The doctors hovering over me; TB or not TB, that was the question"; (4) John and Louise's March trip "uptown for the Broadway premiere of *The Moon of the Caribees*" (sic x 2), which O'Neill had promised Jig Cook but which, "for the sake of the glory and a few dollars more, he had sold ... instead to a big producer," and on which evening the Reeds meet the O'Neills, who behave Long Day's Journically, especially when Gene, as is his wont, gets drunk and raves (James adminishing histrionically; Jamie counterrailing, calling Gene "a royal pain in the hump"; while Ella "slid back along the wall until the darkness masked her face"); (5) Reed's irate reaction, unstillable by Max Eastman, when he gets wind of the O'Neill-Bryant liaison; and (6) John and Louise's subsequent reconciliation, when she tells him about the "awful time" she'd had in New London.

In the scene with Eastman, Reed asks, "How could the boozy animal even know that someone loves him? How could he write a line?" Given Cheuse's O'Neill, the question is understandable. Aside from the "deep-set, searchlight eyes" which, even when he's drunk, have a "blood-rimmed intensity," there is no hint of an explanation how this foul-smelling, booze-swilling nay sayer could have the time, the stamina or the sanity to write anything, even though Reed, after reading the manuscript of *Bound East*, announces that "we've found American drama washed up on the beach!" and later admits, grudgingly, to having been moved by the "sad, baffling, dark blue music" of the *Caribbees* premiere.

Mr. Cheuse has demonstrated critical skill in his book reviews for National Public Radio's "All Things Considered"; and one critic, praising his first book, a collection of short stories, predicted that "the demands of a novel will bring out Cheuse's best." Unfortunately, he hasn't applied his critical skill to his own work; and so we must wait longer to see if his early reviewer's prophecy will be fulfilled. If you want a complete and *accurate* life of Reed, seek out Barbara Gelb's *So Short a Time*. If you want it less complete and souped up with fictional interstices, go to the movies: *Reds* does it better. *The Bohemians* has less to offer than either: a lovely shell, a pretty package with nothing inside.

—Frederick C. Wilkins

6. Robert Feldman, "The Longing for Death in O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra*," *Literature and Psychology*, 31 (1981), 39-48. The following is Robert G. Bass's summary in *Abstracts of English Studies*, 26 (June 1983), 206:

O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* and *Mourning Becomes Electra* ... contain a deathwish theme comparable to Freud's concept of the death instinct described in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* ... which O'Neill had read. Nina Leeds and Charles Marsden in *Strange Interlude* seek a psychological death while members of the Mannon Clan in *Mourning Becomes Electra* seek literal death: Ezra in the Mexican War; Orin and Christine by suicide; and Lavinia through self-imposed isolation. To Freud the death wish is inherent; to O'Neill it is a conscious choice by which to escape life's trials.

7. Marcelline Krafchick, "Film and Fiction in O'Neill's *Hughie*," *Arizona Quarterly*, 39 (Spring 1983), 47-61.

*Hughie*, far from being the short story or closet drama many think it, is eminently "suitable for staging," though a performance would be "substantially strengthened" if it included "a device to express the stage directions" which reveal the "mental fertility" behind the impassive, moribund surface of the night clerk. While Erie Smith is a traditional stage character, the clerk, because his "depiction [is] conveyed mostly by an authorial intelligence," is closer to the realm of narrative fiction. And if the latter's thoughts are not made audible, much is lost: dramatic irony, complexity and balance, Aristotelian tension, and "the ambiguity of the title: Hughes becomes Hughie II."

The solution lies in utilizing "technology [as] a helpmeet for drama." Not radio—because "*Hughie* is, like all of O'Neill's works, as much visual as auditory"—but the very blend of "filmed background and sound track" that O'Neill once suggested to Carlotta for the play. Long before the 1940's, of course, O'Neill's 1928 zeal for the possibilities of film as a medium (especially its potential to "introduce into drama the scope of fiction") had been severely challenged by his exasperation at its abuses as a business and industry. Hence his enigmatic challenge re *Hughie*:

"Let whoever does it figure it out." Whoever, so doing, combines sound and film in producing *Hughie* "will bring to fruition O'Neill's incorporation of film and fiction to achieve a small masterpiece of theater." —FCW

8. Sheng-chuan Lai, "Mysticism and Noh in O'Neill," *Theatre Journal*, 35 (March 1983), 74-87.

That O'Neill was "drawn to the mystic by temperament" is clear throughout his career, and his often-quoted ambition to portray the "impelling, inscrutable forces behind life" is first evident in *The Moon of the Caribbees*. Since "mystical experience ... cannot be explicitly communicated verbally or through demonstration," the play succeeds because it "does not deal with mystical themes discursively, but suggests 'forces' beyond the action through visual and non-verbal signs."

Subsequent "experiments in non-realistic theatrical effects," largely a result of the baleful influence of Mabel Collins's theosophist booklet *Light On the Path*, were less successful, as in the doomed attempt, in *The Fountain*, to have Ponce de Leon "verbalize mystical concepts ... in opaque phrasing reminiscent of Collins," and "the device [in *Lazarus Laughed*] of the paralinguistic laugh as evocative of the transcendent state of mind of Lazarus and his followers." But the latter play marks an advance, since "the use of laughter as a sign of an enlightened state is an indication that O'Neill no longer believed that words alone could convey mystical states to an audience."

Ironically, it was when O'Neill returned to realism in his last four plays—"a realism that paradoxically displays strong affinities with the form and mechanics of the highly stylized Japanese Noh drama"—that his ambition was most effectively realized. In the Noh plays, "the presence of forces beyond the world of the drama is manifested through suggestion of the evanescent, illusory qualities of life. In many cases, ... this is achieved by bringing the dramatic action to a standstill that allows the main character to reminisce on the past. Having set the stage for a revelation of things past, dramatic action is suspended and memory evokes a sense of the transience of life within a timeless world." The same dramatic structure unites *The Iceman Cometh*, *Long Day's Journey*, *Hughie*, and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*: in all four, "dramatic action is suspended while the characters talk about key events from the past." There is a de-emphasis on character development and (after *Iceman*) onstage action, both replaced by "a focus on a recurring past." And the obsessed tellers of tales—Hickey in *Iceman*, parents and younger son in *Journey*, Erie Smith in *Hughie*, and Jim Tyrone in *Moon*—resemble the *shite* of Noh drama, the tortured ghost figure telling his past-evoking tale, "as the normal linear sense of time is suspended in a synchronic moment." By setting this Eastern mode "within the Western conventions of naturalistic dramaturgy," O'Neill, in his last plays, "successfully evoked the 'impelling, inscrutable forces behind life.'" —FCW

9. Timothy J. Wiles, "Tammanyite, Progressive, and Anarchist: Political Communities in *The Iceman Cometh*," *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History and the Philosophy of History*, 9 (1980), 1979-1996. The following is Mary S. Wagoner's summary in *Abstracts of English Studies*, 26 (June 1983), 206:

O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* realizes his ambition to dramatize a large social theme. He represents the three dominant political communities of 1912: Tammany Hall rule of men in the despairing saloon regulars, Progressive reform in Hickey, and IWW radicalism in Hugo, Larry and Parritt. The play looks backward and forward in treating crisis in the sense of community.

## THE EUGENE O'NEILL SOCIETY SECTION: MLA '83

The date and hour have been announced for the Special Session on Eugene O'Neill at the 1983 Convention of the Modern Language Association in New York City next December:

Date: Wednesday, December 28.  
 Hour: 10:15-11:30 a.m.  
 Room: Clinton, New York Hilton.

The session, entitled "Reevaluating O'Neill: New Approaches, New Discoveries," will be directed by Michael Hinden of the University of Wisconsin, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Eugene O'Neill Society. As announced in the last issue of the Newsletter, three papers will be presented:

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

"Current Trends in O'Neill Publication," by Frederick C. Wilkins, Suffolk University; and

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

Professor Hinden's initial proposal to MLA clarifies the content and stresses the importance of the session. The following is an abridgement of that proposal.

"The three panelists will address the issue of how new source materials and new critical methodologies will influence O'Neill studies in the next half decade, as we approach the centennial celebration of the playwright's birth in 1988. The purpose of this special session is to set the agenda for O'Neill studies in the next five years.

"Papers are in two categories: (1) new discoveries, (2) new approaches. In the area of new discoveries, there have been important publications since 1980 of original works and papers left by O'Neill at the time of his death to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. These works now are being made available to the public for the first time. One purpose of the special session is to evaluate these new discoveries and to assess their impact on our understanding of O'Neill's career. Two of the three presentations (those by Professors Voelker and Wilkins) will constitute the first comprehensive discussion of these materials in any public forum (outside reviews).

"At the same time, the session will address the question of what new critical approaches might be applied to the O'Neill canon as the centennial nears. Professor Manheim's paper will be a pioneering effort in this regard. Few sessions on the playwright's work have been as timely or as comprehensive."

For copies of the papers, write to the speakers after November 15. For information on the date, hour and location of the 1983 Annual Meeting of the Eugene O'Neill Society, expect a mailing from the Society early in the fall. If you are not now a member, request the information of Jordan Y. Miller, Secretary, c/o Department of English, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI 02881. You may join at either the special session or the annual meeting, which usually occurs on the same day.

### NEWS, NOTES AND QUERIES

1. ANENT THIS ISSUE'S COVER. The autographed photograph of O'Neill that is featured on page one was acquired by the editor last year. The provider was unable to offer any information about where or when the picture was taken. So eager is the editor to learn more about his cherished catch, that he offers a free one-year subscription to the first writer who proffers persuasive and documented evidence of the photograph's place, year and approximate date.

2. CALENDRIAL KUDOS. Having now examined the calendar announced on p. 28 of the last issue, I can attest personally to its beauty and assure potential purchasers that it will be cherished long after its 365 days on the wall have passed. 18" high and 12" wide, it is similar in format to the annual "Literary Calendar" that it has ousted in my affection, but its paper is superior, its photographs are sharper, and its snippets from the letters and diaries of Mr. and Mrs. O'Neill (far more than I'd expected) make it a very personal glimpse of life during the Tao House years. Its only flaw is quality: though space is provided, I couldn't imagine defacing it with ephemeral scribbles of my own! But I'll get another calendar for use—this one, like the writer it celebrates, is for the ages. For copies (@ \$10 ea.), write to The Eugene O'Neill Foundation, Tao House, P.O. Box 402, Danville, CA 94526.
3. CORRIGENDA: TWO DREAMS DEFERRED. Two events announced in the last issue have been postponed: (1) the television documentary on O'Neill (item 5, p. 28) will probably be ready for airing in January 1985, not 1984; and (2) the Provincetown double-bill entitled "Beginnings" (item 1, p. 27) has been postponed from September 2 and 3 to September 22 and 23.
4. OBIT À DEUX. Raymond Massey and Lynn Fontanne are not names that the general playgoer associates with the work of Eugene O'Neill, but it had an important place in each's career—a place worth recalling in the wake of their deaths on consecutive summer days (Massey in Beverly Hills on Friday, July 29; Fontanne at her home in Genesee Depot, Wisconsin, on Saturday, July 30). Massey, as a Canadian-American, had an accent that secured him his first role when he attempted a theatrical career in England: the play was *In the Zone*. Much later, in 1947, he played Ezra Mannon in the film version of *Mourning Becomes Electra*. Fontanne, of course, was triumphant as the original Nina Leeds in *Strange Interlude*, even though she didn't like the script (and grew to hate it during the rehearsal period), and even though (or perhaps because) she cut the text extensively after O'Neill had refused to agree to any deletions: "I relied on the fact that the play was so long that not even O'Neill would remember what he'd written," she later recalled. The most memorable excisions occurred in Nina's "passionate love scene" with Ned Darrell:

we were sporting about quite vigorously and then I was supposed to be thinking a lot of thoughts at the same time and the action was supposed to stop and we had to freeze while I was speaking my unconscious thoughts. Well, the audience would have just laughed out loud at me if I had done it. You can't stop in the middle of a nice sexual romp and have a brain wave.\*

Both artists will be missed.

5. O'NEILL TO CO-STAR IN ROBARDS' AUTOBIOGRAPHY. Jason Robards reported, in a recent *New York Times* interview with William E. Geist, that he is proceeding "at a snail's pace" on his autobiography, *A Curious Friendship*. The title refers to his long relationship with O'Neill, which is "curious" because, although the actor and the playwright never met, O'Neill has had a marked influence on his career and the parallels between their lives are remarkable. The friendship began when Robards, in the Navy, read *Strange Interlude* in the ship's library and "was moved to become an actor." Then came overnight stardom in *Iceman* (1956) and, soon after, his "acclaimed performance" as Jamie in America's first *Long Day's Journey*, a role that influenced his life as well as his career:

You play a drunken brother for two years, and sometimes you don't know where the role ends and you begin.

Failure to get the Hickey role in the film of *Iceman* led to depression, imbibition and a near-fatal automobile accident. But another O'Neill play reversed his "self-destructive" course: in 1974, playing Jamie again, this time in *A Moon for the*

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\* Louis Sheaffer, *O'Neill, Son and Artist* (Boston; Little, Brown, 1973), p. 275.

*Misbegotten*, he stopped drinking. Subsequent performances as Erie Smith in *Hughie* (which he'd first played in 1964), James Tyrone, Sr. in *Long Day's Journey*, and Con Melody in *Touch of the Poet* have reconfirmed his position as the greatest American actor of O'Neill in our time. *A Curious Friendship* will make fascinating reading. ["Robards—An Actor At the Peak of His Art," *New York Times* (May 22, 1983), Sec. II, pp. 1, 30.]

6. KERRA CULPA. In announcing his retirement from weekly reviewing in the Sunday *New York Times* last July, Walter Kerr assured his readers that the free time he will resultantly enjoy will be spent going to the theater, "because it may be the very last thing in the world that causes me constant surprise." One of the surprises he recalled was the brilliance, in production, of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, which he'd given an "at best so-so" review as a book:

how did I know that Fredric March, whom I'd gone on record as calling our finest realistic actor, and Jason Robards, who'd been so sensational in *The Iceman Cometh*, were going to be so good? Obviously, these things simply cannot be predicted.

This initial misjudgment of "what may be [O'Neill's] masterpiece" Kerr calls "one of my most egregious errors," and he offers it with a purpose: "so you won't miss me so much." (No way, Mr. Kerr!) "Not in the least incidentally," he concludes, "I still think *Moon for the Misbegotten* is the masterpiece." ["A Critic Celebrates the Unpredictability of Theater," *New York Times* (July 3, 1983), Sec. II, pp. 1, 4.]

7. BIBLIOGRAPHIC ADDENDA. The following publications on O'Neill, listed in the 1981 *MLA International Bibliography* have not received previous mention in the Newsletter. They comprise, in separate alphabetical lists, chapters in books and articles in periodicals.

Avram, Rachmael ben. "Eugene O'Neill in the Divided Stream." In *Naturalisme américain*, ed. Jean Cazemajou and Jean-Claude Barat (Bordeaux-Talence: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine, 1976), pp. 38-47.

Castro, Ginette. "Les Femmes dans le Théâtre d'O'Neill: Essai d'interprétation féministe." In *Seminaires 1976*, ed. Jean Béranger et al. (Talence: Centre de Recherches sur l'Amér. Anglophone, Univ. de Bordeaux III, 1977), 131-158.

Mounier, Catherine. "Le Marchand de glace est passé d'Eugene O'Neill et le mise en scène de Gabriel Garran au Théâtre de la Commune d'Aubervilliers." In *Les Voies de la création théâtrale*, IV, ed. Denis Bablet and Jean Jacquot (Paris: CNRS, 1975), 62-102.

Suyama, Shizou. "Eugene O'Neill *Iceman Kitaru*: Moo Hitori no Sisyphe to Kankyaku no Shisei." In *Bungaku to America: Ohashi Kenzaburo Kyoju Kanreki Kinen Ronbunshu* (Tokyo: Nanundo, 1980), III, 297-312.

Törnqvist, Egil. "Strindberg and O'Neill." In *Structures of Influence: A Comparative Approach to August Strindberg*, ed. Marilyn Johns Blackwell (Chapel Hill: U. of N. Carolina Press, 1981), pp. 277-291.

Blesch, Edwin J., Jr. "Lots of Desire, No Elms: A Consideration of Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* on Film." *The Nassau Review* (The Journal of Nassau Community College Devoted to Arts, Letters, and Sciences), IV (1981), 14-22.

Egri, Peter. "The Reinterpretation of the Chekhovian Mosaic Design in O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*." *Acta Litteraria Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, XXII (1981), 29-71.

Moleski, Joseph J. "Eugene O'Neill and the Cruelty of Theater." *Comparative Drama*, XV (Winter 1981-82), 327-342.

Rollyson, Carl, Jr. "O'Neill's Mysticism: From His Historical Trilogy to *Long Day's Journey Into Night*." *Studies in Mystical Literature* (Taiwan, Republic of China), I (Spring 1981), 218-236.

8. O'NEILL DISSERTATIONS (listed in *Dissertation Abstracts International* March 1983):  
Como, Robert M. "The Evolution of O'Neill's Tragic Vision."  
Herzog, Callie J. "Nora's Sisters: Female Characters in the Plays of Ibsen, Strindberg, Shaw and O'Neill."
9. BOOK IN THE WORKS. Virginia Floyd is completing a book on O'Neill for the "Literature and Life" series published by Ungar. When available, it will be reviewed in the Newsletter.
10. *HUGHIE* REDUX. Jason Robards and Jack Dodson repeated their performances as Erie Smith and the night clerk in *Hughie* this summer—at the Donnell Library, 20 W. 53rd Street, New York City, on July 11.
11. O'NEILL FEATURED IN NEW PROGRAM AT BINGHAMTON. "Eugene O'Neill and the Modern Drama" is one of the courses included in the new cross-disciplinary concentration in Modern Drama and Theater at SUNY-Binghamton. A faculty committee of nine oversees the program, which has separate curricula for undergraduates and graduates. (The nine: Haskell Block, Donald Boros, Charles Carpenter, Sandra Cypress, Christian Gruber, John Hagopian, Fridolin Mellert, Loften Mitchell and George Wellwarth.) For a brochure describing the program, write to the Department of Theater, SUNY-Binghamton, Binghamton, NY 13901.

#### PERSONS REPRESENTED IN THIS ISSUE

- GERALD DORSET, currently of Manhattan College, has taught in the drama departments of the universities of Hawaii and Puerto Rico. The author of a monograph on Poe, Mr. Dorset is a regular reviewer of films, plays and books for such periodicals as *Cineaste*, *Library Journal* and *Bookviews*.
- PETER EGRI, Chairman of the Department of English at L. Eötvös University, Budapest, Hungary, is a regular contributor to the Newsletter's pages—most recently as author of "*The Iceman Cometh: European Origins and American Originality*," which was serialized in the Winter 1981, Spring 1982 and Summer-Fall 1982 issues.
- BRENDA MURPHY is Associate Professor of English at St. Lawrence University. Co-editor with George Monteiro of the *John Hay—Howells Letters* (Twayne, 1980), she has published numerous articles on realism in American fiction as well as essays on drama for *Theatre Journal* and *Modern Drama*. Her book, "The Rhythm of Life: American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940," is nearing completion.
- SUSAN TUCK, of Indiana University, is a regular contributor to the Newsletter's pages, her last appearance being a review of the Indiana Repertory Theatre's *Desire Under the Elms* (Spring 1983, pp. 15-19). *Eugene O'Neill's Critics: Voices from Abroad*, which she co-edited with Horst Frenz, will be a Fall 1983 publication of the Southern Illinois University Press.
- FREDERICK C. WILKINS, his welcome mat now woven, is stalking delights to enhance your visit to Boston next March.



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WALLACE BEERY	HENRY HULL	ANTHONY PERKINS
CHARLES BICKFORD	IAN HUNTER	MICHAEL REDGRAVE
WARD BOND	BURL IVES	PAUL ROBESON
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DUDLEY DIGGES	SOPHIA LOREN	ROSALIND RUSSELL
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