DRAMATIC EXPERIMENT IN THE PLAYS
OF EUGENE O'NEILL

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DRAMATIC EXPERIMENT IN THE PLAYS
OF EUGENE O'NEILL

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INTRODUCTION

In this survey of Eugene O'Neill's works it has been my purpose to establish the fact that he has used a number of dramatic experiments in his plays and that he has used them successfully. In the first two chapters I have tried to find in his experiments devices similar to those of other periods. In gathering material for Chapter I, I read Aeschylus' trilogy *Orestes*, Euripides' *Electra*, and Sophocles' *Electra*, searching for devices which might have inspired O'Neill to experiment with them in his dramas. Having found these devices, I have compared and contrasted the uses that the Greek dramatists have given them with their uses in O'Neill's plays. In the second chapter I have gone through the same process with some of the earlier English dramas: *Everyman* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. In the third chapter I have endeavored to find in O'Neill's plays certain devices which are modern. One of these devices gave evidence of the influence of August Strindberg, but for the most part these modern ones are original. In the latter devices I have analyzed his uses of them and the symbolism which accompanies those uses. Thus in this survey I have tried to present
evidence sufficient to uphold my opinion that O'Neill is
definitely the greatest experimenter of the modern drama.

I found available for this study, copies of all of
O'Neill's published dramas, with the exception of his first
collection of one-act plays, which contained "Thirst," "The
Web," "Fog," "Warnings," and "Recklessness," and which has
been recalled by the author, and Chris Christopherson, In
Preparation, and The Old Devil, which are no longer in print.
Having read his twenty-nine other plays, I found the ex-
perimential element in seventeen of them; therefore it was
the observations made in these plays and the conclusions
drawn from them that served as a nucleus for the survey which
I have made. I was able to read the first editions of each
of O'Neill's plays, except those of Diff'rent, The Emperor
Jones, The Hairy Ape, and All God's Chillun Got Wings. The
first three plays were first printed in collections, while
All God's Chillun Got Wings was originally bound in a sep-
parate volume. For the play Diff'rent I used the collection
entitled Beyond the Horizon; for the other three plays, the
collection entitled Nine Plays.

In the trilogies of Aeschylus and O'Neill I have under-
lined the titles of the complete plays, Crestes and Mourning
Becomes Electra and have put in quotation marks the titles
of the three divisions of each trilogy. Even though each
division is more or less complete within itself, in both the
Greek and the modern productions all three divisions were presented as a unit at one performance.

In consulting biographies and critical works I found an abundance of material on most of the experiments discussed in Chapters I and II, but very little has been written regarding O'Neill's modern experiments. Perhaps an explanation for this is the fact that the devices which show influence of the Greek and the earlier English dramas are more striking in nature.

Some of the critics have been complimentary and others uncomplimentary, but none of them has ignored O'Neill; for each one, regardless of his personal opinion, must admit that O'Neill's experiments have been so unusual, so powerful, and so varied that he has contributed at least something to the theatre. Most of them, however, are of the same opinion as I, that Eugene O'Neill is not only a successful experimenter but also a great dramatist.
CHAPTER I

EXPERIMENTS SHOWING GREEK INFLUENCE

Eugene O'Neill has been called "the foremost dramatist of America." The fact that he has twice been awarded the Pulitzer Prize and once the coveted Nobel Prize would tend to verify that title. Although not all drama critics agree that O'Neill is the one really great American dramatist, all admit that he ranks first as a modern experimental dramatist. John Anderson has said of him:

As an experimenter in dramatic forms O'Neill is tireless. . . . He has stretched the playing time from the usual two hours and a half to twice; and nearly three times that length. He has put his characters in masks, frankly borrowed the old-fashioned aside as an almost novelistic convention to reveal the psychological state of his characters, and in an experiment with musical rhythms he has taken Greek drama and given it the modern overtones of psychoanalysis by using the conventional portico setting, and then, for his sharpest motives, pryd (sic) behind it, physically as well as spiritually, to get at the personal impulses that move his characters.1

His experiments are many and varied. Some of them are modern, one might almost say original, for he has introduced into his plays elements which have never been tried before in the theatre. For some of his experiments he has gone back to

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certain devices of the early English drama, while others show a marked derivation from the Greek drama.

Mourning Becomes Electra, declared by most critics to be O'Neill's most outstanding contribution to drama, illustrates definitely the Greek influence, for the plot itself has been borrowed from the very popular Greek tragedy based on the legends of the House of Atreus.

It is a myth all three of the great tragic dramatists of Greece, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, told in their own way, taking their own liberties with its details, distributing the emphasis according to their own sensing of its moral and dramatic values, and managing to make it decidedly their own in each of their independent versions.²

O'Neill's Electra more nearly resembles Aeschylus' Orestes in form. As Aeschylus divided his trilogy into "Agamemnon," "The Choephoroe," or "Libation Bearers," and "The Eumenides," so O'Neill divided his Mourning Becomes Electra into "Homecoming," "The Hunted," and "The Haunted." Referring to the divisions, however, Stark Young writes:

On the other hand, the dividing line is much less distinct in Mourning Becomes Electra; the final curtain of the first part, for example, falls, it is true, on Mannon's death, as in Aeschylus it does on Agamemnon's, but there is not the same effect of totality because of the stress put on Levinia; in 'Agamemnon' Electra does not even appear.³

In the modern version of the Greek tragedy, in accordance with

²John Mason Brown, Two on the Aisle, p. 137.
the single plays of Euripides and Sophocles, Electra definitely
dominates the action; Aeschylus, however, gave his trilogy to
Crestes, Electra being in only "Libation-Bearers."

Both Euripides' and Sophocles' plays, as was the general
Greek custom, kept the same scene throughout the entire ac-
tion. In each of the last two parts of his trilogy, Aeschylus
changed the scene once. Frequent scene changes were not so
necessary to the Greek drama, however, as they are today,
for the really violent action was done off-stage. The modern
audience, on the other hand, wishes to see all the gory and
morbid details. Thus, O'Neill, not being handicapped as were
the Greeks because of inadequate scenic equipment, the lack
of a curtain, and the non-existence of modern mechanical de-
vices, was able to subdivide his play into thirteen acts,
changing the scene for each one.

Granted that the Electra plot was originally Greek,
there has been a great deal of discussion as to whether or not
O'Neill has followed that version closely enough. Ashley
Dukes counts the dramatist's rendition a success, for he
writes:

O'Neill not only knows his myth well, but makes
supreme use of it to write a morality-drama wherein the
guilt of each single character becomes the guilt of us
all. And to this purpose he employs not only the spirit
of classical legend, but also everything good in the
drama of his own day, taking the essentials of expres-
sionism and the essentials of intellectual drama and even
something of the spirit of dramatic poetry. 4

4 Ashley Dukes, "O'Neill Succeeds," Theatre Arts Monthly,
XXII (February, 1938), 102.
John Mason Brown also compliments O'Neill's treatment of the myth in his statement:

Mr. O'Neill, needless to say, has taken even greater liberties with this classic myth than any of his ancient predecessors dared to do. By taking them, he has made the story very much his own, without robbing its terrible sequence of catastrophes of either force or their essential outlines.5

Virgil Geddes, on the other hand, whose criticism of O'Neill throughout his pamphlet is most uncomplimentary, feels that even though the Greek myth is not followed literally but is used only as a nucleus, a preconceived pattern is quite evident throughout the play. Geddes further feels that in Mourning Becomes Electra the original plays rise in interest and become more desirable than the latest version, that instead of the myth's supporting the modern setting and the setting's in turn supporting the myth, "the myth in its borrowed manner rides on top, cramps the play's life and often dominates all. And this explains why the play does not bleed or burn."6 In a very unique and almost ludicrous criticism, which was written by Robert C. Benchley, the author credits the success of O'Neill's trilogy to his inheritance, to the fact that his father, James O'Neill, for so long played the rôle of the Count of Monte Cristo. O'Neill's play to Benchley is an old-fashioned spine-curling melodrama in which he

5 John Mason Brown, op. cit., p. 137.
sees the hand of Monte Cristo. In his eyes *Mourning Becomes Electra* is "just the old Greek story put into not particularly convincing New England talk, but it is a hundred times better show than Electra because O'Neill has a God-given inheritance of melodramatic sense."7

I am rather inclined to agree with Benchley that *Mourning Becomes Electra* is "a hundred times better show" than any of its predecessors. For one thing, having read the modern trilogy, I find it hard to accept the single plays of Euripides and Sophocles as sufficient from the standpoint of plot. I am conscious of the fact that they have each given to us "a middle" rather than the complete story. I do prefer, however, their emphasis on Electra rather than on Crestes. To me the Greek plays move much more slowly than O'Neill's. In the former, a great deal of the action is merely talked about in long speeches or in the chanting of the choruses. Particularly in Aeschylus' "Agamemnon" did I find the action slowed down by the choruses' long bits of exposition. The play seems entirely too long for the amount of action which it presents. In contrast, O'Neill, although he wrote about the post-Civil War days, has his play timed to this century. At no time does the action drag. Someone has suggested that when Christine kills herself immediately after learning of

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her lover's death, the action moves even too rapidly. The tempo of *Mourning Becomes Electra* is such that it keeps the reader or the audience constantly interested. More than a little responsible for that interest are the vital characterizations; each character lives and breathes. After observing O'Neill's psychoanalytical treatment of them, I found the Greek character portrayals rather weak and definitely secondary to the plot. Although O'Neill's characters are morbidly abnormal, they made their drama "bleed and burn" for me, even though they did not for Geddes. The plot of *Mourning Becomes Electra* was borrowed from the Greeks, but O'Neill's unique treatment of it has resulted in a modern masterpiece which surpasses all of the Greek versions.

Once O'Neill had decided to use the Electra myth, he had to seek some motivating force for his drama. Where the Greeks had used the religious faith in fate, he had to find a substitute. Where the Greeks stated that man is the victim of powers he cannot control, O'Neill needed the modern explanation of what these powers are and how they work. Regarding this explanation, Eugene O'Neill in his notes to *Mourning Becomes Electra* asked:

> Is it possible to get modern psychological approximation of Greek sense of fate into such a play, which an intelligent audience of today, possessed by no belief in gods or supernatural retributions, could accept and be moved by?  

The play itself has answered the question in the affirmative, for in the place of the Greek sense of fate O'Neill has used the forces of man's own past, heredity, or environment. He has built his play upon the deterministic principle.

In working out the behavior of Orin, he cannot rely upon Fates, Furies or Gods; he must find the cause elsewhere. For these supernatural powers he substitutes "Puritan conviction of man born to sin and punishment -- Orestes' furies within him, his conscience --" (Notes to Mourning Becomes Electra # 5). This is followed up in the development of Abe Mannon by using "sexual frustration by his Puritan sense of guilt turning love to lust." For the awful sense of fate in the Greek drama, he substitutes "a psychological fate." (Note #16). This conception of the problem is followed in a later note by a clear statement of the deterministic principle. "The unavoidable entire melodramatic action must be felt as working out of psychic fate from past -- thereby attain tragic significance -- or else! -- a hell of a problem, a modern tragic interpretation of classic fate without benefit of gods -- for it must, before everything, remain modern psychological play -- fate springing out of the family." (Note # 16).\(^9\)

O'Neill's fate is inside his characters. The tragedy which descends upon the Mannons is a result of their living by false Puritan standards of behavior. This Puritanism places emphasis on the hereafter and is a religion of death. General Mannon voices the Mannon traditional beliefs when he talks with Christine the night of his return from war:

It was seeing death all the time in this war got me to thinking these things. Death was so common, it didn't mean anything. That freed me to think of life. Queer, isn't it? Death made me think of life. Before that life had only made me think of death! . . . That's always been the Mannons' way of thinking. They went to the white meeting-house on Sabbaths and meditated on death. Life was a dying. Being born was starting to

\(^9\)Tbid., p. 178.
die. Death was being born. How in hell people ever got such notions! That white meeting-house. It stuck in my mind -- clean-scrubbed and whitewashed -- a temple of death!\footnote{Eugene O'Neill, \textit{Mourning Becomes Electra}, "Homecoming," Act III, p. 82.}

It is that Puritanical philosophy from which the Mannons cannot escape. Although Christine is not naturally of the Mannon belief, her life with Ezra Mannon and her "living with the Mannon dead" have gradually forced on her their destiny. Adding further to the tragedy of the Mannons is their inner conflict between Puritanism and a desire for freedom and love. Each one struggles against his Puritan inheritance and strives toward a freedom which he never attains. Christine's symbol of freedom is her love affair with Brant; Ezra Mannon's, a new relation with Christine; Orin's and Lavinia's, first their trip to the South Sea Islands, then their marriages to Hazel and Peter, respectively. Each of the Mannons fails in the realization of his particular freedom, and at the end of the play Lavinia alone remains alive, "bound to the Mannon dead," resigned to being punished in order that the Mannon curse be paid out, and willing to be punished "for being born." Thus, determinism takes the place of the Greek fate in O'Neill's trilogy.

O'Neill's \textit{Electra} follows the story of the Greek dramas in most of the major details through the second part of his trilogy. Generally speaking, he tells the story of Lavinia
and Orin Mannon, brother and sister, who, in seeking revenge for their father's death, bring about the deaths of Christine, their mother, and Adam Brant, her lover. O'Neill, however, has made a number of changes which tend to modernize the plot to some extent and to support his psychoanalytical treatment of the drama.

In "Homecoming," both Ezra Mannon and Orin have been off fighting in the Civil War. Christine feels that Orin's going has been largely Lavinia's and Ezra's responsibility. Christine even blames her falling in love with Adam on Orin's being forced into war, for she tells Lavinia, "Well, I hope you realize I never would have fallen in love with Adam if I'd had Orin with me."ll Agamemnon, the father, in the first part of Aeschylus' trilogy, has been fighting in the Trojan War when the play opens, and is on his way home. Crestes does not arrive at home in any of the Greek plays until after Clytemnestra has murdered his father. Crestes had been banished or exiled after his father's death in both Euripides' and Aeschylus' versions, but in Sophocles' play Electra had sent Crestes off to be reared by Paedagogus and at the same time protected against Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus. When Ezra returns from the war, he comes back with a desire for a new relationship with his wife, a new hunger for living. In contrast, it is intimated in the early plays that Agamemnon had not always been true to Clytemnestra while he

llIbid., Act II, pp. 51-52.
was away. He brings back to Argos with him Cassandra, his paramour, a prophetess who foretells the impending disaster.

In the modern version Lavinia is definitely the dominating element. In the first part she discovers Christine's love for Adam and forces her into a confession. Once that is accomplished, Lavinia has the upper hand and threatens her mother with exposure. Finally, seemingly resigned to accepting Electra's instructions, Christine says, "You know there's nothing I can do now -- but obey your orders!" In the Greek plays Electra participates in the action only after her father's death and after the joint rule of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. In Aeschylus' story Electra has been brought down to a position almost comparable to slavery; in Euripides' version she has been forced to marry a peasant.

When Christine's confession about her love for Brant brings on Ezra's heart attack and she gives him poison instead of medicine, she tries to convince Lavinia and Orin that his death was merely a natural one instead of a murder. In "The Choephoroe" and in the single plays Clytemnestra admits that she and Aegisthus killed Agamemnon and Cassandra, but she tries to justify the deed by saying that her husband's slaying and sacrificing their daughter and his being unfaithful to her made her do it.

In the single plays of Sophocles and Euripides Aegisthus' connection with the murder of Agamemnon is due merely to his

\[\textit{Tbid.}, \textit{Act II, p. 56.}\]
love for Clytemnestra and his desire for power. In Aeschylus' and O'Neill's versions, however, the element of revenge precedes that of love. In "Agamemnon" Aegisthus tries to justify his part in Agamemnon's murder by explaining that Atreus, Agamemnon's father, had banished Thyestes, Aegisthus' father, from his kingdom. Later Atreus had allowed Thyestes to return and had invited him to dinner. At this dinner Atreus had served as a part of the meal one of Thyestes' children. By killing Agamemnon Aegisthus feels that he has at last been able to avenge the wrong done his family by Atreus. In *Mourning Becomes Electra* Adam Brant, too, is seeking revenge. He is in reality a Mannon, son of David Mannon and nephew of Ezra. Before Adam's birth both Abe and David Mannon had been in love with Marie Brantôme, a nurse in the Mannon household. When Marie and David were married, Abe had driven them away from home to a life of poverty. After David's death when Marie became ill, she had written to Ezra for financial aid, but he had ignored her. When Brant found his mother dying of sickness and starvation, he had blamed Ezra, and he had sworn he would get revenge. It is later on that he meets and falls in love with Christine and is given a second motive for killing Ezra. Unlike Aeschylus, O'Neill has only Christine actually commit the murder.

O'Neill has Lavinia plan Brant's murder. It is only by appealing to Orin's jealousy of his mother that she can make him kill Brant. Crestes, on the other hand, is equally as
eager to dispose of Aegisthus as is Electra. He even kills his mother in the Greek plays, although in Aeschylus' and Euripides' tragedies Orestes shows a definite reluctance for taking his mother's life. In the former it is only after Pylades reminds him of the prophecy of Apollo's oracle and in the latter it is only after Electra's insistence that he becomes Clytemnestra's murderer. In Mourning Becomes Electra Christine kills herself, although Orin holds himself responsible for her death. Christine's death occurs after that of Brant, but Sophocles has Orestes kill his mother first.

Not having fate and the supernatural element to punish Orin, O'Neill provides for Orin's punishment through his sense of guilt, his conscience. Sophocles, however, provides for no aftermath of the crime. His Electra ends with a triumphant note for both Orestes and Electra. Euripides has Orestes feel remorse and foreboding after the murders, but Electra, feeling none of his guilt, marries Pylades, her brother's friend. Aeschylus, however, has his hero so tortured by the Furies after his sin that the entire third part of the trilogy is given over to Orestes' being tried for and being absolved of his crime. At the end of O'Neill's play only Lavinia is left to be punished. Christine and Orin having escaped their punishment through suicide, Lavinia decides that she must punish herself by living alone with the Mannon dead. Although this last detail is not in plot connected with any detail found in the Greek drama, Stark Young
sees in it the Greek element. He says:

The end of the play is by imaginative insight Greek in spirit. Lavinia goes into the house, the blinds are closed forever, the stage is silent, the door shut, the exaltation is there, the completion, the tragic certainty. The peculiar kind of suspense employed in the play is Greek. 13

In regard to the major elements of O'Neill's plot of the first two parts of his trilogy, he has followed rather closely the Aeschylean version, the main difference being O'Neill's emphasis on Electra in contrast to Aeschylus' emphasis on Crestes. Between "The Eumenides" and "The Haunted" there is very little similarity, for where the plot of the former involves Crestes' being tortured by the Furies and his being tried for the murder of his mother, that of the latter involves Lavinia's and Orin's attempts and failures to escape from the Mannon curse. The Furies that pursue Crestes throughout the third part of the Greek play become in O'Neill's trilogy Orin's conscience, his sense of guilt which finally, together with Lavinia's suggestion and his hope that in death he will find Christine, drives him to suicide. It is in this third part that O'Neill definitely forsakes the Greek version and turns to a modern psychological drama all his own.

Throughout Mourning Becomes Electra, particularly in the last part, there runs the incest or sex frustration theme. This is one of the outstanding additions made by O'Neill to the Greek plot, for nowhere in the earlier plays is this

13 Stark Young, op. cit., p. 353.
element even suggested. In referring to the existence of
the incest theme in O'Neill's play, Henry Seidel Canby says:

The Greeks who wrote the Electra tragedies would
have drawn back, I think, from such a dependence upon
special circumstance. They would have known the per-
versions of love in every strong family, but they
would not have rested a tragic development upon an ab-
normal instance. 14

In his article Canby writes rather disapprovingly of the ab-
normal element. He seems to feel that by introducing sex
frustration in his play O'Neill has brought before the pub-
linc a subject which should not be discussed or written about.
I grant that the emotional relationship of the Mannons is
abnormal and is certainly not admirable, but O'Neill has
treated that relationship so effectively that it definitely
gives power to both his characterization and his plot.

Throughout the play the members of the Mannon family are
in a constant emotional entanglement. Because Abe Mannon
had built his house out of hatred and jealousy, which re-
sulted from his passionate love for Marie Brantôme, a servant
girl with whom his brother David had run away, those emotions
are prevalent throughout the trilogy. Christine has hated
her husband Ezra since their wedding night, when his love
turned into lust. That hatred has resulted in an equal one
toward Lavinia. Christine explains her feeling for her
daughter when she tells Lavinia:

I tried to love you. I told myself it wasn't hu-
man not to love my own child, born of my body. But
I never could make myself feel you were born of any
body but his! You were always my wedding night to me
-- and my honeymoon.\textsuperscript{15}

Feeling as she does toward her husband and her daughter,
Christine has given all of her love to Orin. He returns her
affections passionately, even to the point of being jealous
of his own father and later of Adam Brant, and there exists
between mother and son an unnatural love, which is partly
responsible for the tragedy which comes to the Mannons.
When Orin is forced to go to war, Christine then turns to
Adam with a passion which finally drives her to the murder of
her husband.

It is only natural that Lavinia turn to her father for
the love which she could not secure from her mother; how-
ever, her feeling for him is the same unhealthy passion that
Orin feels for Christine. Lavinia is definitely desirous of
the place her mother holds in the lives of the three Mannons.
When Christine accuses Lavinia of being in love with Adam
Brant, Lavinia indignantly and angrily denies the accusation;
however, in the last act of "The Haunted" her subconscious
reaction makes her realize that she, too, could have loved
him with the love that Christine gave him. Christine's sec-
ond accusation is equally true: "You've tried to become the
wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Eugene O'Neill, Mourning Becomes Electra, "Homecoming,"}
\textit{Act II, p. 51.}
schemed to take my place!"16 Although Lavinia never quite accomplishes the former desire, her devotion to her father results in her seeking revenge for his death. The latter is accomplished after Christine's suicide, for it is to Lavinia that Orin turns completely for love and comfort. The brotherly love that he has felt for her changes into the passion that he once felt for his mother. He becomes jealous of Peter, Lavinia's fiance, and threatens to expose the Mannon crimes unless she breaks off her engagement. Orin's love for his sister becomes an obsession, which reaches its peak when he insanely says to her:

And I suppose you think that's all it means, that I'll be content with a promise I've forced out of you, which you'll always be plotting to break? Oh, no! I'm not such a fool! I've got to be sure -- You said you would do anything for me. That's a large promise, Vinnie -- anything! . . . You don't seem to feel all you mean to me now -- all you have made yourself mean -- since we murdered Mother! . . . I love you now with all the guilt in me -- the guilt we share! Perhaps I love you too much, Vinnie! . . . How else can I be sure you won't leave me? You would never dare leave me -- then! You would feel as guilty then as I do! You would be as damned as I am!17

The only healthy, normal emotion in the play is the love that Peter and his sister Hazel feel for Lavinia and for Orin; but against the distorted, twisted passions of the Mannons, pure, sincere love has no chance of existence.

In direct contrast to the complex emotions in O'Neill's

16Ibid., Act II, p. 53.
play are the very normal ones in the Greek versions. At no time is it suggested that Agamemnon's love for Clytemnestra contains the element of lust. The reason for the queen's decision to murder her husband is that in his absence she has fallen in love with someone else. Aegisthus' desire for Agamemnon's position, his power, and his wife is certainly not unusual for one who is over-ambitious. Creses and Electra have a very deep affection for their father, and it is only after Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon that they turn against her and plot her death along with Aegisthus'. The dominant emotion which characterizes the three Greek Elec-

tras is revenge: sex frustration and incest are completely absent in the Greek plays. In fact, Joseph Krutch says that the love pictured in O'Neill's drama is a fashion which the Greeks did not understand.18

Although the psychoanalytical treatment of O'Neill's play is definitely an outstanding element, it never rises above and overshadows the general theme and motive of the play. Rather, the frustration element works together with the ancestral heritage to provide the determinism which must serve as a substitute for the Greek Fate.

The influence of the Greek dramatists upon O'Neill is evident so far as his plot is concerned, but the characters are definitely his own creation. Regarding the relative

18Joseph Krutch, "Our Electra," Nation, CXXXIII (November 18, 1931), 551-552.
influence of the three Greek Electra dramas, O'Neill wrote the following statement:

The trilogy of Aeschylus was what I had in mind. As for the individual characters, I did not consciously follow any one of the Greek dramatists. On the contrary, I tried my best to forget all about their differing Electras, etc. All I wanted to borrow was the theme pattern of Aeschylus (and the old legends) and to reinterpret it in modern psychological terms with Fate and the Furies working from within the individual soul. From having made a comparison of the Greeks' plays with O'Neill's, I should say that O'Neill did "forget all about their differing Electras," for his characters are far removed from any of the ones which the Greeks created.

The Greek Electra is more pathetic than Lavinia is. Her bad treatment has resulted in a feeling of self-pity, and she spends a great deal of time mourning and lamenting to the choruses. Aeschylus puts such little emphasis on Electra that she can hardly be called a characterization; the only two emotions which characterize her at all are her love for Orestes and her dead father and her desire to avenge the latter's death. Sophocles' Electra really shows more spirit than either of the other two. She is actively antagonistic toward Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, and in the first scene between Electra and her mother the former openly defies the latter. O'Neill's Lavinia, however, makes these Greek heroines seem anemic. Of course, the complexity of her nature partly

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accounts for her vitality. At the beginning of the play she is almost completely a Mannon. She is thin, angular, and stiff, and she "carries herself with a wooden, square-shouldered, military bearing." Her copper-gold hair, her dark violet-blue eyes, her dark eyebrows, her sensual mouth, and her heavy jaw suggest a remarkable similarity to her mother, but she tries to hide any such resemblance. She loves passionately, hates vehemently, and when her jealousy is aroused, she is likely to go to any length to secure that which she desires. She can be cunning, as she is when she tricks Adam into telling his identity; cruel, as she is when she tells her mother that she is evil, shameless, and an adulteress; and pathetically devoted, as she is when her father comes home from war. She is clever in her method of getting Orin to murder Adam; she is hard as she accuses Christine. In "The Haunted," however, Lavinia has become a different person. The Mannon likeness has gone, and she now strikingly resembles Christine. She is feminine and graceful and has forsaken her usual black attire for the green her mother formerly wore so well. She has also become like her mother in her desire for love. Orin's suicide, together with the realization that a normal, happy life is not for her, makes her revert into the Mannon that she was at the beginning of the play. O'Neill carries her through a complete metamorphosis, then takes her back to her original form. She is truly a masterpiece of characterization.
Crestes in the Greek plays is a strong, upstanding young man with a mind of his own, while in O'Neill's play Orin is a soft, affectionate, neurotic weakling who is dominated first by Christine and later by Lavinia. He allows his love for his mother, his jealousy for Adam Grant, and his submission to Electra drive him to the murder of his mother's lover. Crestes is not such a weakling; he is just as eager for revenge as Electra, and it is he who makes plans regarding Aegisthus' death. When Crestes is tortured by the Furies, instead of taking his life to escape, he stands trial for the murders he has committed. When Orin is tortured by his guilt and realizes that his unnatural love for Electra has repulsed her, being the weakling that he is, he commits suicide.

The mother in the tragedy is treated differently by each dramatist. Euripides evidently considered Clytemnestra a very unimportant character, for she hardly does more than walk through one scene, and then it is to plead for her life. Sophocles' Clytemnestra spends most of her time trying to justify her crime. Once she shows a spark of animation when she threatens Electra, who has defied her. Aeschylus gives a much better characterization of the Greek queen than either of the other two dramatists. His queen is very hypocritical. During the first part of the play she goes around talking about how much she misses Agamemnon, how faithful she has been to him, and how eager she is for him to return. When she first greets him, it is with a great deal of false joy. A few minutes later she kills him. After his death she
continues her deceit by trying to justify her deed of violence. Stricken with a guilty conscience, she, too, becomes rather a weakling and, failing to persuade Orestes to let her live, she meets the same undignified fate of the other two Clytemnestras. O'Neill has characterized Christine as being the direct opposite of Lavinia. Christine is utterly feminine, soft, and affectionate. She and her daughter are alike in one respect: they are both willing to risk anything to get their desires. Throughout the drama Christine is antagonistic toward and afraid of Lavinia. Arthur Hobson Quinn says of Christine:

... she is ruthless in pursuing her passion for Brant but weak at times before the moral strength of Lavinia. Christine is not a lofty figure -- she is more like the Clytemnestra of Euripides than the Clytemnestra of Aeschylus or of Sophocles.20

Agamemnon in Aeschylus' play is a very weak character. All he does is to talk about his joy at being home and to argue with Clytemnestra over whether or not he will walk on the purple carpet into the palace. He is hardly a personality at all. Although Ezra is in the trilogy only a comparatively short time, O'Neill gives us a rather vivid picture of a pathetic, aging man whose adherence to rigid Puritanism has robbed him of a really happy life. His experience with death has made him aware of what he has missed, and he returns desirous of breaking down the barrier that exists between himself and Christine. He is affectionate, embarrassed, and

20Arthur Hobson Quinn, op. cit., p. 257.
bewildered as he talks with his wife. Later in his bedroom he is hurt and bitter when he realizes that Christine does not love him. When he learns that Christine loves the son of Marie Brantôme, the Puritan element in him arouses a fury which brings about his fatal heart attack. With his last words to Lavinia he becomes once more Judge Mannon and accuses Christine.

Aeschylus' and Sophocles' characterizations of Aegisthus are unimportant, but Euripides makes of him a very vivid personality. He is arrogant, self-satisfied, and power-mad. It is the latter characteristic that has made him marry Clytemnestra rather than a great love for her. O'Neill's characterization of Adam is entirely different. Although it is a desire for revenge that has first attracted him to his uncle's wife, it is a sincere love for Christine that makes him become an accomplice to Ezra's murder. He also has a great love for the sea. He is rather of a sensitive, poetic type and is alternately gloomy, loving, revengeful, tender, and bitter. He is as pathetic in his way as Ezra.

In his characterizations O'Neill has introduced a physical resemblance theme. The three Mannons, Ezra, Orin, and Adam, look a great deal alike. According to Stark Young, "It provides a parallel to the Greek motive of a cursed house. . . ."21 It is definitely symbolic of the Mannon

21 Stark Young, op. cit., p. 353.
blood which each has in his veins and the heritage which brings them all to destruction.

There is also a resemblance between the women that the Mannons love. Adam tells Christine, who is the foreign, exotic, warm-blooded type, that she reminds him of his mother, whom both David and Abe Mannon loved and whom even Ezra as a child was attracted to. Although Lavinia seems more like the Mannons at the beginning of the play, after her visit to the South Seas she has become strikingly like her mother. That resemblance is more than just skin deep, however, for she has become like Christine in temperament as well. These resemblances seem to bind the Mannons and the women they love to one another in a rather peculiar way and serve as an important factor of the destinies that await them.

Peter and Hazel, the life-long friends of Lavinia and Orin, are not represented in the Greek plays. On the other hand, Pylades, Crestes' friend; Cassandra, Agamemnon's paramour; and Chrysothemis, the sister of Crestes and Electra, are absent in the modern version. Seth, the Mannon gardener, might be compared to the old man who is the friend of Electra and Crestes in the Greek plays. One important element which is not found in O'Neill's Electra is the chorus. The gossiping villagers in Mourning Becomes Electra serve as O'Neill's substitute for it. They, unlike the Greek choruses, are of very little importance.
All critics agree that O'Neill's characters are utterly foreign to those of the Greek dramas, but there is disagreement as to the value of O'Neill's characterizations. H. G. Kemelman expresses his opinion that

the reader sympathizes with the characters in the Greek story for they are perfectly normal, but the characters in the O'Neill play are so far removed from normal experience that they can interest him only as unusual cases of abnormal psychology.\textsuperscript{22}

Henry Seidel Canby definitely agrees with Kemelman, and he says further:

There are no thrills of sympathy, none of that spiritual exaltation that waits upon tragedy. . . . The great characters are all selfish. Nothing outside of their own will stirs them. The high-tension hate which makes the drama move is sprung not from fate or inevitable human circumstances but of those complexities of incestuous desire which make the Mannon family a thing apart.\textsuperscript{23}

I disagree completely with Kemelman and Canby regarding O'Neill's characters. I grant that the important ones are abnormal, but they are individual personalities who are much more vivid and interesting than are the Greek ones. As for the lack of sympathy with O'Neill's characters, there were times when I felt sympathetic toward each one of the main characters -- Lavinia, when she speaks of Christine's hatred of her; Christine, when Adam's death robs her of her last chance of escape from the Mannons; Ezra, when he

\textsuperscript{22}H. G. Kemelman, "Eugene O'Neill and the Highbrow Melodrama," \textit{Bookman}, LXXV (September, 1932), 488.

\textsuperscript{23}Henry Seidel Canby, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 257.
pathetically appeals to Christine for a new relationship between them; Adam, when he realizes he is no longer fit to command his ship; and Orin, when Lavinia tells him that she hates him and wishes he were dead. It is true that the characters are selfish, but they are not completely selfish. Had they been, there would have been no tragic element, but their selfish desires, together with their longing to escape and their peculiar types of devotion to the ones they love, provide a conflict which is the nucleus of a truly great drama.

O'Neill has borrowed a plot from the Greeks, but aside from that the drama is truly his own. His motivating forces behind his tragedy, his introduction of the frustration element, his characterizations, and his general treatment of the borrowed plot, combined, have resulted in a play which has won unfavorable comment from some and praise from many. Arthur Hobson Quinn voices the opinion of those many in his statement:

Mourning Becomes Electra is not simply a trilogy. It is a landmark in the history of American drama, for in it one of our playwrights matched his strength with the Greeks and rose from the test triumphant. 24

O'Neill has borrowed from the Greeks another theatrical device, one which is older than the theatre itself, the chorus. Greek drama had its birth in the religious festivals held in worship of Dionysus, and in these festivals the chorus was a major element.

24Arthur Hobson Quinn, op. cit., p. 255.
In the beginning there were neither audience nor actors. The priests, together with the choric singers, who were clad in goatskins in imitation of Dionysus' satyrs, met with the villagers to pay homage to the god of wine by means of presenting the dithyramb, which was an improvised ceremony of song and dance. The dithyrambic chorus was composed of fifty dancers, consisting only of boys and men. Sometime in the sixth century Arion, who was said to have improved the dithyramb in regularity and order, placed spoken lines among the lyrical songs. These were brief discourses between the chorus and its leader, the choryphaeus, concerning the exploits of Dionysus. These lines helped to clarify the story which was told in the songs. Thus, the spoken tragic drama was begun. Thespis in the latter part of that same century introduced the first actor who, with the choryphaeus and the chorus, impersonated scenes from the life of the god. With the introduction of the dramatic element into these festival ceremonies, it was necessary that the chorus stop being satyrs and become men and women, usually citizens of the scene of action. By the latter part of the fifth century the choruses were reduced to twelve. This came about as a result of a requirement that each tragic poet present four plays at a time in the annual competition at the City Dionysia.  

words, music, dance steps, and stage business for so many plays, Aeschylus divided them into four groups of twelve each, assigning one group to each play. He was also responsible for the introduction of the second actor, which began the decrease of the importance of the chorus. Sophocles later added the third actor and increased the chorus from twelve to fifteen because that number was better for the dancers and for the leader, who could then stand to one side and not spoil the symmetry of the two half-choruses.26 The increase in the number of the chorus did not increase its importance. On the contrary, this movement resulted in complete subordination of the chorus to the dramatic action. Once this movement was started, it moved with rapidity. There is evidence of this in the fact that in Aeschylus' The Suppliants the chorus of fifty maidens is used as the protagonistic element and only the single actor is used. In Prometheus Bound Aeschylus adopts the two actors, and his chorus is of not quite so much importance. In his trilogy Orestes, although the chorus is active throughout the three plays, particularly "Agamemnon," it, together with the leader, functions only in relationship to the main characters. The chants are definitely in keeping with the mood and the action of the play. Frequently the leader and the chorus advise, question, and comfort, but always they remain secondary to the characters around whom the action revolves. In

26 Ibid., p. 134.
the plays of Sophocles and Euripides the choruses are of even less importance. They do not have so many lines, and they do not speak so frequently; the choruses have been forced a little farther into the background.

The Greek comedy chorus was never so important as that of the tragedy. There was no fixed number until the fifth century, when the group was limited to twenty-four. From that time there was a rather steady decrease in number until in the second century there were only four. The comedy chorus usually represented animals, knights, graces, or poets. By the time of the New Comedy, however, the comic chorus was insignificant. The main function from that time on was one of entertainment between acts. Thus, the chorus, in which is found the origin of drama and which at one time was the drama, has subsided until now its only place in the theatre is in the form of a dramatic experiment, such as O'Neill used.

His play in which the use of choruses is most outstanding is Lazarus Laughed. In this play, as in the Greek plays, the choruses are all masked; therefore, they, in turn, represent different types, ages, and nationalities. There is the Chorus of Qld Men who in their first chant tell of the miracle of Lazarus' being raised from the dead. There is also in the first act the Chorus of the Followers of Lazarus who repeat words and expressions after him and join him in his laughter. After such chanting the crowd frequently joins
in, repeating the words of either the Old Men or of Lazarus' Followers. In the second scene of Act I the crowd is divided into the Orthodox and the Followers of Lazarus. The Chorus of Old Men stands between the two opposing forces; thus their positions show their relationship toward Lazarus. As the Aged Jew talks against Lazarus, the Old Men join in, repeating his expressions and laughing as he does, until all of the crowd, except Lazarus' Followers, join him in this chant against Lazarus. The group's turmoil is finally stopped when Jesus' death is announced, and the two forces again separate. They finally clash, however, and after their fight the Old Men give a chant of woe. Lazarus then leads them in laughter, and the Chorus of Lazarus' Followers dance and chant once more their theme chant of laughter. The different groups join in until Lazarus leaves, and then one by one they start singing of death and fear.

In Act II the chorus is Greek, and they chant about Lazarus' coming, believing him to be Dionysus. Then the Crowd and the Chorus of Greeks protest against the Romans until the Chorus of Followers and the Followers come in with Lazarus, chanting their theme. The Greek Chorus hails him, and after Lazarus has talked with Caligula, all join in with laughter. At the beginning of Scene Two the Chorus of the Senate are singing about themselves; then they hail Caesar. Frequently throughout that scene all choruses chant the laughter theme.
In Scene One of the third act there is only one chorus, that of the Guards. They come into the play only once, when they chant at the end of that scene the laughter theme. In the second scene the chorus is not so important as it was in the first few scenes. The chorus is composed of three males and four females. Once they ask for a proof that there is no death, and the crowd joins them in their demand. Then when Pompeia laughs over Miriam's death, the chorus joins her in that laughter.

This same chorus functions throughout Act Four. Toward the end of the first scene the chorus laughs once with Pompeia and chants about laughter as Lazarus leaves. In the last scene the chorus comes back into prominence; it laughs, it questions, it hails Caesar and Lazarus, and finally it laughs again the laughter of Lazarus.

In his usage of the choruses O'Neill has given them a combination of functions. Although he does not raise them to the importance of the original Greek chorus, he does have them perform a number of duties which were given over to the Greek choruses when their prominence was on the decline. He uses eight main choruses: Old Men, Lazarus' Followers, Greeks, Roman Senators, Legionaires, Guards, Youths and Girls, and Roman Populace. At different times they represent the citizens and officials of that time and of that community. They give exposition of events which occurred before the main action which takes place on the stage. They
lead the crowd in furnishing mood and background for the action, and in some cases they even enter into the action. The choruses further represent the division of opinion regarding the acceptance of Lazarus. They perform this function not only by their words but also by the positions they take on the stage. They sing, they dance, they lament, they rejoice, and, in doing so, they lead the crowd in similar reactions. Frequently they repeat the words of Lazarus and join him in his laughter. At times, however, they forsake him and chant the words of the disbelievers. Thus, O'Neill through his choruses reveals the shifting faith of the crowd and of the main characters. It is the Followers of Lazarus who, until their deaths, chant the laughter theme, the message which Lazarus came back to deliver, the thought that is so easy to accept but equally easy to forget. It is that theme which remains in the minds of the reader and of the audience:

Laugh! Laugh!
There is only life!
There is only laughter!
Fear is no more!
Death is dead!27

Besides the large or major chorus O'Neill uses a chorus of seven who repeat the chanting of the main chorus and at times also have solo speaking lines. The members of this small group are first the Seven Guests, then the Seven Citizens

27Eugene O'Neill, Lazarus Laughed, I, 1, 23.
of Athens, and last the Seven Senators. In the words of the
author, their function is "emphasizing and 'pointing' the ac-
tion throughout." 28

O'Neill has used his choruses most effectively. Without
them the conflict between paganism and Christianity would
have been commonplace. They lend to the drama a grandeur
and a splendor that lift the play up among the ranks of the
topmost symbolistic dramas. Barrett H. Clark expresses the
opinion that "half the choruses of Lazarus should be cut." 29
To cut any of them, in my estimation, would be cutting the
mood, the exposition, and even a part of the action. The
numerous choruses, however, are a disadvantage in the produc-
tion of the play, for the necessity of frequent changes in the
elaborate costumes and masks has made its production very ex-
pensive. The frequent occurrence of laughter by both Lazar-
us and the chorus is another technical difficulty. In 1928,
however, Gilmor Brown overcame these difficulties and in his
production at the Pasadena Playhouse presented a spectacle
which truly rivaled the "glory that was Greece."

In Marco Millions O'Neill also uses the chorus, although
in this drama it is merely a minor detail. It is in the
scenes where the tragic element enters into the drama that
the chorus is introduced. As Marco Polo is taking Kakuchin

28 Barrett H. Clark, Eugene O'Neill, the Man and His
Plays, p. 181.

29 Ibid., p. 186.
to Ghazan, her future husband, the Boatswain and the Chorus of Sailors chant about the waves, the sun, the voyage, and death. In contrast, Kakuchin and the Chorus of Women chant about love and sorrow. These two choruses furnish mood and background for the action which is to follow. Before Ghazan comes aboard, the Women talk of his coming and after he leaves, they chant of weeping and sorrow. This is quite in keeping with Kukachin's emotions, for she sinks to her knees sobbing quietly. In the funeral scene the chorus comes into more prominence. There is a chorus of women who moan whenever the signal is given by Kublai, the Kaan. In the procession are nine musicians, a chorus of nine singers, and a troupe of young girls and young boys, who are singing and dancing as they enter. Each of the four priests, a Confucian, a Taoist, a Buddhist, and a Moslem, ends his part in the ceremony with the words, "Death is."\(^{30}\) After the lines of each priest, the chorus takes up the refrain. Next in the ceremony is the chant between Chronicler and the chorus, lamenting Kukachin's death. Throughout this chant is the accompaniment of the musicians and the humming and swaying of the chorus. The final function of the chorus is to repeat the lines spoken by Chu-Yin, the Kaan's friend, and Kublai in their discussion of prayer.

Although one definitely sees in these choruses the influence of the early Greek chorus, the elaborateness and the

glory of the latter are absent. O'Neill's chorus in *Marco Millions* is truly a minor detail which occasionally furnishes mood.

In *The Hairy Ape* there is the mere suggestion of a chorus in Yank's companions in the forecastle of a transatlantic liner. Their choric duties consist, however, of repeating in refrain certain expressions from Yank's or Paddy's dialogue. When Yank tells the group to quiet down because he is trying to think, they join in the refrain:

Drinking, don't think!  
Drinking, don't think!  
Drinking, don't think!  

Two other times they join in, repeating only one word from a bit of preceding dialogue. Even though the stokers seem more a group than individuals, their lines are given as solo lines rather than choric ones in most cases.

Although *Mourning Becomes Electra* is of Greek origin, O'Neill does not emphasize the choric element in it. Indeed, there seems to be an absence of this popular Greek device in O'Neill's *Electra*. At the beginning of each trilogy, however, O'Neill introduces townspeople who are "a chorus representing the town come to look and listen and spy on the rich and exclusive Mannons." These townsfolk are definitely types instead of individuals, but instead of indulging in

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choral speaking, they speak solo dialogue which portrays the general attitude of the community toward the Hannon's. Ashley Dukes says of O'Neill's attempted use of the chorus in the modern trilogy:

The attempt to introduce a chorus to the tragedy clearly fails. It might have succeeded, but only with the help of an avowed poetic convention. As it is, a few elderly men drift across the foreground of the classic scene, bringing into the play whatever salt of humor it possesses, but otherwise never diverting our attention for an instant from the main platform of action. To interpret the action is utterly beyond their power or province.33

I admit that Dukes' comment regarding the unimportance of O'Neill's chorus in that tragedy is true; however, at no time did I feel that the play really needed the dramatic chorus of the Greeks. It is definitely a play of individual personalities, and I do not believe that even a chorus could give it more power and fire than it now has.

Even though O'Neill has used the chorus in four of his plays, it is only in Lazarus Laughed that it is a major part of the play. His only real experimental work with choruses is done in this symbolistic drama of the man who "laughed at death."

Almost hand in hand with the development of the chorus is that of the mask, another O'Neill experiment which shows definitely the Greek influence; for, although the mask has been in use all over the world and still exists in Tibet,

China, Japan, Burma, Siam, Ceylon, and Java, the mask, as we know it, comes to us from the Greeks.

Like the chorus, the mask was originally a ceremonial and religious object. When the Greeks first celebrated the feast of Dionysus, they painted themselves with wine dregs, later covered themselves with red lead, and then with vine leaves. The real mask, however, was adopted when drama became "the story of the struggle of gods and demons, of good and bad spirits, acted out by the priests." These priests felt a necessity for the masks, particularly when they were impersonating the gods. The first Greek mask, which Thespis is credited with having made, was really a covering of linen which was painted and had slits for the eyes and the mouth. Linen masks made way for the leather ones which were sometimes gilded. The final Greek mask was carved of wood or formed of clay and baked. Because of the size of the Greek theatres, it was necessary to find some means of conveying the words and gestures of the actor to the more distant rows of the spectators. In order to remedy the situation the high mask was introduced to increase the size of the actor. Aeschylus further developed an enlarged mask which covered not only the face but also the whole head, with side and

34 "The Tradition of the False Face," Literary Digest, LIXVII (April 7, 1928), 22.

front hair attached to it. The open mouth, which characterized the Greek mask, was in the form of a bivalve shell which served as a resonating chamber and aided in the projection of the voice. The mask proved advantageous from another point of view. It enabled one actor to play several different parts; thus, the cast of a play could be smaller than if each one could take only one part. The main disadvantage of the mask, on the other hand, was the fact that it allowed for no change of expression. Frequently a change in masks was possible if the character was off-stage when his physical or mental state was supposed to be modified by some misfortune or accident. 36 When the catastrophe occurred while the character was on the stage, at times he hid his face until the strong emotional scene had passed. At other times the dramatist tried to justify the immobility of the actor's mask by connecting it with the plot. Since the use of masks prevented truly detailed individualized portraits, "like our newspaper cartoonists they reduced each character to the fewest possible traits, which were suggested in bold strokes and were easily recognized by even the most remote spectator." 37 Of course, the masks, when closely viewed, seemed crude and grotesque, but they ably served the purpose of representing the Greek types, which they had a tendency


toward rather than individuals, and at the same time enlarging the features and amplifying the voice. Thus, the mask had adapted the dramatic art to fit the physical Greek theatre.

Though the Greek tragedy masks were a bit exaggerated in their expressions, the comedy masks had even more distorted features, and usually the mouth was widely open. While the tragic choruses usually represented the citizens in the play and were masked alike, the comic chorus frequently represented all kinds of animals. There were twenty-eight tragedy masks with about thirty special ones. The masks of the comedy numbered about forty-four. It was really in Rome, however, that the comedy mask reached its height.

As civilization moved westward, drama moved with it to Rome. The tragedies were the same as the Greeks had used, but the comedy was a "throwback to the ancient Doric mimes with which comedy was allied."38 Without the aid of choruses the Romans parodied mythology and burlesqued tragedy. In these comedies there was a wide use of ridiculous, caricaturing, abnormally ugly masks throughout scenes that had to do with eating, drinking, theft of wine or food, browbeating husbands by shrewish wives, intrigues, and other phases of ordinary, lusty life.39 This comedy gave way to the atellanæ

39 Ibid., p. 32.
and the mimes, two forms of improvised farces which were the forerunners of Commedia dell' Arte, which developed in the sixteenth century in Italy. These Roman farces continued the development and usage of the large ugly leather masks of the ancient farce. The Dark Ages brought on the death of the drama, and during that time the mask was used only in revels and to celebrate holidays and special occasions. The minstrel was the only real disciple of the creative arts in existence for a while. In the thirteenth century, drama had a rebirth in the church. When Pope Innocent III prohibited the wearing of masks in church ceremonies, the church officials gave scriptural plays outside the church and were able once more to use masks. Wherever the mystery, the morality, or the miracle plays were given, there was an occasional use of masks. From that time on there was a steady decrease in the use of masks until the fourteenth century, when Commedia dell' Arte was originated in Italy. This comedy was improvised as were its predecessors, and the mask was one of its major elements. Instead of using the whole mask as had been done formerly, the Italian comedy used the half-mask, which covered the top part of the face. These comedies featured such stock characters as Harlequin, Pantaloon, and Pulcinella; therefore the masks of this period were of more uniformity than those of the Empire Period. The popularity of the Commedia dell' Arte lasted until the seventeenth century. In the next century the comedy theatres of France affected the mask, and in the nineteenth century the
mask degenerated to crude false faces. This has been the status of the mask until this century, when interest in this device has been revived. Greatly responsible for this re-awakened interest has been the re-introduction of masks into the theatre as an experiment by modern dramatists.

O'Neill's experimental work with masks has been of great importance in the modern theatre, for he has used both the ancient Greek and the *Commedia dell'Arte* forms of masks both as the Greeks used them and also in an original and unique fashion.

The usage of masks in *Lazarus Laughed* is more similar to that of the Greek theatre than in any of his other plays. In this play O'Neill follows the symbolic treatment of masks, for he has all of his choruses wear masks of different types and periods. The periods of life which are represented are Boyhood or Girlhood, Youth or Young Womanhood, Manhood or Womanhood, Middle Age, Maturity, and Old Age. Each period, in turn, is represented by the following types of characters: the Simple, Ignorant; the Happy, Eager; the Self-Tortured, Introspective; the Proud, Self-Reliant; the Servile, Resigned. These choruses change nationality, costumes, and masks with each new act. Throughout the entire play there is the similarity between the choruses because, even though first the chorus is Jewish, next Greek, and then Roman, they are of the same types and periods. The choruses of Old Men, Greeks, Senators, Guards, and Youths and Girls, each a group
of only seven people, wear masks which are twice the size of those of the other choruses.

Each of the rather unimportant characters wears a whole mask, which presents a rather generalized picture of himself; while the main ones wear half-masks, which are representative of the conflicting elements within them.

Miriam, Lazarus' wife, has her forehead, her eyes, and her nose concealed by the half-mask, the form of which can be traced back to the Commedia dell' Arte.

Her mask is the pure pallor of marble, the expression that of a statue of Woman, of her eternal acceptance of the compulsion of motherhood, the inevitable cycle of love into pain into joy and new love into separation and pain again and the loneliness of age. The eyes of the mask are almost closed. Their gaze turns within, oblivious to the life outside, as they dream down on the child forever in memory at her breast. The mouth of Miriam is sensitive and sad, tender with an eager, understanding smile of self-forgetful love, the lips still fresh and young. ⁴⁰

Her countenance reveals that she is a woman with a triple personality, for her mask presents one type of woman, her eyes, another, and her lips, still another. Throughout the first three acts she becomes steadily older; therefore, she wears a new mask in each scene. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus' parents, on the other hand, wear the full masks, which reproduce their characters without too much exaggeration. Caligula joins Miriam in appearing in a half-mask. His mask is of crimson with a purplish tinge and in contrast to the

⁴⁰Eugene O'Neill, Lazarus Laughed, I, 1, 13.
bulging prematurely wrinkled forehead, hollow temples, bulbous, sensual nose, and large troubled eyes are his childish mouth and his soft, feminine red lips, which reveal a spoiled, petulant, self-obsessed, weak, domineering character. 41

His countenance, too, suggests a complexity of personality. His mask suggests the cruel, heartless Caligula who loves to kill, but his lips suggest the confused child who represents Fear. Cassius, one of the statesmen, has on a whole mask, which presents a heavy, battered face suggestive of coarse humor. Marcellus, a Roman patrician, wears the full mask which reveals a picture of a hypocritical smile and hard, cold eyes with a general expression of weakness. Pompeia's dark, cruel eyes in her half-mask show an evil beauty, a lust, a perverted passion, while her mouth is gentle, girlish, and self-loathing. Tiberius, who represents the Empire, wears a half-mask of purple, blotched with a darker shade. His eyes are leering, cynical slits and his nose is long and thick. His lips are not at all in keeping with the rest of his face, for they are thin, stern, and self-contained. Thus, we see that O'Neill has used several different kinds of masks, each one meaning a certain thing.

The masks of his choruses, which represent both type and quality, are symbolic rather than individualistic. The large choruses and the crowd wear the regular-sized masks; the small choruses of seven wear those of double size. The whole masks of the minor characters reproduce their characters,

41 Ibid., II, 1, 54.
not to the extent of being highly individualized. It is the half-mask of the important characters that shows the dual nature of each. The mask, in each case except that of Miriam, represents the cruel, bitter, or evil side of the person; the lips, on the other hand, show the side of the character which cries out to Lazarus and which, in most cases, is victorious over the evil self.

Lazarus is the only character in the play who never wears a mask. It is because he alone was brought back from the dead and knows the "laughter of Heaven." He is the only one who has learned to laugh because there is no death. Because of his knowledge, he becomes steadily younger. The fact that Lazarus does not wear a mask symbolizes the purity and simplicity of his life; it sets him apart from the others in the drama.

O'Neill has definitely made a success of his experimental undertaking in this play. He typifies the world struggling against the one faith which might bring to all the element of laughter. The author has said of his efforts:

It's in seven scenes, and all the characters wear masks. And here I've used them right. . . . In Lazarus I believe I've managed the problem of big crowds better than crowds are usually worked in plays. It's never quite right. My Jews all wear Jewish masks and it's the same with the Greeks and the Romans. I think I've suggested the presence and characteristics of mobs by means of masks without having to bring in a lot of supers.42

O'Neill, in *The Great God Brown*, uses the mask in an

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entirely different way. It is used to make evident to the audience the difference between the real self and the artificial self one presents to the world. Each actor carries with him a rubber false-face expression of his assumed attitude. This device represents the dual nature of the characters and gives an outward show of changing personalities. O'Neill "in a picturesque way thus enters the same realms of psychology that are being explored by Lenormand and Pirandello."43

Not all of the characters in this play wear masks; only Dion Anthony, William Brown, Margaret Anthony, and Cybel, "a group of people who even in their most intimate moments cannot bear to gaze for more than a few seconds at the naked faces of their companions."44 When their self-revelation becomes too painful for either themselves or their companions, they put their masks back on and become again themselves as others see them. The more outward-living the characters are, the more nearly their masks resemble their faces; the more inward-living, the less they resemble them. These masks serve as a protection against the world and are manufactured by fear of the world and of the people with whom the characters come in contact. As their lives and personalities change, so their masks change. Frequently when the characters

43 Moses Montrose, Dramas of Modernism and Their Fore-runners, p. 666.

face a crisis or experience strong emotions, their masks fall off, but generally it is only when they are alone and soliloquize or pray or when they bare their souls to one another that we see them without their masks.

The mask is introduced in *The Great God Brown* when Dion Anthony enters with his mother and his father. Only his face is masked.

The mask is a fixed forcing of his own face -- dark, spiritual, poetic, passionately supersensitive, helplessly unprotected in its childlike, religious faith in life -- into the expression of a mocking, reckless, defiant, gayly scoffing and sensual young Pan.45

Because of an early injustice done him, he has designed a mask in which "to live and rebel against that other boy's God" and to protect himself "from His cruelty."46 That "other boy" was William Brown, whose infantile jealousy of Dion's artistic ability had made him strike Dion and kick out his picture in the sand. Dion explains his disillusionment at this action when he tells Brown:

... It wasn't what he'd done that made me cry, but him! I had loved and trusted him and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of Man was born.47

Because of his artistic nature, Dion is too sensitive to bear the misunderstanding of the world, which is blind to the man beneath the mask. Dion analyzes his sensitivity when he


46Tbid., II, iii, 60.

47Tbid.
tells Cybel that he was born without a skin; therefore he must wear a mask to keep from touching or being touched.

Once he takes his mask off before Margaret, his future wife, to try to show her the real Dion, but she is so alarmed by his real face that he resumes his mask and vows that she will never again see him as he really is. He, therefore, becomes the husband of a woman who never really knows him. All through his life, however, Dion keeps this vow to his wife, until the night of his death when he bids her farewell. In desperate mockery he says to her:

Look at me, Mrs. Anthony! It's the last chance! Tomorrow I'll have moved on to the next hell! Behold your man -- the sniveling, cringing, life-denying Christian slave you have so nobly ignored in the father of your sons! Look! 48

Once more, however, she finds it unbearable to look at his face, and she faints. His last effort having failed, he goes to his death, never having been understood by the woman whom he loves and who loves him.

Dion does find understanding in the nourishing soothing Cybel. To the world she is a prostitute, but without her mask she is the Mother Earth who gives Dion the quiet wisdom of maternal friendship. It is only in the presence of Cybel that he can leave his mask off. He analyzes the stimulation she has given him by saying: "You're strong. You always give. You've given my weakness strength to live." 49

48 Ibid., II, 11, 56.  
49 Ibid., II, 1, 48.
Throughout the play both Dion's face and his mask undergo a change. Arthur Hobson Quinn in his statement explains this change:

Dion's inner self retrogresses along the line of Christian resignation until it partakes of the nature of the Saint, while at the same time the outer Pan is slowly transformed by his struggle with reality into Mephistopheles. 50

These resemblances become more and more marked with each experience, until, just before his death, "his masked face has a terrible deathlike intensity; its mocking irony becomes so cruelly malignant as to give him the appearance of a real demon, tortured into torturing others." 51 When his mask falls off just before he dies, his face is that of a Christian martyr at the point of death. Thus, true to the symbolism of his name, he has remained half devil and half saint.

Margaret, before her marriage to Dion, wears a mask which is merely an almost exact transparent reproduction of her own face, the only difference being that the mask has the abstract quality of a Girl instead of an individual. She keeps her mask on throughout the prologue except when she talks to the moon and to Dion. After her marriage her face, though still pretty and fresh, has a worried expression around the nose and mouth and a hurt expression in her eyes. She has become mature and maternal. The latter quality is

50 Arthur Hobson Quinn, op. cit., p. 193.

resultant of the maternal love for Dion, which she expresses in a soliloquy: "I'll be Mrs. Dion -- Dion's wife -- and he'll be my Dion -- my own Dion -- my little boy -- my baby! . . . "52 Although Margaret loves her husband dearly, it is not the real Dion whom she loves, but the poet and dreamer which his mask reveals. As Dion becomes a drunkard and a frequent visitor to Cybel's parlor, Margaret's mask thickens and hardens in order to serve as a protection for her pride. It is only when she is with her husband that she does not wear the mask. At one time when she faints, her three sons fail to recognize her because she does not have her mask on. When, after Dion's death, Brown wears the former's clothes and mask and makes it seem to Margaret that her husband has changed completely in his attitude toward her, she throws her mask away, for she no longer needs it since she has nothing to hide or to fear. In the epilogue after the death of Dion's mask, she once more wears a mask, one of a proud, indulgent mother. She seems sad; yet she wears the expression of one who formerly has known happiness. At the end of the play she removes her mask and talks to Dion's, professing to it undying love. Thus, Margaret never realizes that she was married to a mask and not to Dion.

To everyone except Dion, Cybel is a hardened prostitute. To him, before whom she seldom wears her mask, she is "the

52Ibid., Prologue, p. 20.
mother of men with eyes upon the future in order to see that mankind continues and endures."53 She, too, loves him in a maternal fashion, but she loves the real Dion, not his mask. She foresees his death. When she tells him of his approaching death and he begins to sob, she hands him his mask and comforts him by saying: "Here you are. Don't get hurt. Remember it's all a game, and after you're asleep, I'll tuck you in."54 Immediately after Dion leaves, Brown comes in, sees her without her mask, and fails to recognize her. She tells him she is Cybel's sister, and he leaves, never knowing the difference. Later, however, it is in the arms of Cybel, the Mother Earth, that Brown dies. It is she who removes Dion's mask in order that Brown may die as himself, she who comforts him, and she who teaches him to pray.

The "Great God Brown" is the last one of the four main characters to wear a mask. In the first part of the play he is self-assured and has nothing to hide or to fear; hence there is no necessity of his covering his face. Arthur Hobson Quinn describes him as:

A visionless demi-god of our new materialistic myth -- a success -- building his life of exterior things, inwardly empty and resourceless, an uncreative creature of superficial preordained social grooves -- a by-product forced aside into slack waters by the deep main current of life-desire.55

53 Alan D. Mickle, Studies on Six Plays, p. 81.
Although William Brown is outwardly a success, he has never realized any of his desires. Having lost Margaret to Dion, Brown all his life has envied Dion Margaret's love. He has never been able to attain the genius of Dion's architecture; yet it is that genius which has made Brown a success. When Dion turns to Cybel for comfort and understanding, Brown buys her for himself, never realizing that he has bought only her mask. Always he desires what Dion possesses. As Dion dies, he curses Brown by willing "Dion Anthony to William Brown -- for him to love and obey -- for him to become me. . . ." 56 As Dion's mask falls off, the Christian martyr begs Brown to bury him, hide him, and forget him in happiness. After Dion dies, however, Brown is contemptuous of his former friend, for he realizes that the Dion of whom he was afraid and whom Margaret loves is the mask, not the man. Thus, Brown assumes the mask of the sensitive, cynical artist, and with it Margaret's love comes to him. After he has stolen Dion's mask, Brown is forced to wear a mask of his success, William A. Brown, before the world. He is not himself to anyone, for he has inherited Dion's inner conflicts along with his mask and succumbs to them just as Dion did. Brown's internal turmoil caused by his constant deception increases to such an extent that he, as Dion, finally announces the death of William Brown. When he, accused of

being Brown's murderer and pursued by the police, is shot, he welcomes the release from Dion's frustration, and out of anguish finds belief through Cybel. Both he and Dion in death lose their complexity and die without their masks.

As might be expected there has been a great deal of discussion over O'Neill's use of masks in The Great God Brown. Stark Young feels that they are well used, for he says of them:

Coming on and off as they do when these human beings confront one another, they say quickly and clearly certain things that need to be said. . . . On the whole, too, they manage not to be confusing or even very difficult, unless it be toward the last when Brown puts on Dion's mask. By this time the masks are used not only to express the real character and the character sometimes shown the world, but also to express the transfer of one man's personality to another, to carry perhaps one soul into another body. 57

Although R. Dana Skinner admits that the masks convey the changes of the soul state with greater clarity and emphasis than the facial muscles of actors could possibly do, he says that when the author tries to fuse Dion and Brown into one, he is obliged to resort to methods of suggestion and indication which demand too much of the average audience. 58 H. G. Kemelman, however, is not at all complimentary in his remarks regarding O'Neill's use of the mask. He states:

This "experiment," rightly considered, is merely a method of labelling the speeches of the characters.


58 R. Dana Skinner, "Blossoms in the Arid Desert," The Independent, CXVI (March 6, 1926), 275.
It cannot be considered an advance on modern dramatic technique. Indeed, it is a step back, for only a poor artist needs labels to make his intentions clear.59

Again I disagree with Kemelman. I see in O'Neill's usage a deeper meaning than just "labels of speech." By using masks he is able to give to the audience or the reader a look into the bared souls of his characters. O'Neill is never satisfied with a surface characterization; hence, sometimes he uses soliloquies and asides to reveal the true image of the individual. In this play, however, he depends upon the very effective use of masks, so effective that the mask seems not merely a theatrical device, but also an integral part of his characters.

In contrast to his treatment of The Great God Brown O'Neill has only one character wear a mask in Days Without End. In the latter drama two characters represent the single person, John Loving. John is the real self, while Loving is the masked self, the part of John which is bitter, cynical, and irreligious. Loving is never seen by any of the characters, but he is frequently heard, for he accompanies John wherever he goes. Loving, the doubter, whose existence is the result of grief over an early tragedy in John's life, wears a half-mask whose features reproduce those of John's face. The mask is "the death mask of a John who has died

59H. G. Kemelman, op. cit., p. 401.
with a sneer of scornful mockery on his lips."

Loving represents John as he was between the time of his parents' death and the time of his marriage to Elsa. It is only after John has allowed fear to enter his life that this older self tries to return and ruin his life again. R. Dana Skinner contrasts the difference between the use of the mask in _The Great God Brown_ and in _Days Without End_ by saying:

"Loving is not a mask symbolizing John's present attitude to the world. He is not a symbol of concealment of false attitude, but very much a symbol of the past, of an older self."

Where Dion's two personalities have both been ever present since childhood, John and Loving represent two separate personalities which have been John Loving at different periods of his life. Thus, it is that older self which brings about the conflict inside John Loving, rather than the two present elements which are used in _The Great God Brown_.

In _Marco Millions_ the mask is indeed a trivial detail; however, its use more nearly resembles that of the Greeks. At Kukachin's funeral the chorus of nine singers enters, each singer wearing a mask of grief. The masks are of the general type which was used in the ancient Greek plays.

In _The Fountain O'Neill_ uses the mask as a symbolistic device. As Juan lies wounded as a result of his search for the Fountain of Youth, he sees frequently a masked figure

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60 Eugene O'Neill, _Days Without End_, Act I, p. 16.

who represents the Spirit of the Fountain. Each time she comes to him masked, with a message which he is unable to understand. Her mask is pale and her features are indistinguishable except for her eyes, which stare straight ahead with a stony penetration that sees through and beyond things. When she drops her mask and reveals the face of Beatrice, the girl Juan loves, he understands her message, that the Fountain of Youth is the Fountain of Eternity. Again O'Neill borrows the rather suggestive, impressionistic mask from Greece.

In All God's Chillun Got Wings no character wears a mask, but there hangs in the apartment of Jim and Ella a Negro primitive mask from the Congo. To Ella this mask is symbolic of her fear of Negro Jim's superiority. Whenever Jim, because of his race, fails to accomplish his desires which would lift him above his white wife intellectually, Ella gloats to the mask and laughs at it. At the end of the play when Jim has failed to pass the bar examination and she realizes that she has won her victory in keeping him below her, she points to the mask saying, "It's dead. The Devil's dead. . . ." Again O'Neill gives the mask another function, that of symbolizing the element of conflict in the play.

Although in Mourning Becomes Electra the characters do

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not actually wear masks, O'Neill at one time intended for
them to. In his second draft of his trilogy he had his
characters wearing half-masks to get "unrealistic truth in
wearing the mask of lying reality."63 In the finished draft
of the play the masks are not external but are elements in
the expression of the faces of the characters. In his de-
scription of Christine Mannon O'Neill writes:

One is struck at once by the strange impressions
her face gives in repose of being not living flesh but
a wonderfully life-like pale mask, in which only the
deep-set eyes of a dark violet blue are alive.64

As each Mannon is introduced, one sees that the mask-like
countenance is characteristic of that family.65 This facial
quality is representative of the Puritan element which has
suppressed the healthy, living desires and emotions of the
Mannons. Arthur Hobson Quinn believes that this substitution
of the mask-like countenance for the actual mask shows pro-
gress in O'Neill's symbolism.65

Although I did not see in Strange Interlude any use of
the mask, the drama critic for the Literary Digest found in
the play the suggestion of the mask, for he writes:

In Strange Interlude the people wear masks, only
they must be imagined. The character pauses while the
facial muscles are half static and the soul's thoughts
are poured forth in level tones. Then the everyday self
resumes control, the face becomes mobile and follows the
emotion of the words uttered.66

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63 Sophia Keith Winther, op. cit., p. 265.
64 Eugene O'Neill, Mourning Becomes Electra, "Homecoming,"
Act I, pp. 21-22.
65 Arthur Hobson Quinn, op. cit., p. 260.
66 "The Tradition of the False Face," Literary Digest,
XCVII (April 7, 1926), 22.
That O'Neill intended this suggestion of the mask in this play is debatable, but I feel sure that it is much more in evidence in the dramatic production than in the manuscript of the play.

Again O'Neill has borrowed from the Greeks and has used the device in some cases as it was used in the ancient theatre. On the other hand, he has experimented frequently with this device and at different times he has had it represent the dual nature of characters, the old self of a single character, and the symbolism of an idea and of the theme of a play. He has attached so much importance to the mask that in two plays in which the device is not used, the characters sometimes take on mask-like expressions. Even though his masks are put to varied uses, each one is effective. Thus, from another point of view, one must admit O'Neill's versatility and his success as an experimenter.

A comparison of O'Neill's plays with those of the ancient drama shows definitely the Greek influence. O'Neill has taken advantage of the knowledge and the art of the Greek dramatists and has given their plot, their choruses, and their masks a modern treatment which has made, not weak imitations of the Greek drama, but powerful and unique contributions to the modern theatre, contributions which as yet no other American dramatist has surpassed.
CHAPTER II

EXPERIMENTS SHOWING INFLUENCE OF
EARLIER ENGLISH DRAMA

The next period of literature to which O'Neill goes for
devices to use in his experimental play is that of the
earlier English drama. From this period he has borrowed
the morality play, the soliloquy, and the aside. These de-
vices were actually used prior to this period, but it is by
the earlier English treatment of them that O'Neill is in-
fluenced and inspired to give them his own unique treatment
and incorporate them into the plots of a number of his own
compositions.

Although O'Neill labels his latest play, Days Without
End, "a modern miracle play," it is definitely not of that
type of drama. The miracle play generally covers the "scrip-
tural and apocryphal history from the Falls of the Angels to
the Last Judgment."¹ Such plays as Noah's Flood, Abraham
and Isaac, and The Second Shepherd's Play come under this
classification because their characters are taken from the
Bible and their plots depict the religious stories of the

Bible or variations of them. In no way does Days Without End comply with the definition of the miracle play.

In comparing O'Neill's play with the subtitle he has given it, George Jean Nathan says:

> It is not modern, as he himself should realize, since he originally wrote it with the scene set back something like fifty years. And, if he knows the miracle plays, which he most assuredly does, he certainly realizes that this forced, tortured and hocus-pocused slice of greasepaint drama is anything but a miracle play in the sense of such a play's goll simplicity, and innocence, and moving dignity.  

John Anderson, on the other hand, regards the word miracle in O'Neill's subtitle as meaning a marvel or an event in the physical world deviating from the known laws of nature. Regarding O'Neill's classification of his play in the light of the above definition, Anderson is of the opinion that it is definitely false because in all of the four acts there is not one miracle.

In view of the lack of conformity between Days Without End and its subtitle, one can draw either of two conclusions: that his play failed, as a finished product, in the purpose which he originally set out to accomplish, or that he made an error in classifying it. Since O'Neill considers Days Without End to be his best play, the latter conclusion seems the more logical one.

This play is in reality an attempted morality play.

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Although it does not in a strict sense adhere to all characteristics of the morality, at least there are a few elements in common which justify its classification as such.

The morality is didactic and allegorical in nature; its principal characters are personified abstractions or highly universalized types. In the more ancient moralities the characters were virtues and vices, acting in accordance with their names. In these the element of conflict between the virtues and vices was the very essence of the drama. Furthermore, the morality characters are not static, but are subject to change and development. Evident, also, in these religious dramas are passages upholding specific doctrines and practices of the church. The four general types of the morality are as follows: those which depict conflict between virtues and vices, those which illustrate a special text, those which give warning of summons of death, and those which take one side of a religious or political controversy. Of the four types Days Without End comes under the first, and Everyman, one of the best-known early English moralities and the one with which I shall compare O'Neill's play, is of the third type.

The plot of Everyman revolves around the situation of Death's having summoned Everyman to the last long pilgrimage. God's messenger grants him permission to take with him any

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friends who will consent to go. As he appeals to his friends, Fellowship, Kindred, Cousin, and Goods, each flees, leaving him in despair. It is only when he is guided to Confession by Knowledge that he is absolved of his sins. Then Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and the Five Wits accompany him to the churchyard, but, frightened by the sight of the grave, they, too, desert him. It is only his one faithful and true friend, Good-Deeds, who finally goes down into the grave with him, thus saving his soul.

The allegorical element of the morality is clearly in evidence, although God, while he gives a résumé of man's sins and failures in life, seems very much a human being. There is little of the typical or abstract about him as he rather pathetically says:

I perceive here in my majesty,
Now that all creatures be to me unkind,
Living without dread in worldly prosperity;
Of ghostly sight the people be so blind,
Drowned in sin, they know me not for their God;
In worldly riches is all their mind.

I hanged between two, it cannot be denied;
To get them life I suffered to be dead;
I healed their feet, with thorns hurt was my head;
I could do no more than I did truly.
And now I see the people do clean forsake me.  

In contrast, Everyman is highly universalized. His first gay nonchalance, with "his mind on fleshly lusts and his treasures," is very typical of mankind who are so busy with

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worldly affairs that they have no time for God. The development of Everyman's character and the emotional stages through which he goes are equally typical. He becomes apprehensive of his danger as he understands the seriousness of Death's summons. This apprehension develops first into panic as his friends forsake him and then into terror as he cries out:

Good-Deeds, I pray you, help me in this need
Or else I am for ever damned indeed.  

He is relieved when Knowledge promises to stand by him, and assured when through Confession Good-Deeds is released from the bonds of his sins and receives the sacrament. The reawakened fear which seizes him when his bodily faculties desert him at the grave and the humbleness with which he gives himself to God conclude the earnest picture of human life. Fellowship, who is ready to follow Everyman to a feast or to frolic but flees when Death is mentioned; Kindred and Cousin, who pledge their faith to him but desert him when they learn of his destination; and Goods, who rejoices at his distress, are also generalized types, while the others are abstractions.

The general didacticism of Everyman may be summed up in the words of the Doctor:

And forsake Pride, for he deceiveth you in the end,
And remember Beauty, Five-wits, Strength, and
Discretion,
They all at the last do Everyman forsake,
Save his Good-Deeds, there doth he take.

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6Ibid., pp. 43-44.
For after death amends may no man make,
For then mercy and pity do him forsake.7

Apart from the general didacticism which is the theme of the morality, there are passages which uphold specific doctrines and practices of the church; for example, Everyman's confession and penance, the enumeration of the seven sacraments, the praise of the priesthood immediately following.8 Thus, Everyman in almost every detail has complied with the definition set up for a true morality of the first type.

In contrast, Days Without End, being of the third type of morality, depicts the conflict between the vices and virtues of John Loving. All of his vices are represented by Loving, his masked spirit of evil, while John represents the virtuous element which is reaching out for a faith in something, anything. Loving is the "old self" which developed as a result of John's loss of faith when he was young. When John, once a devout Catholic, had, in spite of his prayers, lost both his father and his mother, his "God of Love" had become a "God of Vengeance," and out of his bitter despair and doubt Loving was born. Throughout his early life John was almost completely dominated by the bitter, scornful Loving, whose philosophy was, "There is nothing -- nothing to hope for, nothing to fear -- neither devils nor gods -- nothing at all."9 It was the spark of John's former religion which

7Ibid., p. 31. 8Ibid. 9Eugene O'Neill, Days Without End, Act I, p. 19.
made him realize a lack of something in his life and at different times made him pursue atheism, socialism, anarchism, the mysticism of the East, Greek philosophy, and finally the mechanists' philosophy. None of these, however, satisfied John's longing. It was only when he met Elsa that he was able to find peace and security from Loving's doubt. His love for Elsa became his religion, his new faith, and through her he once more knew happiness. For a while Loving was dormant, unable to do any damage with his cynicism and disbelief. When Elsa went away for a visit, however, John found himself "at the mercy of life," and Loving became once more active. He filled John's soul with doubt and fear, fear that Elsa might die. He instilled in John the hatred of love, the desire to kill it; and thus John, being temporarily under Loving's domination, committed adultery with Lucy, one of Elsa's friends, as a means of killing that love. It is this much of his life story which John has, at the beginning of the play, written into a novel. The outcome of the play furnishes the ending to the novel.

John, having been led by Loving into sin against Elsa, is once more the tortured, insecure doubter at war with himself. As John tries to figure out a solution for the ending of his play, which is in reality an ending for the situation which has arisen while Elsa was away, Loving suggests the death of John's wife. John is naturally horrified, but he cannot put the idea completely out of his mind, for Loving
is constantly reminding him that this is the one possible solution. Loving is a constant advocate of death. At one time he even suggests it for John as he says, "Yes, unfit to live. Quite unfit for life, I think. But there is always death to wash one's sins away -- sleep, untroubled by Love's betraying dream."10

As John talks with Eliot, his partner, and Father Baird, his uncle who has always been so concerned about his nephew's lack of faith, Loving frequently answers them with a bitterly cynical statement which John tries to cover up. Loving is not visible to the others in the room; therefore, John's conversation seems very contradictory to them. Just when John seems to reach out toward Father Baird for a renewal of faith in God, Loving interrupts with a quelling statement, such as the following:

Old superstition, born of fear! Beyond death there is nothing. That, at least, is certain -- a certainty we should be thankful for. One life is boring enough. Do not condemn us to another. Let us rest in peace at last.11

Father Baird is always busy working against the Loving element in John. Sensing his nephew's emotional turmoil, he pleads:

Why do you run and hide from Him as from an enemy? Take care. There comes a time in every man's life when he must have God for friend, or he has no friend at all,

10Ibid., Act II, p. 87.
11Ibid., Act I, p. 44.
not even himself. Who knows? Perhaps you are on the threshold of that time now.12

After Father Baird hears the plot of John's novel, he realizes that John is "on the threshold of that time," for he is the one about whom the novel has been written.

Elsa, who is just recovering from an illness, also recognizes herself as the wife who has been sinned against in the novel. When Loving once more suggests the wife's death, Elsa decides to take that suggestion, for his unfaithfulness has killed her faith in life. She takes a walk in the rain, and the exposure causes her to have a relapse which develops into pneumonia. Thus, once more John finds himself about to lose in death the one who is dearest to him, and, what is even harder, he realizes that he is responsible for her condition.

The real struggle between John and Loving comes when they stand by Elsa's bedside. The former has a longing to call on God for help, but the latter tells John that his wife is going to die, that it is too late, that there is "no turning back." Loving encourages John to plead with Elsa, for he knows that each time she protests against her husband, she becomes weaker. Father Baird begs John to pray for his lost faith, but Loving only scoffs and repeats that Elsa will die. The climax of the struggle comes when John defiantly decides to go to the church, for Elsa in her illness senses

12 Ibid., Act I, pp. 43-44.
the change in her husband and says that now she understands, loves, and forgives him. At the church Loving continues to argue with John, who this time completely disregards him. John prays, begging forgiveness, and rises in victory, having been forgiven. Loving, realizing defeat, falls at the foot of the cross murmuring, "Thou hast conquered, Lord. Thou art -- the End. Forgive -- the damned soul of John Loving." Thus, through his love for his wife, John finds the love of God, and, in doing so, loses his dread of life and his fear of death, for he says in triumph at the foot of the cross, "Death is dead. Life laughs with God's love again! Life laughs with love." Days Without End from the standpoint of a conflict between virtue and vice may be classified as a morality; however, the allegorical element is less evident than in the early morality. It is true that by using imagination the characters might be regarded as personifications of the following: John, Mankind; Loving, Doubt; Elsa, Love; Father Baird, Religion; and Lucy, Sin or Betrayal. However, this allegorical element has to be read into the play rather than extracted from it, for the characters on the whole are neither universalized nor abstract. Indeed, Lazarus Laughed is more nearly an allegory than Days Without End. In the former play the symbolism of the characters is one of the most important...

\[13\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 156.\]  \[14\text{Ibid.}, \ p. \ 157.\]
parts of the drama. Lazarus represents Immortality; Miriam, Motherhood; Caligula, Fear; Tiberius, Empire; Pompeia, Passion; and the choruses, mankind of all ages and sexes. These types are highly universalized and abstract, and they present a completely symbolistic drama. Days Without End, in contrast, presents the story of an individualized man who battles against his personal demon for "freedom against anything outside of himself that might control him, against anything growing up within him, the loss of which might beat him down again."  

Although Eugene O'Neill's morality is not so didactic as is Everyman, there is an element of didacticism in it. The general theme is that of a man who struggles against his evil nature and rises victorious at the foot of the cross. This element, however, is of importance in the play only because it is the basis of the conflict between John and Loving. John Anderson has found a fallacy in one of the important religious ideas on which O'Neill has built his drama. He writes:

Mr. O'Neill's fundamental error, dramatically, lies in the notion that Faith is an intellectual process to be touched through words. Its very point, I take it, is that it lies beyond reason. His own hero prays for the "gift of Faith" as something which he cannot reach by his own mental processes.  

Although specific doctrines and practices of the church

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16John Anderson, op. cit., p. 287.
are not upheld in the "modern miracle play," Father Baird throughout the struggle against Loving quotes bits of religious philosophy and ideas. His statements are of the very essence of simplicity as he quietly and calmly refutes Loving's cynicism.

Since O'Neill is always a master in the art of characterization, it is only natural that the development of John's character be just as marked as that of Everyman's. O'Neill carries his hero from despair to love, back into doubt, through mental torture, into confession and salvation, with the proper reactions in each emotional stage.

Although the conflict and the character development of O'Neill's latest drama are suggestive of the ancient morality, the absence of the other characteristics makes it seem lacking as a morality when compared with Everyman.

There has been more agreement among the drama critics regarding Days Without End than concerning any other of O'Neill's dramas. The general opinions have been most unfavorable, however. Each critic feels that the play has fallen short of the standard which O'Neill has built up with his other dramas. The Literary Digest quotes Gilbert Gabriel of the New York American as saying: "It is a miracle play without simplicity, without eloquence, without dignity. It is a religious tract clumsily tied to unpicturesque claptrap
and most threadbare wording."17 George Jean Nathan calls it "a reconstruction of the Faust idea." To him it cries piteously for a poetry that is nowhere in it, for the lines are banal and humdrum. He recognizes a need of high and thrilling beauty of the written English word; in illustrating this need he refers to the use of the unpoetic expression, "Forgive me for butting in."18 In summarizing his opinion of it he states:

From beginning to end, save for two brief flashes, this Days Without End is a tournament in collegiate theorizing artlessly bamboozled into a superficial aspect of grave experimental drama by a recourse to masks and to the technical device of co-ordinating the narration of a hypothetical fiction story with the actual lives of the immediate characters. 19

Although to me Days Without End is not so weak and objectionable as it is to Nathan and to other critics, I do find it lacking in a certain vital power, which is so characteristic of O'Neill's other plays. It seems an anti-climax to his series of stirring dramatic contributions. Thus O'Neill falls below the standard of the pattern which he has borrowed from the earlier English moralities.

Since in most of his plays O'Neill presents psychological studies of characters who are either at war with themselves or with God, it is only natural that he should use a variety of devices with which to present to the audience what goes

17"Bitterness over O'Neill's New Play," Literary Digest, CXVII (February 10, 1934), 17.
18George Jean Nathan, op. cit., p. 124. 19Ibid.
on in the minds and souls of his characters.

From the ancient Greek drama he has borrowed the mask and has used it in several plays as a means of depicting the struggle which occurs within the individual; from the earlier English drama he has borrowed the soliloquy and the aside for a similar purpose. The soliloquy, like the mask, may be traced back to the Greek drama, but the use of the ancient monologue and the use of O'Neill's monologue are entirely different. The main function of the Greek soliloquy was to serve as an introduction to the play which was about to be read or seen. Usually at the beginning of the first act a figure of little or no importance to the play came out and told of the preliminary action. Such was the duty of the Peasant in Euripides' Electra, the Watchman in Aeschylus' "Agamemnon," and the Pythian Priestess in his "Eumenides." This same function of the soliloquy was still very much in evidence in the English miracle and morality dramas. By the time of the Elizabethan period, however, the soliloquy had taken on another duty, the explanation of the actions and the philosophies of the characters. William Shakespeare, the master dramatist who used the soliloquy quite frequently in his plays, introduced to the drama still another function of the device, that of revealing the "inner self" of the character. It is this latter function to which O'Neill has applied the Freudian psychology to obtain the type of soliloquy which he uses in his plays.
While in Shakespeare's plays the mental anguish and conflict are important in their relationship to the action, in O'Neill's dramas the action is important only in its effect upon the minds of the individuals. The "dagger scene" in Macbeth does definitely present the mental state of the hero; however, its importance comes from its relationship with the murder which the speech is pointing toward. On the other hand, in Mourning Becomes Electra, it is the effect of Orin's maniacal actions and of his frequent suggestion that Lavinia murder him that makes her say:

I can't bear it! Why does he keep putting his death in my head? He would be better off if -- Why hasn't he the courage -- ? Oh, God, don't let me have such thoughts! You know I love Orin! Show me the way to save him! Don't let me think of death! I couldn't bear another death! Please! Please!20

O'Neill's self-revealing soliloquies seem more nearly voiced thoughts which are the result of preliminary action or dialogue than do those of Shakespeare.

Alan D. Mickle classifies Shakespeare's soliloquies into two types, those given by outward-living characters and those given by inward-living ones. He is of the opinion that the latter type is definitely more self-revealing than the former. He further says: "Take away the soliloquies of Falstaff and Henry V, and you do not know them any less well; but take away the soliloquies of Hamlet, Macbeth, and Iago,

and you do not know these characters at all." Of the three characters Hamlet is perhaps more nearly a complete introvert. For that reason he resorts to verbal self-analysis more frequently than any other of Shakespeare's characters. One of his best-known soliloquies which give evidence of self-revelation is, "To be or not to be..." Shakespeare's soliloquies, however, are not always solely self-analytical. Hamlet both reveals his mental anguish and presents the situation which is responsible for his emotional state as he says: "O! That this too, too, solid flesh of mine would melt, thaw, and resolve itself into dew..." Sometimes Shakespeare's soliloquies are explanatory in nature. Such is that of Lady Macbeth as she exclaims:

That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire —
Hark! -- Peace! --
It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,
Which gives the stern'st goodnight. He is about it.
The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms
Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd their possets,
That death and nature do contend about them,
Whether they live or die.24

Petruchio, on the other hand, just before his first interview with Katharine, gives a soliloquy which foretells his plans. Shakespeare gives the soliloquy still another function when

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22 William Shakespeare, Hamlet, III, ii, 56.
23 Ibid., I, ii, 129-130.
he uses it as a means of conveying the madness of Lady Macbeth to the audience through her speech:

Out, damned spot! out, I say! -- One; two: why, then 'tis time to do't. -- Hell is murky! -- Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? -- Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him!25

Her disconnected speech, reminiscent of the murders which have been committed, serves effectively in revealing to the audience the inner thoughts of a woman whose mental faculties have deserted her. The philosophizing element is also present in Shakespeare's plays. It is very evident in Macbeth's monologue:

If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly; if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
We'd jump the life to come -- But in these cases,
We still have judgment here... ...26

There are many such philosophic soliloquies throughout the dramatist's plays. Thus it is that Shakespeare gives to his soliloquy a variety of functions: to explain both the situation and the actions of the characters, to foretell future actions, to depict madness, to present a philosophy, and to provide self-revelation of his characters. O'Neill at different times uses all of these functions of the soliloquy, but it is the latter one which has had the most influence upon his plays.

The similarity between the monologues of Shakespeare and those of O'Neill ends with the function of the device, for the form which each uses is entirely different from that of the other. Shakespeare writes with a poetic dignity which is entirely lacking in O'Neill's plays. Although a character may be experiencing deep emotions, Shakespeare never sacrifices the lyrical beauty of the line for the sake of his characterization. In contrast, O'Neill's soliloquies are broken, disconnected, confused, jerky statements which are sometimes utterly void of any suggestion of the beauty of language. Joseph Wood Krutch in speaking of the lack of this element in *Mourning Becomes Electra* says:

One realizes that it lacks just one thing and that thing is language -- words as thrilling as the action which accompanies them. Take for example the scene in which Orin stands beside the bier of his father and apostrophizes the body laid there. No one can deny that the speech is a good one, but what one desires with an almost agonizing desire is something not merely good but something incredibly magnificent, something like, "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow . . ." or "I could a tale untold whose lightest word . . ." Here is a scenario to which the most soaring eloquence and the most profound poetry are appropriate, and if it were granted us we should be swept aloft as no Anglo-Saxon audience since Shakespeare's time has had an opportunity to be.27

To realize this absence of the lyrical element in O'Neill's dramas one need only compare the poetic beauty of Romeo's love soliloquy in the balcony scene to Reuben's analysis of his feeling for Ada in *Dynamo*:

But it's grand to have her around handy whenever I want . . . the flesh, as the old man would call it! . . . and she's all right other ways, too. . . . I like her. . . . she got me the job. . . . she'll be useful. . . . and I'll treat her decent. . . . Maybe it's love. . . . whatever the hell love is! . . . did Mother really love the old man? . . . she must have or how could she stand him? . . . and she made me with him . . . act of Nature . . . like me and Ada. . . .

Even though O'Neill's drama is definitely lacking in the lyrical quality which is characteristic of the drama of Shakespeare, one must admit a certain "down to earth" power in his soliloquies. Because the poetic element is lacking, the speeches are more realistic and in most cases more typical of the characters who give them. It is only in such plays as Mourning Becomes Electra and The Great God Brown that one wishes for a more eloquent and magnificent language, for one could hardly imagine coming from the lips of Yank, Jones, or Eben Cabot such words as:

When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers, suffers most in the mind,
Leaving free things and happy shows behind;
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip,
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship . . .

O'Neill strives in his soliloquies to have his characters speak in such diction and dialect as would be appropriate for them and in such self-explanatory, self-excusing, and self-condoning phrases as would be typical of the thoughts of the modern mind.

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Of all O'Neill's plays the soliloquy is most frequently and consistently used in The Emperor Jones. This play is the story of a negro porter who, having committed murder and having escaped from a chain gang, has made himself Emperor Jones on an island of the West Indies. Most of the action takes place in the forest through which Jones is walking in order to escape from the natives. With the exception of the first and the last scenes the play is made up of pantomime and soliloquies. As Jones flees through the forest his monologue reveals the change of emotions which he feels. When he starts out, he is filled with confidence until he realizes that he is lost. When the Formless Fears enter, he develops a mournful foreboding which turns into fear, into panic, and into terror as the fear and superstition of his race bring before him the scenes of his life. In the second scene, as he has just been walking through the forest for a little while, he primitively talks to his feet:

Feet, you is holden up yo' end fine an' I suttinly hopes you ain't blisterin' none. It's time you git a rest. You is still in de pink -- on'y a little mite feverish. Cool yo'selfs. Remember you done got a long journey befo' you.30

In Scene Seven, obsessed with fear, Jones kneels before an altar, and with all of the fear and superstition which have filled his soul during his attempted escape he cries out, "Oh, Lawd, I'se skeered in dis place! I'se skeered. Oh, Lawd,

perfect dis sinner." 31 Although when Jones talks to the "ha'nts," a number of facts regarding his earlier life are revealed, it is pantomime of the figures rather than the actual monologue that presents these facts to the audience or reader, for O'Neill's main purpose in using the soliloquy in this play is to present the inner workings of Jones' mind as he wanders through the forest.

In three scenes of The Hairy Ape, an expressionistic drama, the soliloquy is in evidence. Yank, who was a stoker on an ocean liner and who had been called a "filthy beast" by Mildred Douglas, a passenger, is struggling to find a place in the world where he "belongs." Having been put into jail for starting a fight, Yank soliloquizes rather insanely about "the girl" and her father, about being in a cage, about breaking out. In the next scene Yank is thrown out of an I. W. W. meeting, where he does not "belong." Yank voices the turmoil which is going on inside him as he sits in the attitude of Rodin's "Thinker":

Dis ting's a in your inside, but it ain't your belly. Feedin' your face -- sinkers and coffee -- dat don't touch it. It's way down -- at de bottom. Yuh can't grab it, and yuh can't stop it. It moves, and everything moves. It stops and de whole woidd stops. Dat's me now -- I don't tick, see? I'm a busted Ingersoll, dat's what. Steel was me, and I owned de woidd. Now I ain't steel, and de woidd owns me. Aw, hell! I can't see -- it's all dark, get me? It's all wrong. 32

31 Ibid., Scene VII, p. 31.
The last act of The Hairy Ape is completely a monologue. Yank is in the zoo, and he stands before a cage, verbally comparing himself to a gorilla. After he sets the beast free, it crushes him and throws his body into the cage. Thus, Yank dies, still searching for an answer to his question, which he asks all through the play.

In All God's Chillun Got Wings the soliloquy is O'Neill's method of presenting Ella's madness to the audience. Her mental condition is a result of her having married Jim, a negro. All through the play she fights against Jim's desire to pass the bar examination, for she feels that once his passing is accomplished, he will be superior to her. To Ella the symbol of Jim's desire for advancement is a Congo mask which hangs in their apartment. In her more unbalanced moments she talks to the mask as follows: "Hello, sport! Who d'you think you're scaring? Not me! I'll give you the laugh. He won't pass, you wait and see. Not in a thousand years!"33 In the same soliloquy she argues with herself about the reason for a former friend's having failed to speak to her. One side of her says that he did not hear her yell at him; the other side replies: "Why? You know well enough! Because you married a -- a -- a -- well, I won't say it, but you know without my mentioning names!"34 Later she again

33Eugene O'Neill, All God's Chillun Got Wings, Act II, p. 120 (in the collection entitled Nine Plays).
34Ibid., Act II, p. 121.
talks to the mask. This time she not only insanely ridicules the mask, but also pathetically reveals her desperation regarding Jim's passing the examination: "Maybe he's passed! Maybe he's passed! No! No! He can't! I'd kill him! I'd kill myself!" 35

In Days Without End there is this same kind of soliloquy, an argument between the two sides of an individual. In this play, however, the two sides are represented by two separate characters. Nevertheless, when John and Loving talk about a possible ending for the novel, it is really nothing more than a person arguing with himself. This situation occurs again in the church when John wants to confess and beg forgiveness and Loving is trying to discourage this impulse.

Since the soliloquies of the characters in The Great God Brown are self-revelations, it is only natural that the characters give these speeches without their masks. Dion's attempt at self-analysis is representative of the type of soliloquy found in the play:

Why am I afraid to dance, I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter? Why am I afraid to live, I who love life and the beauty of flesh and the living colors of earth and sky and sea? Why am I afraid of love, I who love love? Why am I afraid who am not afraid? Why must I pretend to scorn in order to pity? Why must I hide myself in self-contempt in order to understand? Why must I be so ashamed of my strength, so proud of my weakness? Why must I live in a cage like a criminal, defying and hating, I who love peace and friendship? . . . 36

Not only does this soliloquy reveal Dion's thoughts, but it also is an analysis of the conflict within Dion until his death.

Ah, Wilderness certainly cannot be classified as one of O'Neill's experimental dramas. To the contrary, it is his one play which is a domestic comedy-drama concerning everyday characters in an every-day home. In one scene, however, Richard, the young son of this family, gives a typical O'Neill soliloquy while he is waiting for his sweetheart Muriel to meet him. He says just what runs through his mind as he stands on the beach. He first thinks of Muriel's coming; then his mind goes back to the night before and his experience with Belle. He tries to analyze his feelings for the latter and compare them to what he feels for Muriel. As he quotes some poetry, his mind turns again to Muriel and to the lovely scenery surrounding him. As he sees Muriel coming toward him, his reactions are characteristic of a young person in love:

Mmustn't let her know I'm so tickled ... I ought to be about that first letter anyway ... if women are too sure of you, they treat you like slaves ... let her suffer, for a change ... 37

This monologue is not so striking and powerful as are a number of O'Neill's other soliloquies, but the very simplicity of it makes it human and appealing.

Although Mourning Becomes Electra is definitely a play

of individual personalities, O'Neill does not depend upon the soliloquy for characterization in this play. Instead, it is what the characters say and do to one another that makes them seem what they are. There are a few short soliloquies spoken by Lavinia and Orin either to themselves or to the pictures of the Mannons, usually about death. The only really effective soliloquy, however, is given by Lavinia after Christine and Ezra have gone into the house and left her alone:

I hate you! You steal even Father's love from me again! You stole all love from me when I was born! Oh, Mother! Why have you done this to me? What harm had I done you? Father, how can you love that shameless harlot? I can't bear it! I won't! It's my duty to tell him about her! I will! Father! Father! 38

This soliloquy is filled with the longing, jealousy, indignation, and love which Lavinia feels at that time and all through the play.

In Dynamo the soliloquy, although evident in a few scenes, is comparatively unimportant. Reuben is the only one to indulge in this theatrical device. The subjects of his voiced thoughts are his dead mother, his feeling for Ada, and the power and mystery of the dynamo, particularly the latter.

Although in Strange Interlude there are a few actual soliloquies, there is so little difference between them and the asides, which are O'Neill's real experiment in this play,

that the two devices can hardly be separated. In reality O'Neill's aside is a combination of the Elizabethan aside and the soliloquy. The main difference in form between the two Elizabethan devices is that the aside is spoken either to another actor or to the audience but is not supposed to be heard by the other characters who are on the stage at that time, while the soliloquy is usually spoken when the actor is alone on the stage. In the light of these characteristics O'Neill's aside complies with the former Elizabethan device, for his characters voice their thoughts almost always in the presence of others. In length, however, the modern aside is more comparable to Shakespeare's soliloquy, because in most cases the Elizabethan aside is only a few lines in which one character explains his plans for future action to another character, gives to the audience his opinion of the characters in a scene which he is observing, or explains to the audience his real opinion, emotion, or intention in contrast to what he has just told the characters in the play. Because of the usual brevity of the Elizabethan aside, it is only natural that the soliloquy be more self-revealing and self-analytical in nature. One exception is Shylock's aside which in nature more nearly resembles that of O'Neill than any other of Shakespeare's asides:

How like a fawning publican he looks!  
I hate him for he is a Christian;  
But more, for that, in low simplicity,  
He lends out money gratis, and brings down  
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip, 
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him. 
He hates our sacred nation; and he rails, 
Even there where merchants most do congregate, 
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift, 
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe, 
If I forgive him! 39

In *Strange Interlude* O'Neill does more than just present his characters in self-revealing speeches such as Hamlet and Iago might give. Where the latter's soliloquies or asides are statements of their conscious emotions or reactions, O'Neill's characters voice their subconscious thoughts in their asides. The author's treatment of this device shows definite Freudian influence, for he presents thorough psychological analyses of all his characters as he has them speak their individual thoughts as well as their social ones. Eleanor Flexner explains O'Neill's use of the aside in her statement:

The aside, in which characters speak their conscious as well as sub-conscious thoughts out loud in a stylized monotone while other characters on the stage remain immobile, has its origin in his desire to convey more of the obscurely mixed workings of our minds on the stage than have ever been displayed there before. 40

O'Neill is never content to present merely a surface character analysis, but instead he delves into the inner minds of his characters for the purpose of "unraveling the intricacies of human motivation." 41 His means of doing this in *Strange Interlude* is the aside.

41 Barrett H. Clark, *Eugene O'Neill, the Man and His Plays*, p. 179.
Although Barrett H. Clark is generally complimentary of the play, he is of the opinion that perhaps one third of the asides might have been omitted without the loss of anything essential. 42 Joseph T. Shipley agrees with Clark, for he feels that in both life and good drama the thoughts which have been put into the asides are inferred from the situation, betraying words, and action. He further says, "O'Neill gives us little we could not have gathered without his added words . . ." 43

It is true that a number of the asides are unnecessary as far as self-revelation is concerned, for frequently the characters think aloud about experiences which have absolutely no bearing on the present situation in which they find themselves. For instance, Charles Maraden at the beginning of the play thinks back to the time when he and some other boys went to "that house of cheap vice"; yet this speech adds nothing to the plot or the characterization in the play. A number of the thought speeches are explanatory, giving information regarding previous events. Such a speech is another of Maraden's asides which tells of the change in Nina since she has gone to the hospital to nurse. Also contained in that speech are numerous details such as letter writing, Maraden's visit to the hospital, and other things

42 Ibid., p. 176.
which are not really important. Frequently the asides reveal emotions that could be registered on the characters' faces, and sometimes the speeches are merely mild verbal observations of other characters. A number of the asides, however, are the powerful, self-analytical or self-revealing speeches which have made Strange Interlude such a stirring drama.

When Nina comes back to her father's funeral, she reveals her lack of grief as she says:

I'm sorry, Father! ... you see, you've been dead for me a long time. ... when Gordon died, all men died ... what did you feel for me then? ... nothing ... and now I feel nothing ... it's too bad. 44

Later, when Nina has married Sam, but, because of insanity in his family, has had a son by Ned, she plans to leave her husband and go off with her lover. As she comes back into the room and finds that Ned has left, she reacts mentally in a very typical fashion:

Ned doesn't love me ... he's gone! ... gone forever! ... like Gordon! ... no, not like Gordon! ... like a sneak, a coward! ... a liar! ... oh, I hate him! ... O Mother God, please let me hate him! ... he must have been planning this! ... he must have known it today when he said he loved me!

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Later, however, as she sits with Sam, Charles, and Ned, she is strangely triumphant as she says:

My three men! . . . I feel their desires converge in me! . . . to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb . . . and am whole . . . they dissolve in me, their life is my life . . . I am pregnant with the three! . . . husband! . . . lover! . . . father! . . . and the fourth man! . . . little man! . . . little Gordon! . . . he is mine, too! . . . that makes it perfect! . . . Why, I should be the proudest woman on earth! . . . I should be the happiest woman in the world! . . . Ha-ha . . . only I better knock wood . . . before God the Father hears my happiness! 46

In contrast to her expression of contentment is that of Ned's confusion as he tries to decide whether or not to take her away with him:

This is horrible! . . . Sam thinks I'm the finest fellow in the world . . . never forgive myself . . . ruin my career . . . By God, I won't! . . . she'll find out! Smiling! . . . got me where she wants me! . . . then be as cruel to me as she is to him! . . . love me? . . . liar! . . . still loves Gordon! . . . her body is a trap! . . . go to Europe! . . . keep hidden until boat sails so she can't reach me! . . . tell him about baby! . . . poor Nina . . . she'll forget! . . . she'll have her child! . . . she'll be happy! . . . and Sam'll be happy! . . . 47

Marsden, after Nina has confessed that she has given herself to some of the soldiers at the hospital, exhibits another kind of mental confusion as he says:

I wish she hadn't told me this . . . it has upset me terribly! . . . I positively must run home at once. . . . Mother is waiting up . . . oh, how I'd love to hate this little whore! . . . then I could punish! . . . I wish her father were alive. . . . "now he's dead there's only you," she said. . . . "I've wanted you," . . . Dear old Father Charlie now! . . . ha! . . . that's how she wants me! . . . 48

46Ibid., Act VI, p. 234.  
47Ibid., Act II, p. 82.  
48Ibid., Act II, p. 82.
All through this play there are numerous such asides, some of which are more powerful than others, some more eloquent than others, but all of them revealing the subconscious mind at work.

Margaret G. Mayorga rather uncomplimentarily refers to Strange Interlude as,

A play definitely of modern method and "new" psychology, which is full of meddling and more or less self-conscious people who act like "case 102, 110, 126" in a psychopathic ward and ought to be so labeled. 49

In a statement which might be a rebuttal to that of Margaret G. Mayorga, Alan D. Mickle says:

The characters in Strange Interlude do not appear normal because we see them abnormally. If we saw those "normal" people whom we meet and have dealings with every day as we see the characters in the play, with their minds exposed and their every-day, world-facing masks off, see them as their doctors and lawyers and priests see them, see them as they alone see themselves, would they appear normal? 50

I am inclined to agree with the latter critic, for it is not hard to accept the asides once the novelty wears off. In fact, the situations, desires, and emotions revealed by the asides give the reader a much more thorough knowledge of each individual in the drama than he would have if only the conscious thoughts were spoken.

O'Neill again uses asides in Dynamo; they do not play such a big part in this play, however, as they do in Strange

49 Margaret G. Mayorga, A Short History of American Drama, p. 329.

50 Alan D. Mickle, op. cit., p. 145.
Interlude. Perhaps the reason is that the characters are not such complex personalities in the former play; therefore, there is less chance for self-revelation. The characters of Dynamo, being of a lower type, probably would have less philosophic and analytical power and reasoning ability. Their asides do, however, help to characterize them and to show the development of personality which takes place in some of them. Rev. Light is at first the self-righteous sermonizer who judges first his neighbor and then his son; later, after his wife's death, he is rather pathetically less certain of himself and his God. Mr. Fife is chiefly concerned with his plant and with disproving Light's belief in God. Mrs. Light's asides reveal her almost passionate love for her son and jealousy of Ada. As Reuben's mother listens to the conversation inside the Fife house, she says:

Marry her! . . . I heard it clear as day! . . . respect her like he does me! . . . damn her! . . . Oh, I didn't mean to swear! . . . I don't know what I'm doing! . . . Oh, I'll get Hutchins to beat him within an inch of his life! . . .

Ada's asides are not very important and are scattered rather infrequently through the play. They do show her change from the rather brittle, indifferent attitude which she takes with Reuben at the beginning of the play to the very humble and devoted worship, which makes her seem "easy" to him. The two characters whose asides mean the most are Mrs. Fife and

51Eugene O'Neill, Dynamo, I, 111, 48.
Reuben. Mrs. Fife is a dreamer and very sentimental. She spends most of her time gazing out of the window and thinking about love, her husband, or nature. Always drowsy, she seldom listens to anyone for any length of time. One of her asides which reveals nothing but which strengthens her characterization is:

Some animal's in the garden . . . maybe it's a skunk. . . . I'd love to have a skunk skin coat next winter . . . maybe Ramsay'll give me one for Christmas. . . . Ramsay calls the minister a skunk. . . . Poor Mr. Light! . . . Ramsay says awful mean things sometimes . . . but it's only because he loves to make jokes. . . . he's the kindest man in the world. . . .

Reuben's asides change as his personality changes. First he is so timid that he almost lacks the courage to ask Ada for a kiss. Next he is the conscience-stricken boy who thinks he is an accessory to a murder. His verbal reaction to the panic is:

Accessory! . . . the police can arrest me! . . . but I won't tell them! . . . ever! . . . I gave my word! . . . but God! . . . I'll be guilty before God! . . . but He knows I gave my word! . . . but does that count with Him! . . . when I didn't swear on the Bible? . . .

Reuben, after having denounced God and having been away from home for a while, comes back a bitter, hard atheist. Where once he was afraid of Ada, he now realizes he is the stronger of the two as he says:

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52 Ibid., I, 111, 48-49.
53 Ibid., I, 111, 53.
... she certainly didn't put up a fight ... marry her! ... what does she think I am, a boob? ... she put one over on me and now I've put one over on her! ... we're square. ... 54

Still later his metamorphosis is completed as he, having shot Ada, calls out, frightened and humble, "Mother! ... where are you? ... I did it for your sake! ... why don't you call to me? ... don't leave me alone." 55

The aside is in evidence in only one scene in Welded. Eleanor and Cape have had a characteristic argument, and at this point in the play they sit side by side and give alternate asides, neither one answering the other. As each one talks he tries to analyze the situation and to justify himself as follows:

Cape: I've grown inward into our life. But you keep trying to escape as if it were a prison. You feel the need of what is outside. I'm not enough for you.

Eleanor: Why is it I can never know you? I try to know you and I can't. I desire to take all of you into my heart, but there's a great alien force -- I hate that unknown power in you which destroys me. Haven't I a right to myself as you have to yourself? 56

Even though the aside is a minor detail in this play, it shows a variety in the method with which it is used.

The aside in Days Without End is presented in still another form. It is given by Loving as he talks to John, his other self, in the presence of others. These asides occur

54Ibid., II, 11, 122. 55Ibid., III, 111, 157.

very infrequently because, although Loving is never seen, he is nearly always heard by the other characters on the stage who think it is John talking. The main scene in which the aside occurs is in Elsa's bedroom. Dr. Stillwell is in the room, but he does not hear Loving's aside to John. All the doctor hears are John's agonizing replies. In this play also the aside is merely a minor device.

Of the several plays in which O'Neill has used the aside, Strange Interlude is the most outstanding, the most successful, and the most representative of his work as an experimenter in this field.

H. G. Kemelman, as might be expected, has seen in O'Neill's use of asides a rather absurd purpose, for he writes:

> It is a confession on the part of the playwright that he cannot express himself in the dramatist's medium. This experimentation is intended only to hide defective craftsmanship and to tickle the fancy of the audience.\(^{57}\)

In view of O'Neill's success as a dramatist, Kemelman's first point is certainly without foundation. Instead of the aside's being merely a subordinate element to cover up defects in the plot structure, it is one of the main parts of the drama. It would seem that Kemelman is definitely a conventionalist who is against anything experimental in the theatre. He seems unaware that in order for any movement to progress, there must be a few experimenters.

\(^{57}\)H. G. Kemelman, "Eugene O'Neill and the Highbrow Melodrama," Bookman, LXXV (September, 1932), 491.
Stark Young justly praises O'Neill for helping to break down the realistic taboo on this dramatic means of expression. He continues:

It must be clear by now that there are infinite things that the realistic method, sticking to what is actual or possible in the outward surface of life, cannot express, even with the help of the best actor's pantomime.58

Eugene O'Neill has once more gone back into the past for theatrical devices which he could use in his own style and manner. The soliloquy and the aside have met with a great deal of success, but the morality drama has generally been considered a failure. Since this failure is his latest drama, perhaps it will serve as a challenge to him to bring forth a new experiment to surpass all others. We can only wait to see.

O'Neill, having experimented with and modernized certain ancient Greek and early English devices, has also undertaken some more modern experiments. Although a few of these modern experiments have not been so strikingly revolutionary in the theatre as the earlier ones have been, each has contributed to the originality and inventiveness he has brought to the American theatre.

The first six of Eugene O'Neill's playwriting years were spent in writing the conventional one-act plays. In 1920, however, he began experimenting with the form of his plays, and since that time he has frequently written dramas of unusual length and construction. The first of these experiments in form was The Emperor Jones, in which he discarded any attempt at arrangement into acts and dealt with his theme progressively in eight scenes. The action, which is supposed to take place in about fifteen hours, is continuous, beginning in the afternoon of one day and ending at dawn of the next. With the exception of Scene One, which takes place in the palace of the Emperor Jones, the scenes are all laid in the forest. To further the impression of unity and
of progression O'Neill uses the curtain only once before the end of the play. After the first scene, which ends as Jones leaves the palace and starts toward the forest, the curtain is lowered; after Jones begins his tramp through the forest, however, blackouts are used between scenes to allow slight changes in scenery. The blackout suggests less of a break in action than the curtain; thus the scenes seem almost fused into one whole and continuous picture of the increasing terror of a man.

The eight scenes of this play are so short that the play in its entirety is not equal to the usual evening's performance. Hiram Motherwell writes regarding the brevity of the production of this play, "In The Emperor Jones O'Neill gave his audience only half their money's worth, measured by the clock."¹ So powerful is this imaginative drama of human fears, however, that in spite of its briefness it has been proclaimed the success which made O'Neill's position as a dramatist secure.

Two years later O'Neill presented to the American theatre The Hairy Ape, another one-act play, similar in form to The Emperor Jones. O'Neill in a letter labeled the former "a much greater departure in form than Jones."² The Hairy Ape, like its predecessor, is divided into eight scenes. It is a highly symbolic picture of the struggles of Man, in the form


of the stoker Yank, to "belong." It traces Yank's progression from the forecastle and the stokehold to Fifth Avenue, the jail, and finally the zoo. None of these scenes can be considered for themselves alone, for each scene is a part of the unit, a step for Yank in his struggle to overcome his discontent, to find a place where he can "fit in."

Another form which O'Neill has used as an experiment is the two-act play. Very seldom in literature is this form in evidence, and it has never gained prominence in the field of drama. O'Neill, however, uses it for a definite purpose. When in the plot of the play there is one definite break or change of character or events, he uses the two acts, the first one representing what occurs before the break and the second one what occurs after it. Such is the case in All God's Chillun Got Wings and Diff'rent. In the former the event which is the division point of the play is the marriage of the white Ella to the Negro Jim. The first act is divided into four scenes. The first depicts the relationship between Jim and Ella in childhood; the second, at the time of Jim's graduation from high school; the third, after Mickey has betrayed Ella; and the fourth, after Jim and Ella have just been married. The break between the action of the two acts represents not only a passage of two years but also a change which has come over Ella. The three scenes in the second act take place after Ella and Jim come back from Europe, where they have lived for two years. With each scene
her obsession against Jim's passing the bar examination grows in intensity until she becomes insane. Each scene represents a further deviation from sanity.

_Diff'rent has been divided into a two-act drama because the plot involves two separate and distinct periods in the life of Emma, the heroine. The first act takes place when she is young and engaged to marry a sailor. When she, having had a high ideal of what her husband should be, finds out that her betrothed is like all other sailors, she declines to marry him. The second act takes place twenty years later, when she, having been sexually starved, has changed completely and throws herself at the head of a young soldier. These two periods serve as direct contrasts to each other.

Thus O'Neill adapts the form of his plays to the development of their characters and situations.

In _The Great God Brown_ and in _Marco Millions_ O'Neill not only uses the usual three and four acts, respectively, but also gives each play a prologue and an epilogue. In the former the prologue presents the characters of the play in their youth before their real struggles and conflicts begin. It also reveals Dion's reason for wearing a mask; this reason is definitely tied up with the conflicts which occur throughout the play. The epilogue merely serves as a balance to the prologue; it shows Margaret and her sons after the death of Dion and of Brown, and it reveals the tie which binds her to the past. While the prologue and the epilogue themselves are not so unusual, it is the fact that so few
modern plays have them that makes them somewhat of a novelty.

The prologue to Marco Millions is of an entirely different nature from that of The Great God Brown. This modern satire presents a scene which takes place after the action of the play is finished. The only person who is in both the prologue and the play is Kukachin, who in the former is dead and is being carried to Cathay for burial. The epilogue, however, is most unusual. After the play is finished, a man, dressed as a Venetian merchant of the later thirteenth century, in fact, "none other than Marco Polo himself," rises out of an aisle seat and walks up the aisle in the crowd without self-consciousness. When he gets outside the theatre, he impatiently waits for his car, casting a glance here and there at faces in the groups around him. His car draws up at the curb, and he gets in and drives away. Thus the play starts in the theatre and ends at the curb. Certainly this ending suggests the O'Neill experimental element.

One of O'Neill's greatest experiments is Strange Interlude, not only because of the asides but also because of its length. Since the characters speak their subconscious as well as conscious thoughts, it is necessary that the playing time of the drama be longer than the usual two hours. The theatre-goers, however, were rather surprised in 1928 to learn that O'Neill's latest play started at five-thirty in the evening and lasted until eleven o'clock at night, with
an hour out to dine. Hiram Motherwell says of the freedom
O'Neill took with this play: "In the nine-act Strange Inter-
lude he actually dictated to them at what time the audience
should eat and grinned at them when they asked when they could
dress . . . "3 The nine acts of this play are divided into
two parts. The first part takes the action up to the point
where Ned leaves Nina after having told Sam that she is
going to have a baby and goes to Europe. This is, indeed,
the breaking point of the play, for after Ned leaves, all
possibility of his ever having a happy life with Nina is
gone. The second part takes place after Nina's child has
been born. It covers a period of about twenty-one years
and ends after Sam dies, Ned leaves, Gordon marries, and
only Charles is left with Nina. At the end of the play Nina
states her philosophy in the words: "Our lives are merely
strange dark interludes in the electrical display of God
the Father."4 O'Neill in nine acts has dramatized one of
these interludes through a powerful study of a woman and
her relationship with the five men who love her.

In 1931 O'Neill gave the theatre a second play which
was of unusual length, the trilogy Mourning Becomes Electra.
This play was originally supposed to be performed on three
successive evenings, but when production plans were completed,
it was decided that the play should be presented in one

3Hiram Motherwell, op. cit., p. 203.

evening, starting at four o'clock in the afternoon and ending at eleven o'clock at night, with an hour and fifteen minutes allowed for dining and an intermission. The trilogy is divided into "Homecoming" in four acts, "The Hunted" in five acts, and "The Haunted" in four acts. The first division concerns Ezra Mannon's coming back from the war and the circumstances leading up to his death. The second part has to do with Christine's attempt to escape her guilt and the fate of the Mannons and her failure, which results in her suicide. "The Haunted" presents an account of Orin's and Lavinia's being haunted by the Mannon dead and their succumbing to their own separate destinies. Despite the length of the play, it was accepted enthusiastically by the public. Later during the production of the trilogy the playing time was cut to three hours. Although this trilogy is definitely divided into three separate parts, the complete unity of impression has not been disturbed.

Thus O'Neill not only has conformed to the usual three and four acts in which most of the other modern dramatists deal but also has experimented with the one-act, the two-act, or the fourteen-act play, whichever has suited him best, and in each form he has been successful.

The effectiveness of a number of O'Neill's plays has been increased by certain lighting effects. Although O'Neill never sacrifices the dialogue and the action of the play for the sake of electrical display, he has used these lighting
effects in such a way as to add greatly to the mood and symbolism of the play.

In Welded the stage is in total darkness except for the spotlights on Michael and Eleanor. The two other characters and the room are distinguishable only by the light of the two main characters. The author describes these two movable circles of light as being "like auras of egoism, which emphasize and intensify Eleanor and Michael throughout the play." In this statement O'Neill has explained the symbolism of the lighting and its bearing on the characters.

In Where the Cross Was Made O'Neill uses an entirely different kind of lighting effect. Near the end of the play a green light is representative of the peak of insanity which Bartlett and his son Ned reach as they see a vision of the three sailors who went in search of the treasure. The glow of light begins as Bartlett says, "Hark! They've landed. They're back on earth again as I swore they'd come back. They'll be a 'comin' up the path now."

The light comes into the room slowly in "rhythmic waves like liquid." Since the three figures in this vision represent ghosts of the drowned sailors, the green light is further representative of the great depths of the sea; it also suggests the decomposition of the flesh of the ghosts. When Bartlett and the three

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figures go up the companionway, the green light disappears, thus ending the vision. In this play O'Neill has given the lighting a special function, that of conveying to the audience what goes on in the minds of the two insane men.

The lighting in Scene Ten of The Fountain has a general function similar to that in Where the Cross Was Made. A more complex lighting effect aids in the former play to present another vision, that which comes to Juan Ponce de Leon, who, having been wounded by the Indians during his search for the Fountain of Youth, lies between life and death in a clearing in the woods of Florida. As the curtain rises on this scene, the stage is in complete darkness, and only the murmur of the spring can be heard. Then the sound of Juan's voice comes out of the darkness as he talks to God, praying for a sign, a faith:

True, I prayed for a miracle which was not Thine. Let me be damned then, but let me believe in Thy Kingdom! Show me Thy miracle -- a sign -- a word -- a second's vision of what I am that I should have lived and died! A test, Lord God of Hosts! Nothing!7

As he speaks, a strange unearthly light begins to flood down upon a spot on the edge of the clearing on the right. Almost entirely through this scene the figure of a woman, dressed in long dark blue drapery and wearing a pale mask, stands in this spot of light. As the voice of Beatriz, the girl whom Juan loves, sings of love, the same mystical light

floods down slowly about the spring, which is transformed into a gigantic fountain. As visions of the past appear in the fountain, its waters are arched with rainbows. As the figure walks toward and vanishes into the fountain, then materializes in the form of Beatriz, who again sings, the light fades, and the vision ends. Juan falls unconscious once more. After a short pause the faint misty light of the dawn floats over the clearing. The coming of the dawn symbolizes the coming to Juan of a better understanding of life, a belief, a faith in eternity.

In the Prologue of Marco Millions the lighting aids in giving the play a supernatural element. As the Christian looks at the face of the dead Kukachin, the sky grows suddenly dark, and an unearthly glow, like a halo, lights up her face and she says, "Say this, I loved and died. Now I am love, and live. And living, have forgotten. And loving, can forgive. Say this for me in Venice." After her tender laughter recedes heavenward, the halo of light about her face fades and noonday rushes back. Nearly every one of the scenes following the Prologue ends with a gradual blackout, while a few of the scenes open with the gradual lifting of the darkness. At the end of each scene which is the last in its particular act the curtain falls, thereby making a stronger break between acts than there is between scenes. In the third scene of the first act as Kublai and Chu-Yin look into

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8 Eugene O'Neill, Marco Millions, Prologue, p. 22.
the crystal to see Marco Polo in Venice, the light grows dimmer on the back part of the stage where the two men sit, and it begins to come up on the forestage where the Venetian scene is revealed. Finally as Kublai tires of the revelation of the crystal, he lets it fall from his hand, and there is instant darkness. After the darkness, however, as the scene ends, Kublai's voice is heard saying, "The Word became their flesh, they say. Now all is flesh! And can their flesh become the Word again?"9 This gradual raising and lowering of the lights has served as a most effective means of beginning and ending the scenes. It seems rather in keeping with the mood of the play.

The use of the blackout between scenes in Dynamo has a definite function, that of providing for a change of scenery before going on with continuous action. In the first act of this play there are three continuous scenes. The blackouts between the first and second scenes and the second and third ones allow enough time for the walls of certain rooms in the set to be removed in order that the action may continue in these rooms. Between the scenes of Act Two the curtain is lowered to denote a passage of time. Scene One takes place in the early morning of a day in August; Scene Two, at about half past eleven on the same night; Scene Three, a half hour later. The action of the third act is again continuous; therefore the blackouts are used for the purpose of

9Ibid., III, 1, 170.
modifying the scenes. The first scene takes place outside the power house; the second scene shows the upper and lower switch galleries inside the power house; and the third scene reveals also the interiors of the dynamo and switchboard rooms. Most effective lighting comes at the end of the play, when Reuben throws his arms out over the exciter of the dynamo, his hands grasping the carbon brushes.

There is a flash of bluish light about him and all the lights in the plant dim down until they are almost out and the noise of the dynamo dies until it is the faintest purring hum. Simultaneously Reuben's voice rises in a moan that is mingling of pain and loving consummation, and this cry dies into a sound that is like the crooning of a baby and merges and is lost in the dynamo's hum. Then his body crumples to the steel platform and from there falls heavily to the floor. The dynamo's throaty metallic purr rises slowly in volume and the lights begin to come up again in the plant.10

The pausing of the dynamo and the dimming of the lights is symbolic of the dynamo's final consummation of triumph and of its consumption of Reuben's body as well as his soul.

O'Neill has used these certain lighting effects in different forms and in different functions. In each of these plays the effects are in keeping with the mood or symbolism of the play and contribute to its vividness and power.

O'Neill has introduced into his drama another element which has done much toward making effective the plays in which he has used it. This element, the ghost, is not a new device because it was used slightly in Greek drama and rather

10 Eugene O'Neill, *Dynamo*, III, iii, 158.
frequently in the Elizabethan drama. O'Neill's ghost, however, is not the same kind as that of either the Greeks or the Elizabethans. Clytemnestra's ghost in Aeschylus' "Eumenides" tries to arouse the Furies for the purpose of following Crestes to Pallas' city to haunt him because of his having killed his mother. O'Neill's ghosts do not resemble Clytemnestra in function. Nor do they resemble Kyd's ghost in The Spanish Tragedy, who had no connection with the play itself but merely gave the induction of the play. O'Neill's ghosts are not like the persistent ghost of Hamlet's father, urging his son to avenge his father's murder; nor are they like the ghosts of Banquo and Duncan, who were products of Macbeth's conscience. Instead, the modern dramatist uses them as hallucinations of the past. His ghosts are generally products of the minds of those who see them. They are not to be considered as actual characters.

This element is perhaps most evident and important in The Emperor Jones. In each scene as Jones goes through the forest, he encounters "phantoms deepening in intensity and mystery and receding from the present into the prenatal stages of his being."11 In Scene Two they are little Formless Fears of his imagination. They are black and almost shapeless, about the form of a grubworm and the size of a creeping child. Their one outstanding feature is their glittering eyes. They are continuously moving noiselessly,

striving to rise up on end, and falling prone once more. As they laugh softly and squirm upward toward Jones, he sees them and yells out in terror. As he fires at them one of the six bullets he has in his revolver, they scurry back into the forest.

In the next scene is a figure of the Negro Jeff who is crouching on his haunches in the rear of the triangular clearing in the forest. He is thin, light brown in color, and middle-aged, and is dressed in a Pullman porter's uniform and cap. He is throwing a pair of dice on the ground before him, picking them up, shaking them, and casting them out with the regular, rigid, mechanical movements of an automaton. When Jones sees Jeff, he thinks the figure is the living man and starts talking to him. Jeff says nothing and merely continues rolling dice. Jones' first reaction is that of real relief at seeing someone he knows. When he remembers that in the past he had killed Jeff, however, Jones shoots at him as he says, "Is you -- is you -- a ha'nt? Nigger, I kills you dead once. Has I got to kill you ag'in? You take it den." He fires a shot and when the smoke has cleared away, Jeff is gone.

In the fourth scene Jones sees another picture from his past, and in this one he takes an active part. A small gang of negroes, dressed in striped convict suits, enter. Their

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13 Ibid., Scene IV, p. 22.
heads are shaven, and one leg of each drags limply, shackled to a heavy ball and chain. Some of them carry picks, and others, shovels. Leading them is a white man dressed in the uniform of a prison guard; he carries both a rifle and a heavy whip. When the Prison Guard noiselessly cracks his whip, the convicts start their work, swinging their picks and shoveling, but not making any noise. Their movements are slow, rigid, and mechanical. The Prison Guard points at Jones with his whip, and the latter goes through the motions of shoveling dirt. When the Guard, after having lashed Jones across the shoulders, turns his back, Jones raises his arms as if his imaginary shovel were a club and springs toward the Guard. At this time, however, Jones realizes that his hands are empty and, seized with terror, he shoots at the Guard. The walls of the forest close in from both sides, and the gang of convicts is blotted out.

The next group of phantoms which come to Jones is made up of figures dressed in Southern costumes of the period of the fifties of the last century. Most of the men are middle-aged planters, but one of them is an Auctioneer. Five slaves, three men and two women, are led in. The planters present a pantomime of their looking over the slaves and exchanging judgment on them. The Auctioneer touches Jones and motions for him to join the slaves. The latter looks for a way to escape; when he finds none, he screams and leaps madly to the top of a stump. He stands there, cowering, paralyzed
with horror. As the Auctioneer begins his spiel and the planters examine him and start bidding, Jones pulls out his revolver and shoots at the Auctioneer and the Planter to whom he has been sold, almost simultaneously. Once more the walls of the forest fold in, and only silence remains as Jones rushes off, crying with fear.

In Scene Six the limbs of the trees meet over the cleared space, and the interlocking ropes of creepers, reaching upward to entwine the tree trunks, give an arched appearance to the sides, thus making the place resemble the dark hold of some ancient vessel. Jones comes in through the underbrush, moaning and praying. He has only the silver bullet left in his revolver, and he says he must save it or he will be a "goner." As he throws himself on the ground to rest, it grows gradually lighter in the enclosed space, and two rows of seated figures can be seen behind Jones. They sit in crumpled, despairing attitudes, hunched, facing one another with their backs touching the forest walls as if they were shackled to them. At first they are motionless and silent; then they start swaying slowly forward and backward in unison as if they were rowing on a galley ship. At the same time a low, melancholy murmur rises from them, then falls back down into silence. This occurs again, and the third time the murmur starts, Jones joins them, rising to a sitting posture and swaying back and forth. As darkness descends, the voices cease, and Jones is left alone in the
darkness and the silence. Jones hurriedly gets to his feet and runs off into the forest.

The last figure from the past that Jones sees is a Congo Witch-Doctor, who is wizened, old, and almost naked. His body is stained a bright red, and on his head he wears antelope horns. He carries a bone rattle and a charm stick with a bunch of white cockatoo feathers tied to the end. His neck, ears, wrists, and ankles have around them a great number of glass beads and bone ornaments. He struts in and prances noiselessly until he gets between Jones and a rough structure of boulders which represents an altar. Then he begins to chant and to dance. Jones sits hypnotized as the dance of the Witch-Doctor becomes a narrative in pantomime. As his dance becomes wilder and wilder, Jones joins in with the cries, beating time with his hands and swaying with his body. When the Witch-Doctor in his dance points with his wand to the sacred tree, to the river beyond, to the altar, and finally to Jones, the latter realizes that he must offer himself as a sacrifice. The Witch-Doctor springs to the river bank, stretching out his arms and calling to some god within. As he starts backward slowly, a huge head of a crocodile appears over the bank, and its glittering green eyes fasten upon Jones. For a few minutes Jones is fascinated and remains immovable, but the Witch-Doctor touches him with his wand and motions him toward the monster. Jones crawls nearer and nearer, calling for mercy. As he and the monster
get closer together, he suddenly remembers his one silver bullet. Defiantly he snatches his revolver and fires at the green eyes in front of him. The head of the crocodile sinks back behind the river bank, and the Witch-Doctor springs behind the sacred tree and disappears. The scene ends as Jones lies with his face to the ground, whispering with fear. Thus the phantoms of his past and of the history of his race are created in the mind of the fleeing man, but as Thomas Dickinson says, "They are more than phantoms; they are reality to Jones, they are Jones."

In this play O'Neill has made characteristic of all of his ghosts the regular, rigid, mechanical movements and their noiseless pantomime which seems in keeping with the beating of the tom-tom which ever serves as a background for them. These hallucinations of the past, together with the sound effects and Jones' monologues, have presented to the theatre an experiment which held the audience spellbound and sent them away praising both the production and the play which Barrett H. Clark describes as "a kind of unfolding, in reverse order, of the epic of the American negro."

O'Neill presents a different kind of hallucination in his one-act drama, Where the Cross Was Made. Captain Bartlett is a sailor who is obsessed with the idea that he has discovered a valuable chest of gold ornaments on a desert

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island in the Pacific. Having sent a ship back to the island and having received news that the ship had sunk, he has lost his mind and is still looking for his three companions who sailed on the *Mary Allen* to return with the treasure. So strong is his belief in their return that his son Nat has finally started looking for them, too. While Sue and Nat are talking, Bartlett comes into the room, saying that he has seen his ship. Both Bartlett and Nat see the ship as they look out the porthole, and both of them hear the creaks in the locks of the boat in which the three men are coming ashore, but Sue sees and hears nothing. The sound of a door being heavily slammed is heard from down in the house, but Sue says that it is only a shutter in the wind. The padding of bare feet sounds from the floor below, then comes up the stairs; Sue says it is only rats running about. Captain Bartlett rushes to the door and throws it open, and the forms of Silas Horne, Cates, and Jimmy Kanaka rise noiselessly into the room from the stairs. The last two carry heavy inlaid chests. Horne is in gray cotton trousers and a singlet which is torn open across his hairy chest. Jimmy wears only a breech-cloth, while Cates is in dungaree pants and a shredded white sailor's blouse, stained with iron rust. They are all in their bare feet, and water drips from their soaked and rotten clothes. Their flesh in the green light has the suggestion of decomposition, and their bodies sway limply, nervelessly, and rhythmically as if to the pulse of
long swells of the deep sea. Sue tries to convince her brother and her father that there is no one there. Captain Bartlett, however, takes the three ghosts upstairs, leaving Nat behind. As they leave the room, the green glow disappears, for the supernatural element has been disposed of. As has been suggested, this vision of ghosts is merely the hallucination of the two insane men, for Sue, who is present during the entire scene, sees nothing. O'Neill says of this play, "It was fun to write, theatrically very thrilling, an amusing experiment in treating the audience as insane -- that is all it means or ever meant to me."¹⁶ So, O'Neill goes farther than just presenting a dramatization of the insanity of two people, for everyone who sees the scene is insane. Thus during the production of the play the only people in the theatre whom O'Neill considers sane are Sue and the doctor.

The figures from the past in The Fountain are of a more spiritual cast than those of the other two plays, for through a vision they reveal to Juan the real meaning of Youth. After he has prayed for a miracle and a sign, the masked Figure appears in a light, staring straight ahead. He talks with her, pleads with her to tell him who she is. In passionate invocation he asks to be allowed to hear Beatriz sing once more. His wish is granted, and while she sings, the spring becomes a gigantic fountain out of which the form of Beatriz

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rises, "the personified spirit of the fountain." As Juan sinks in weakness from having tried to reach the fountain, Beatriz vanishes, and in her place is the form of a Chinese poet. This man, a dreamer and a scholar, carries with him a block and writes upon it with a brush; he is absorbed in contemplation. Juan recognizes him as the poet from the East of whom the Moorish minstrel had sung and who had told the Moor's father the story of the Fountain of Youth. As the poet raises his hand, the form of the Moorish minstrel appears. Then comes the figure of Nano, the Indian chief who had tried to kill Juan. He joins the other two. Last comes Luis, Juan's old friend. The four figures join hands, thus making a circle. Beatriz' voice can again be heard singing as the four forms dissolve in the fountain. Juan appeals once more to the figure, who raises her hand summoning the figures again. Within the fountain the following solemn figures materialize: first the Chinese poet dressed as a Buddhist priest, next the Moorish minstrel in the dress of a priest of Islam, then the Indian Medicine Man in all the paint and regalia of his office, and last Luis dressed as the Dominican monk of the present. Each of these figures carries before him the symbol of his religion. They are clearly visible for a moment, and then they all vanish into the fountain. Juan states the symbolism of the figures as he says: "All faiths -- they vanish -- are one and equal --
within. . . .”\(^{17}\) But he does not yet grasp God’s message; therefore he asks Youth to tell him the secret. As the voice of Beatriz is heard, the figure of an old woman comes from the left. She seems about to fill her wooden bowl at the fountain. As she stretches out her hand to Juan, he at first turns away. Then, pity entering his heart, he takes her hand, and immediately her face becomes that of Beatriz. Again he grasps the symbolism as he says, "Age -- Youth -- They are the same rhythm of eternal life!"\(^{18}\) His sweetheart vanishes from the fountain once more, and the figure walks into it. This time she appears without her mask, and her face is also the face of Beatriz. As he sees this last figure, knowledge and understanding come to him, and he realizes that Youth is Eternity, and that there is no death. Thus Juan through this vision of the people whom he has known realizes victory at last in finding a permanent Youth, Eternal Life.

In none of the three plays are O'Neill's ghosts or spirits similar in form or in function. Those of The Emperor Jones are a reflection of fear; those of Where the Cross Was Made, a reflection of insane desire; and those of The Fountain, a reflection of spiritual realization. Each ghost is a vivid character and performs his duty well.


\(^{18}\) Ibid., Scene X, p. 184.
the monologue. In the preceding discussion of O'Neill's use of the soliloquy, it was made evident that The Emperor Jones is made up almost entirely of Jones' monologue. This experiment is indeed rather extreme; however, in Before Breakfast its use is even more unusual. The treatment of the monologue in this play is not borrowed from Elizabethan drama as were the other soliloquies in his plays. Rather it shows the influence of August Strindberg, for throughout the entire play only one person speaks. O'Neill probably got his idea from Strindberg's The Stronger. In this play there are two characters, Mrs. X and Miss Y. Mrs. X. does all of the talking, and Miss Y remains silently on the stage from the beginning of the play to its end. O'Neill carries this experiment even a little farther in Before Breakfast, for only one character is ever completely visible to the audience. The situation definitely involves two people, Mrs. Rowland and Alfred, her husband, but all that is ever seen of him is his hand, when he reaches into the room to take a bowl of water. The two life stories are laid bare as Mrs. Rowland seemingly aimlessly nags at her husband. Not only does O'Neill present in her a vivid characterization, but also he reveals through her monologue a characterization of her husband. As Mrs. Rowland talks, the reader learns that Alfred, son of a one-time millionaire, has married her because "he had got her into trouble." When his father had tried to buy her off, however, Alfred had said that he wanted to marry
her. Their baby had been born dead, and Alfred had never been able to keep a job. Now Mrs. Rowland has a very meager sewing job with which she is supporting her husband. Alfred has been doing some heavy drinking, and his nerves are almost ruined. Mrs. Rowland tells Alfred that she has read his letter from Helen, a friend of his, and when he seems indignant about it, she tells him:

Don't look at me that way! Yes, I read her letter. What about it? I got a right to. I'm your wife. And I know all there is to know, so don't lie. You needn't stare at me so. You can't bully me with your superior airs any longer. . . .

She complains more about having to work, about his not doing anything, about the frequent cuts he gives himself while shaving. She further reveals the contents of the letter, the fact that Helen is going to have a baby -- his baby. She continues her chatter until just before she leaves for work, when she hears a groan of pain from the next room. Thinking that he has merely cut his face again, she talks on utterly void of sympathy. Hearing something dripping in the bathroom, she says: "There. You've overturned the water all over everything. Don't say you haven't. I can hear it dripping on the floor."\(^{20}\) When Alfred does not answer her, a vague expression of fear comes over her face. She hears a noise of something's being overturned and crashing to the floor. As she stands in the doorway looking down at the

\(^{19}\)Eugene O'Neill, *Before Breakfast*, p. 251 (in the collection entitled *Beyond the Horizon*).

\(^{20}\)Ibid., p. 254.
floor of the next room, she is transfixed with horror at discovering Alfred has cut his throat in order to escape the future with her. As the curtain falls, she is shrieking madly and rushing wildly into the hall. Thus O'Neill has taken a situation, one character, and a monologue and has worked them into a very dramatic one-act play full of feeling, conflict, and containing good characterizations.

In all of O'Neill's plays the set, the lights, and the off-stage effects help to build up the mood and are definitely in keeping with the situation. In *The Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillun Got Wings* he uses two most effective and unusual off-stage effects. Toward the end of the conversation between Jones and Smithers the low and vibrating thump of a tom-tom comes from the hills. It starts at a rate corresponding to the normal pulse beat, seventy-two to the minute, and continues at a gradually accelerating rate from this point to the very end of the play. With each scene Jones' fear and panic increase, so does the uninterrupted rate of the tom-tom. In the sixth scene where the figures are swaying back and forth as if they were rowing, their melancholy murmur increases gradually by rhythmic degrees which seem to be directed and controlled by the throb of the tom-tom in the distance. As the Witch-Doctor dances in the next scene, his rhythm is in keeping with that of the tom-tom, which has grown to a fierce exultant boom. After Jones has
been killed by a silver bullet, the haunting beat of the
tom-tom continues remorselessly.

This device has been used before in drama in such a play
as Austin Strong's The Drums of Oude; however, never has it
been so effectively used. Arthur Hobson Quinn describes
this device as being "the unifying force which accentuates
the needed mood in both character and audience, for it goes
back to the primitive expression of emotion, the accentuated
rhythm of the earliest race."\(^{21}\) H. G. Kemelman has not a
complimentary word for even The Emperor Jones, for he says:

I would merely point out that the tom-tom in The
Emperor Jones, although a new device, produced no change
in the established technique of the drama. The use of
the tom-tom is a trick whose only virtue is its novelty;
it cannot be used again, and it has not been used since.\(^{22}\)

In contrast, Thomas Dickinson discusses his ideas about the
play:

The use of the reverberating drum to imply the deeper
rhythms of life from which the Emperor was seeking to
escape by his trickery of civilization, a rhythm that
was to swallow him up as the tide laps the sand, is one
of the creative achievements of the modern theatre.
Let no one dismiss it as a mere stunt.\(^{23}\)

Although this play is of unusual length and is, for the
most part, a monologue, there is definitely evident conflict,
emotion, characterization, and mood, all important elements
by which this play is made one of O'Neill's outstanding successes.

\(^{21}\)Arthur Hobson Quinn, op. cit., p. 179.

\(^{22}\)H. G. Kemelman, op. cit., p. 490.

\(^{23}\)Thomas Dickinson, op. cit., p. 106.
In *All God's Chillun Got Wings* the symbolic off-stage effect is musical. The first three scenes in the first act take place at a corner in lower New York. In the street leading left, all the faces are white; in the street leading right, all are black. From the street of the whites a high-pitched, nasal tenor sings the chorus of "Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage." On the street of the blacks a Negro sings the chorus of "I Guess I'll Have to Telegraph My Baby." As the singing ends, there is distinctive laughter from both streets, then silence as the play begins. The next scene takes place nine years later at the same corner. One street is still all white, and the other still black. From the white street comes the same high-pitched nasal tenor singing "Gee, I Wish I Had a Girl," and the Negro replies, "All I Got Was Sympathy." Again the singing is followed by laughter, then silence as the action starts. The third scene is at the same corner five years later, This time there comes from the white street the same nasal tenor, a bit drunken, in high barber-shop falsetto, singing the last half of the chorus, "When I Lost You." The Negro voice replies with the last half of "Waitin' for the Robert E. Lee." Silence then follows as the characters enter and the drama moves on. In the fourth scene the same two streets run on either side of a church. Instead of the white and Negro elements being symbolized by the singing of first the white tenor and then the Negro, this time there is heard from off right only
the Negro singing "Sometimes I Feel Like a Mourning Dove."
This, too, holds a symbolism, for with the marriage of Ella
and Jim, which supposedly is taking place while the singing
goes on, she is assuming a part of the Negro race in marry-
ing Jim and in taking his name. The scenes in Act Two
take place in Jim and Ella's apartment; therefore the mu-
sical symbolism of the two races is absent. Although in the
first three scenes the songs have nothing to do with the
action, they furnish a mood which is definitely symbolic of
the racial relationship and conflicts which follow in each
scene. Indeed, in this play the off-stage effects serve as
a symbolic prelude to the scenes which they introduce.

Of course, in a number of O'Neill's other plays certain
off-stage effects such as the reflection of flames, the flash-
ing of lightning, and the rising of the dawn are employed.
However, these are the rather usual effects found in the
plays of almost any other modern dramatist. In The Emperor
Jones and All God's Chillun Got Wings the effects are more
in the experimental vein. These experiments have added much
to the general power and moods of the plays.

In writing some of his plays O'Neill found that one
scene was not sufficient to display all of the action which
was going on at one time. Thus through another kind of ex-
periment, visible simultaneous action was born. O'Neill has
made it possible to view different members of the cast in
different places at the same time. In Marco Millions he
uses a device which is comparable to one used by Robert Greene in *Friar Bacon* and *Friar Bungay*. In the latter, two scholars, Lambert and Serlsby, come to Friar Bacon's cell and ask to look into the magic glass in order that they may see their fathers back home. On one section of the stage Friar Bacon, Friar Bungay, and the two scholars look toward that part of the stage representing the glass. They see the two fathers come out arguing and fight a duel, killing each other. After the scholars witness this scene, they, too, fight each other and are killed. Realizing the tragedy which the glass has caused, Friar Bacon breaks it to avoid any future tragedy of the same kind. In *Marco Millions* Kublai and Chu-Yin, who are seated at the back of the stage, gaze into a crystal in order to see Marco Polo. The scene which they see, that of Marco's arrival at the Grand Throne Room in the Imperial Palace, is played on the front part of the stage. When Kublai tires of the scene, he breaks the crystal and both scenes fade from view. This is the only play in which O'Neill uses this method of providing for visible simultaneous action.

It was in *Desire Under the Elms* that O'Neill first presented his version of simultaneous action. Joseph T. Shipley explains this treatment in the statement:

*Desire Under the Elms* is marked by a wide translation into the theatre of the attitude that considers the stage a room with the fourth wall removed. The
spectators behold a house of which, as required, wall after wall is drawn away, revealing on the stage at once the ground outside and the requisite interior. 24

In the first scene of Part One this device is not in existence, for only the exterior of the Cabot farmhouse is shown. In Scene Two, however, the wall of the kitchen has been removed, and the scene between the three brothers is revealed. Toward the end of the scene Eben rushes outside and talks about Min, the girl to whom he has been making love, as the two brothers continue talking in the kitchen. In the next scene the wall of the brothers' bedroom is gone. Eben is seen first walking outside the house, then going into the bedroom to tell his brothers of their father's latest marriage. Scene Four takes place in the kitchen and the exterior, first as Simeon and Peter are preparing to leave for California and then as they leave and Cabot and Abbie arrive. Scene One of the second part takes place outside the farmhouse, but the second scene reveals Eben's bedroom and that of Caleb and Abbie. One of the most effective parts of this scene is that where Eben and Abbie with the wall between them seem aware of one another and react similarly. Eben and Abbie stare at each other through the wall. He sighs heavily and she echoes it. Both become terribly nervous, uneasy. Finally Abbie gets up and listens, her ear to the wall. He acts as if he is seeing every move she makes. As she goes to the door, his eyes follow her. She comes into

the room, and the rest of the scene takes place there. The next two scenes occur in only one place each, the parlor and the exterior, respectively. The first scene of the third part occurs in three places on the stage: the kitchen, where the party is going on; the bedroom, where Ben stands looking at Abbie's baby; and outside, where Cabot finally goes to find peace. All of Scene Two takes place outside the farmhouse. Scene Three shows Cabot's bedroom, where Abbie has just smothered her baby, and the kitchen, where she later confesses her crime to Eben. When the curtain rises on the last scene, both Cabot's bedroom and the kitchen are still visible. The scene ends outside the farmhouse, however, as the sheriff takes Eben and Abbie away and as Cabot goes down toward the barn. Thus ends the play which initiated in the theatre O'Neill's experiment of visible simultaneous action.

Arthur Hobson Quinn says of this experiment: "The result is generally ironic, and it is not at all certain that the freedom thus secured compensates for the distracting influence of the stage setting."\textsuperscript{25} I, however, found the simultaneous action rather pleasing because it did not limit the action of the character to one room in each scene. I disagree with Quinn regarding the distracting influence, for at any time that different characters are simultaneously in different rooms, as one scene gains in prominence, the action

\textsuperscript{25}Arthur Hobson Quinn, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 190.
of the other is subdued. This device is one that, after having proved a success, has been used by O'Neill in several other plays.

In *The Great God Brown* there is one scene in which both the drafting room and Brown's private office are shown. The former is at left, and the latter at right of a dividing wall at center. The two draftsmen in the former room give exposition of the office situation since Dion's death, while Margaret and Brown talk in his office regarding Dion's work. This experiment plays only a minor part in the action of this drama.

O'Neill's next play in which he used this device was *Dynamo*. Even though the production of this play was a failure, the simultaneous action was at times very effective. This device is used in only the first two acts of the play. Instead of revealing the rooms of only one house, the scene shows the rooms of the Light house and the Fife house which are located side by side. The first scene reveals Reuben Light's bedroom and the sitting room, where his father, to whom O'Neill refers as "Reverend Light," and his mother Amelia are discussing their son. Toward the end of the scene Reuben goes out into the yard and stands waiting at the hedge for Ada to come out. In the second scene of Act One the walls of the rooms in the Light house have been replaced and the interiors of the Fife sitting room and their bedroom are revealed. Mrs. Light's head can be seen peering
out of Reuben's window as she watches her son, who is still crouched in the shadows. Fife and his wife are in the sitting room, while Ada is upstairs in the bedroom. Ada goes outside to meet Reuben and then the two go back inside the house to talk with Fife. Mrs. Light then comes outside and hides in the shadows. The next scene is even more complicated, for Light is shown in his sitting room reading the Bible; Mrs. Light is still hiding outside, Mrs. Fife is now upstairs looking out of her bedroom window, and Fife, Reuben, and Ada are in the Fife sitting room. In Scene Four only Reuben's bedroom is revealed. Mrs. Fife is still leaning out of her window. As Mrs. Light goes into her house, Reuben comes out of the Fife house. As Light enters the bedroom in search of his wife, Amelia comes upstairs and tells him about Reuben's being with Ada. Almost all of this scene takes place in this room. The last of the scene, however, takes place outside the house. The Light sitting room is shown as the curtain rises on Act Two. Mrs. Fife leans leisurely out of one of the windows in her sitting room.

Most of this scene takes place with Mrs. Fife and Ada at the window and Reuben standing outside talking with them. There is a short scene between Light and his son in the sitting room; then Reuben goes back outside and talks with Ada. The next scene is the same except Reuben's bedroom is now revealed and the wall of the sitting room has been replaced. At first Ada and Reuben talk outside the houses; then he
goes into his bedroom, where he talks to his dead mother as the second act ends.

This usage of simultaneous action is more confusing than it was in *Desire Under the Elms*. So many times there were as many as four or five spots on the stage on which the audience might concentrate. The use of this device, however, did aid in making the action more continuous. *Dynamo* possesses the asides that are used in *Strange Interlude* and the simultaneous action that is found in *Desire Under the Elms*. Where each of these two plays was a success, *Dynamo* was a failure. This tends to prove that although O'Neill's experiments usually increase the effectiveness of his plays, these devices alone cannot make them successes or failures.

In *Mourning Becomes Electra* O'Neill once more uses this same device, but in only one act. The scene is the stern section of a clipper ship moored alongside a wharf in East Boston, with the floor of the wharf in the foreground. Christine comes aboard, and she and Brant talk on deck for a while; then they go through the door to the companionway stairs and disappear. In a few minutes Lavinia and Orin come aboard. As they look down through the cabin skylight, the scene fades into darkness. When the lights come on again, a section of the ship has been removed to reveal the interior of the cabin. As Christine and Brant talk and plan, Lavinia and Orin listen through the transom up on deck. When the two lovers leave the cabin, they come up on the left side
of the cabin, while Lavinia and Orin go downstairs through the companionway door. As Brant comes back downstairs, Orin and Lavinia prepare to kill him. After Orin shoots Brant, the simultaneous action ends, for the rest of that act takes place in the cabin.

O'Neill has written only one play since this one, and the device was not used in it. Perhaps he has finished his experiments with it. On the other hand, he may possibly use this device again in the plays on which he is now working.

Although the experimental element is not evident in O'Neill's earlier sea dramas, since The Emperor Jones he has been experimenting one way or another with nearly every one of his plays. Sometimes the experiment is more or less original; sometimes the influence of Strindberg can be recognized in it. In still other plays his device may be borrowed from Shakespeare or from Aeschylus. Regardless of the original source, O'Neill modifies these devices to such an extent that they are definitely his.

O'Neill has not presented to the public a play since 1934, when Days Without End was published. Many feel that this play is representative of a change which has taken place in the author. If this is true, perhaps his new plays will be entirely different from those he has written in the past. I feel, however, that regardless of the type of plays he writes in the future, if we are to judge them by his latest one, they will still be experimental in nature,
since *Days Without End* is one of his most unusual experiments. Regarding this matter we can only join Hiram Motherwell in saying, "O'Neill, what next?"
CONCLUSION

In an analysis of O'Neill's dramas and the experimental element in them, I have found that in more than half of his plays there is evidence of deviation from the conventional drama. Most of the plays which are entirely lacking in the experimental element are his earlier sea dramas. His first real dramatic experiment was The Emperor Jones, in which he experimented with the form of the play, the off-stage effects, and the soliloquy. Since that time almost all of his plays have contained at least one experimental device.

Not all of O'Neill's experiments have been original. As has been made evident in Chapter I, O'Neill borrowed from the Greeks one of their very popular tragedy plots and their use of choruses and masks. He has not been content to use these devices completely as the Greeks used them. To the Greek plot he has added the sex frustration element and has changed the setting, the characters, and a number of details of the plot. In his use of the choruses he has more nearly followed the Greeks, although he has never given them the prominence which Greek choruses had. Some of O'Neill's masks have the same functions as those in the Greek plays,
but he has provided, in addition, more varied functions for
them, such as representing the dual nature of his characters,
symbolizing an idea or theme of a play, and representing the
former self of a character. In each of these experiments
borrowed from the Greeks he has been quite successful.

O'Neill has shown definitely the influence of the earlier
English dramatists in his use of the morality play, solilo-
quies, and asides. He has borrowed from Shakespeare the
type of soliloquy and aside that reveal the "inner self,"
and, in addition, he has applied to them a definite Freudian
psychology. His use of these devices has met with a great
deal of success, but his rendition of the morality play has
been a disappointment to his admirers.

In his modern experiments he has been influenced by
Strindberg's use of the monologue and, in one play, Robert
Greene's use of visible simultaneous action. Most of his
modern experiments, namely, those in form, in lighting,
in hallucinations of the past, in off-stage effects, and in
another treatment of visible simultaneous action, are original
in nature. Each of these modern experiments has met with a
certain degree of success; however, the experiments borrowed
from the Greeks and from the earlier English dramatists have
met with a more striking degree of success.

H. G. Kemelman, who is definitely not an O'Neill en-
thusiast, says, "O'Neill has been called a great dramatic
experimenter, but I think the value of his experimentation is greatly over-rated.¹ John Anderson, however, voices the general opinion of the influence O'Neill and his experiments have had on the American theatre:

O'Neill set up no school and fortunately has no imitators. Yet his is the permeating influence on the American theatre. For the theatre cannot touch its living functions, as against the revival of its past, without the mouthpiece of a dramatist. O'Neill came along at the urgent moment to use the theatre's newly found freedom in the idiom of his own country, and fortunately, in his own time.²

O'Neill writes of Puritanism, religion, the pagan way of life, the relativity of good and evil, determinism, social implication, and the sickness of today, each with effectiveness. His character portrayal is done in such detail and with such power that each character is a living personage caught in the struggle of life. His experiments are such that he has presented to the theatre new devices with which the more deeply to portray characters and develop situations. Whatever his future plays may be, the American theatre already owes no small debt to the experimentation and achievement of Eugene O'Neill.

¹H. G. Kemelman, "Eugene O'Neill and the Highbrow Melodrama," Bookman, LXXV (September, 1932), 490.
²John Anderson, The American Theatre, p. 73.
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