CHAPTER - IV
THEMES & TECHNIQUES

Beyond The Horizon (1918) is generally regarded as O’Neill’s first important full length play, and as such, is historically significant. The play is also significant in that it introduces many of the themes and dramatic techniques to be found in many of O’Neill is able to develop themes and characters to a much greater degree than in his earlier one-acts. In this play, O’Neill establishes the farm setting to which he will return later in Desire Under the Elms (1924). Although this play is realistic in setting and structure, it contains expressionistic elements that will be further explained in The Emperor Jones (1920) and The Hairy Ape (1922). This play also introduces the theme of thesis, Death. In this play we find the first evidence of the concurrent use of spiritual and physical death. An example of this is the death of James Mayo. Once he has thrown his son Andrew out of the house his hopes for the future, and the farm, which is his life dies and when hope dies, physical death is sure to follow. Thus, a spiritual death and a physical death are linked by O’Neill, establishing a theme that can be traced throughout his canon. Mrs. Mayo (James Mayo’s wife) expresses this point when she says:

*It was that (the expulsion of Andrew and the resultant loss of hope) brought on his death—breaking his heart just on account of his stubborn pride.*

The element of pride would be attacked by O’Neill in many of his plays, but most ardently when the fault was the pride of intellect.
A clear example of this will follow in *The Emperor Jones.*

The theme of death is pervasive in the play *Beyond the Horizon.* There is the death of the dreams or hopes (spiritual) of Robert Mayo who had always wanted to go "beyond the horizon", there is the death of James Mayo (both spiritually and physically), there is the death of the dream of Ruth when Andrew tells her he no longer feels love for her and there is the death of the dream of love between Robert and Ruth, symbolized by the physical death of their child Mary. This degeneration into hopelessness and death is reflected in the physical appearance of the characters as well as the decay of the farm and the farm house. At the beginning of each act, O'Neill's stage directions reveal the growing extent of this deterioration. This stylistic treatment of the physical (outer) revealing the spiritual (inner) and vice versa, will be used in many later plays.

Probably the best example of this is the deterioration and death of Robert Mayo. He has the dream of travel which dies when he substitutes it for the illusion of love. As he says to Ruth, in an attempt to justify his giving up his dream of travel:

> I think love must have been the secret--the secret that called to me from over the world's rim--the secret beyond every horizon; ... Oh, ruth, our love is sweeter than any distant dream.²

But in the next act, we see the failure of this dream as well, symbolized by the deterioration of the farm as well as the characters. Ironically, in the midst of this "dying", there is a child; a symbol of hope. Robert clings to this with all his will, yet this hope, this child,
Robert's condition, as well as that of the farm, rapidly deteriorates after the death of Mary. In act 3, Scene 1, he grasps at one more false hope; he returns to the dream of going "beyond the horizon", of leaving the farm and going to live in the city and starting over. With this "vision of a new life" burning in his mind, he rushes over to the window to see the sun rise but, alas, reality sets in and "All I can see is the black rim of the damned hills outlined against a creeping grayness." There is to be no new life, there is only reality and reality is death. Now Robert is forced to face the world without a "saving lie", to face death without any illusions and it is here, finally, that he achieves insight; he realizes that only through suffering and sacrifice, by going through life, can one achieve true freedom, in death. As he says: "I've won my trip--the right of release--beyond the horizon!"

Robert realizes that a reality without hopes or dreams is death, and death is freedom. But for Andrew and Rugh, there is no revelation. They are left to cope with life as they see it; Andrew grasping for some kind of meaning and Rugh simply "sinking back into that spent calm beyond the further troubling of any hope." For her there is only mere existence awaiting death and in this she prefigures Lavinia at the end of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, returning to the boarded up Mannon house to live out the rest of her existence with the dead Mannons' ghosts punishing her until her death.

*Beyond the Horizon* is a story of two brothers Andrew and
Robert. The first is the son of the soil in true sense, oberea the second one dreams like a romantic who tries to look into ‘The far off, the unknown, the mystery and spell of the East .... in the quest of the secret which is hidden over there, beyond the horizon.” But the Destiny has something else in store for them. consequently they are forced to take up jobs which go against their natures. It results in tragic waste of two spirits. O’Neill presents these characters as pitched against such forces which thwasrt their efforts to get their dreams materialised. He was symbols which stand for the inner corruption of the astounding knowledge of American material prosperity. The Former of these two characters, Robert who has ‘a touch of the poet about him’, wishes to respond to the call of the btauth of the unknown and the unseen. The life at the form tires him. It is absolutly of no interest to him. The latter of the due, Andrew, who is ‘intelligent in a shrewd way’, to use the words of Robert himself, ‘is widded to the soil’. But unfortunality the roles of the two are reversed.

The agricultural farm suffer a great decay under Robert which gradually leads to the sinking of spiritual vigour in him’. He is made to realize that he is at mistake in his craving for the fulfilment of his dream beyond the horizon in Ruth. He ultimately finds himself to be a misfit there. As such he starts hating the farm. At this print natural forces hit him back and the man suffers an attack of neurosis. Very like Hardy’s Edgon Health, the farm, which is an agent of the Destiny, completely crushes Robert physically and ruins him mentally.
And once such forces are active in their destructive role they do not spare Robert's lady love Ruth. They even take away the body through which their love has found. Fruition, very curiously Andrew grows as a symbol of human desire for natural prosperity. He takes up a voyage and loses his innocent nature. Not only this his next journey converts him into a cunning trader. In this process Andrew is shorn off his native sincerity of outlook on life. Robert comments on the decay of Andrew’s morality:

"You a farmer - to gamble in a wheat pit with scraps of paper. There's a spiritual significance in that picture. Andy, ... you used to be a creator when you loved the farm. You and your life were in a harmonious partnership... your gambling with the thing you used to love to create proves how far astray... So you'll be punished. You'll have to suffer to win back ... (O'Neill, Beyond the Horizon. The Plays of Eugene O'Neill, Vol. I p. 161-162)"

And Andrew is cursed to live on the farm. In fact, tragedy befalls both Robert and Andrew, the major factor being the disharmony in relations. It further illustrates how nature punishes those who leave the ground of reality and try to take big leaps beyond the horizon. This is a sort of punishment for acting against one’s nature and temperament. Their fate forces them to embrace their death and distinction--be is Robert who dreams of going beyond the horizon and lands into the territory of Death, or Andrew who also tries to go beyond the horizon i.e. quitting his farm and escaping from the land nature, but ultimately dying his moral death, or Ruth who again times to go beyond the horizon and acts against her nature, marries a man she hardly understand, and
consequently suffers a greater decay.

The cyclical structure of *Beyond the Horizon* is a recurrent element in O’Neill’s works. The cycle of sunset at the beginning of the play, to sunrise at the end of the play is reflected in the cycle of Robert’s dreams. There is an excellent juxtapositioning, however, because as the sun sets one has the images of darkness and night or death yet, for Robert, this is the beginning of his dreams (illusions) of love. In contrast to this, the sunrise at the end, symbolizing a new day or life, occurs at his death (physically), but with his spiritual realization and the beginning of his true journey “beyond the horizon.” There is, therefore, a physical as well as a symbolic structure to the play which prefigures that of *The Emperor Jones* and *A Long Day’s Journey Into Night*.

Finally, this play is important as it introduces the concept of instinct versus intellect to O’Neill’s works. The characters all fail, because they ignore their instincts and “decide” on alternate courses. Robert decides, or is persuaded by Ruth, to forsake travelling in order to remain on the farm, Ruth, who is much more suited to Andrew, is attracted to Robert for intellectual reasons. Andrew, the man of the soil, decides to wander the earth in search of Robert’s romantic ideals. This duality of intellect versus instinct will be explored to a greater extent in *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*.

*The Emperor Jones* is a play which concern itself very much with the duality of intellect versus instinct. The Emperor Brutus Jones is inordinately proud of his intellect as is shown by his constant referral
to his island kingdom’s subjects as “bush niggers.” Yet he is representative of all men with their ignorance and fear under the layers of intellect. The layers of intellect will, during the course of the play, be peeled away one by one. As each layer is removed, it is “killed” with a bullet from Jones’ pistol. He regresses from personal (Little Formless Fears) through social fears to actual fear itself, manifest in primitive religion. Each “Killing” of a layer of intellect serves a dual purpose: firstly, it is symbolic of his mental regression and secondly, it motivates the next step in the regression. Finally, Jones faces the ultimate reality of existence without the protection of any “saving lie” or any rationalized code or arrangement of beliefs. He faces the void and as he is about to give in to despair, he calls on the Christian god he has assumed (and wears with the casualness of a cloak, to be discarded at will) and fires his last bullet.

This destruction of even his most inner-self coincides with his own physical destruction. He is shot by the rebels, yet, even in death, he cannot escape illusions or society, as he is shot with silver bullets made of money. This is because he created the belief that normal bullets would not kill him.

In The Emperor Jones, visual images of increased interaction with other contrasted with increased individuation in The Hairy Ape. A comparison of the opening scenes of the two plays illustrates the contrasting visual images of the two closely related works. Very conscious of his images as emperor, Jones first appeared on stage
dressed flambouyantly.

He wears a light blue uniform coat, sprayed with brass buttons, heavy gold chevrons on his shoulders, gold braid on the collar, cuffs, etc. His pants are bright red with a light blue stripe down the side. Patentleather laced boots with brass spurs, and a belt with a long-barreled, pearl-handled revolver in a holster complete his make up.

(EJ, Sc. I; p. 9)

In contrast to Jones’ highly ornate appearance, the crew of the ocean liner resembled sub-human figures.

The men themselves should resemble those pictures in which the appearance of Neanderthal Man is guessed at. All are hairy-chested, with long arms of tremendous power, and low, receding brows above their small, fierce, resentful eyes. All the civilized white races are represented, but except for the slight differentiation in color of hair, skin, eyes, all these men are alike .... He seems broader, fiercer, more truculent, more powerful, more sure of himself than the rest. They respect his superior strength—the grudging respect of fear. Then, too, he represents to them a self-expression, the very last word in what they are, their most highly developed individual.

(HA, Sc. I; p. 166)

Jones’ isolation was emphasized by his sitting on the throne after the audience knew that his former followers had abandoned him and joined the insurrection led by Lem. The veneer that Jones had used to exaggerate his importance to the natives, and which was parodied by his appearance near the end of the play, was based on his observations of white businessmen when he was a Pullman porter. Jones’ studied appearance and behaviour and his rationalizing of it emphasized the inauthenticity of western civilization from which Jones had learned
deceit. The crew members and Yank resembled the sailors aboard the SS Glencairn, except for the exaggeration of their primitive physical description; O’Neill made them appear ape-like. However, they constituted a chorus and their crowded mass contrasted to Jones’ solitariness as he argued with his parasite, Smithers.

The visual images in the beginning of *The Emperor Jones* and the end of *The Hairy Ape* depicted man in isolation from his universe and fellow beings. In *The Emperor Jones*, the resulting confusion and fear that Jones felt after entering the forest were due to the failure of science and modern religion to protect him from the chaos of existence. Jones was a modern man who normally denied the pull of non-rational drives and urges, and consequently fought against them when he was forced to recognize their existence. For example. When Jones entered the jungle, the distance he imagined to exist between him and the people he exploited began to disappear. consequently, the first visual image in the play showed him removed from the unpredictable flow of events of everyday life. By insisting on his self-sufficiency, Jones denied that life was non-rational; he thought he could succeed in his plans for self-aggrandizement because he could think more rationally than his subjects.

The opening description of Jones in his emperor’s garb publicized the limited success he had in exploiting the natives, and differentiated him from them. However, O’Neill also prepared the audience for Jones’ later non-rational behaviour. Jones was a black
man, and despite his past experience in western civilization, he was less modern than his white counterpart; therefore, his reversion to primitive behaviour involved less of a chronological retrogression. And, the racial stereotyping contributed to the ease with which an audience was willing to accept his regression to primitive man. Even though Jones had learned well the dishonest practices of the white businessmen he had observed during his stint as a Pullman porter, he had a few personal quirks that connected him to the primitive society he exploited. He claimed to have the power to read people’s past experiences in their eyes; “Dey’s somethings I ain’t got to be tole. I kin see ‘em in folk’s eyes” (EJ, Sc. I: p. 11). Jones also maintained that “Trees an’ me, we’se friends ...” (EJ, Sc. I; p. 21); while part of what he claimed was said for Smither’s benefit, part of it accurately reflected the non-rational part of his psychological makeup.

In addition to the good luck charm, Jones had him membership in the Baptist Church to protect him against harm. After Smithers suggested that the natives’ “devils and ghosts” would hound him in the jungle at night, Jones rejected the suggestion but replied that he had protection from them.

Does yo’s ‘pect I se silly enuff to b ‘lieve in ghosts an’ ha’ants an’ all dat old woman’s talk? G’long, white man! You ain’t talkin’ to me. (With a chuckle) Doesn’t you know dey’s got to do wid a man was member in good standin’ o’ de Baptist Church? Sho’ I was dat when I was porter on de Pullmans, befo’ I gits into my little trouble. Led dem try deir heathen tricks. De Baptist Church done perect me and land dem all in hell. (Then with more confident satisfaction) And I se
got little silver bullet o' my own, don't forgit.

(EJ, Sc. I; pp.21-22)

In the second scene, Jones was spatially confused. Although he thought he knew where he was and where the food was hidden, he was lost. As he scrambled from stone to stone in search of the canned food, the audience realized he was lost. Finally, Jones admitted his mistake.

(While he is talking he scrambles from one stone to another, turning them over in frantic haste. Finally, he jumps to his feet excitedly.) If I lost de place? Must have! But how dat happen when I was followin’ de trail acrocc de plain in broad daylight?

(EJ, Sc. II; p. 27)

The gun represented modern man’s strength and intelligence throughout the rest of The Emperor Jones: it was pitted against the dionysian power and attraction of nature. Each shot weakened Jones’ ability to resist the attraction of nature that signalled the end of individual identity. He was unconvincing when he explained his encounter with the formless creatures. He dismissed them as “little wild pigs,” but his joking comment, “what you think dey is--ha’nts” (EJ, Sc. II; p. 29), suggested that he didn’t believe his own explanation. This comment also indicated that his faith in the power of reason to explain existential phenomena was weakening.

Structurally, the play is a cycle of reality to illusion (fantasy) returning to reality. There is also the journey that Jones makes in a circle, returning to his physical point of departure at the edge of the forest, Furthermore, there is the symbolic cycle of nothingness to
existence, existence to nothingness. The structure of the play prefigures that of *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*. The dramatic progression of the action in present time counterpoints the dramatic regression of the memory in time past which, in turn, develops a progressive understanding of the psychological motivation within the mind.\(^9\)

Thus, as previously stated, Jones has come full circle both physically and spiritually. In his attempts to live without illusions where his cynical intelligence has rejected all the romantic sentiments of life, and in his attempts to manipulate "nigger superstitions" to his own end, Jones prefigures Hickey in *The Iceman Cometh*. But his great illusion is the belief that he can live without illusions, and his denial of romantic idealism becomes a denial of life itself. Like the self-deluded Hickey, he dies in the tangle of his own mind, destroyed by his imperial self-superiority.

For O’Neill, society as a hole, with its social, intellectual and moral codes dehumanizes man into a marionette-like existence. This is, in itself, a type of death as the vital, instinctual side of man is rejected. Each person only feels comfortable in his designated place in society, and only thinks and acts as society would have him. But this is denial of self. O’Neill would have us return to the emotional, instinctual level. It is by process of intellect that we slay ourselves by questioning our place in society. This leads us to the next play, *The Hairy Ape*.

This play, *The Hairy Ape*, marks the beginning of O’Neill’s
long war with the soul-destroying materialism of American society. Soon, The Great God Brown would symbolically destroy the creative Dion Anthony, and Marco Millions would disgust the great god Kaan.\textsuperscript{10}

But in this play, we see the failure of the uneducated American to “belong” to civilized society. Yank, the protagonist, is immediately a symbol of the displacement of modern man’s pride of power. he “belong”, he thinks, to the world of speed and accomplishment. When this, his “saving lie” is refuted and revealed as false, Yank begins to “think”, and this culminates in his downfall.

Yank, until he is confronted by “society”, represented by the “incongruous (with nature) artifical figure”\textsuperscript{11} of Mildred, believes he is an essential part of modern industrial civilization:

\begin{quote}
\begin{flushright}
It's me makes it roar! It's me makes it move! ... I'm at de bottom, get me! Dere ain't nothin' foither, I'm de end! I'm de start! I start somepin and de world moves! It-- dats me! De new dats moiderin' de old! ... I belong!\textsuperscript{12}
\end{flushright}
\end{quote}

But when confronted by that same society to which he believes he belongs, he repulses it (Mildred) and is referred to as a “filthy beast”.\textsuperscript{13} This begins the process of “thinking” (as is shown in the staging by the repetition of the Thinker motif) and will lead to his destruction.

Like the opening of The Moon of the Caribees and in contrast to the beginning of the The Emperor Jones, the first visual image in The Hairy Ape was one of choric interaction.

\begin{quote}
\textit{VOICES:} Gif me trink dere, you! 'Ave a wet!
\end{quote}
Salute!
Gesundheit!
Skoal!
Drunk as a lord, God stiffen you!
Here's how!
Luck! Pass back the bottle, damn you!
Pourin' it down his neck!
Ho, Froggy! Where the devil have you been?
La Touraine.

(HA, Sc. I; pp. 166-167)

Paddy represented another existential alternative in the first scene. Like Driscoll in The Moon of the Caribees, Paddy fondly remembered sailing the oceans before the advent of steam power. According to him, a sailor's connection to nature was intimate; it was hard to separate his identity from the natural forces of the sea.

Oh, to be back in the fine days of my youth, ochone! Oh, there was fine beautiful ships them days--clippers wid tall masts touching the sky--fine strong men in them--en that was sons of the sea as if t' was the mother that bore them. Oh, the clean skins of them, and the clear eyes, the straight backs and full chests of them!

(HA, Sc. I; p 173)

Paddy's edenic description of his life on the sea emphasized a primitive vision of nature; "en that was sons of the sea as if t' was the mother that bore them" Paddy's statement could have been a myth of primitive man, with the exception of his qualification, "as if."

Prior to the opening scene, O'Neill characterized the intensity of the crew as "the baffled defiance of a best in a cage." And later, after noting that the opening scene shouldn't be treated naturalistically, he repeated the cage-like surroundings of the crew.
The effect sought after is a cramped space in the bowels of a ship, imprisoned by white steel. The lines of bunks, the uprights supporting them, cross each other like the steel framework of a cage. The ceiling crushes down upon the men's heads.

(HA, Sc. I; pp. 166-167)

Paddy's recollection of his past communion with the sea was similar to Edmund's recounting his experience of temporary oneness with the ocean in Long Day's Journey Into Night. Like Edmund's mystical epiphany, Paddy recalled losing grasp of reality as the ship and ocean became one.

Night when the foam of the wake would be flaming wid fire, when the sky'd be blazing and winking wid stars. Or the full of the moon may be. Then you'd see her driving through the gray night, her sails stretching aloft all silver and white, not a sound on the deck, the lot of us dreaming dreams, till you'd believe 'twas no real ship at all you was on but a ghost ship like the Flying Dutchman they say does be roaming the seas forevermore without touching a port.

(HA, Sc. I; p. 174)

Paddy's reverie suggested the transitory lifting of the eveil of maya that Nietzsche discussed in The Birth of Tragedy. With "the lot of us dreaming dreams," Paddy's former crew overcame the bounds of individual identity and experienced the "mysterious primordial harmony" that Nietzsche posited at the heart of all existence. "Each one [man] feels himself not only united, reconciled, and fused with his neighbor, but as one with him..." (BOT, Sec. III; p. 37). Paddy completed his recreation of past oneness between man and man, and man and nature by including the ship in the equation of sea and crew.
"Twas them days men belonged to ships, not now. 'Twas them days a ship was part of the sea, and a man was part of a ship, and sea joined all together and made it one" (HA, Sc. I; p. 175). The introduction of steam power destroyed much of the intimacy between man, ship, and sea. As we know from the physical description of the crew and their surroundings at the beginning of the first scene, the dependency and the intimacy have almost completely disappeared in The Hairy Ape.

If The Emperor Jones attested to the continued existence of primitive man's drives and feelings, then The Hairy Ape pointed out their suppression in contemporary civilization. Yank dismissed Paddy's comments as the fantasies of one who had been "hittin' de pipe of de past." And, like his response to Long's political philosophizing. Yank threatened Paddy with physical violence. He had an immediate involvement with the world of the firemen's forecastle and the engine room, which he saw as the center of the universe. Consequently, he recast primitive man's feelings of closeness to nature into an intimacy with the machine age. When Paddy asked yank if he considered himself "a flesh and blood wheel of the engines," Yank replied affirmatively: "Sure ting! Dat's me. What about it? (HA, Sc. I; p. 175). According to Yank, the individual assured modern society's ability to exist. "Sure, on'y for me everything stops. It all goes dead, get me? De noise and smoke and all be engines movin' de woild, dey stop. Dere ain't nothin' nor more! Dat's what I'm sayin' (HA, Sc. I; pp. 176-177). Yank was not totally wrong, at least as far as life aboard
the ship was concerned. However, once O’Neill brought Yank ashore in the fifth scene, his primal vitality was turned against him: Yank couldn’t respond moderately to external stimuli. Paddy’s past intimacy with nature was no longer available to Yank, and Long’s political analysis of and ordered reaction to events was too tame. Ironically, it was Yank who, in his own words, didn’t “belong”.

In the first scene, O’Neill defined Yank’s existential philosophy with visual images of him contesting Paddy and Long, physically threatening the views of life that they represented. Yank was a neo-primitive like the rest of the crew, but was individualized by the degree of his development; he was the best of his kind. And, in his cramped universe below decks, he imposed his interpretation of life upon his fellows by sheer force. However, his vitality couldn’t protect him against the intrusion of the world outside that he claimed was dependent on him. Mildred Douglas’ appearance in the second scene prefigured Yank’s later encounter with the society he represented.

Before the steel magnate’s daughter ventured down into Yank’s universe, O’Neill described her in the most unflattering terms. Audience sympathy was channeled toward Yank.

*She looks fretful, nervous and discontented, bored by her own anemia. Her aunt is a pompous and proud—and fat—old .... MILDRED is dressed all in white .... The impression to be conveyed by this scene is one of the beautiful, vivid life of the sea all about—sunshine on the deck in a great flood, the freshest sea wind blowing across it. In the midst of this, these two incongruous, artificial figures, inert and disharmonious, the elder like a gray lump of dough*
touched up with rouge, the younger looking as if the vitality of her stock had been sapped before she was conceived, so that she is the expression not of its life energy but merely of the artificialities that energy had for itself in the spending.

(\textit{HA}, Sc. II; pp. 180-181)

Compared to O’Neill’s description of the two representatives of modern civilization, Yank’s primitive behavior and near in humane living conditions seemed attractive. Yank’s major characteristic, vitality, was absent in the portrait of Mildred and her aunt. Although Yank rejected Paddy’s description of the wholesomeness of life on deck of a sailing ship as a fantasy of the past, Mildred was oblivious to the forces of nature around her. She claimed that “I don’t like Nature” (\textit{HA}, Sc. II; p. 185).

Mildred’s self-evaluation was depressing; it contrasted to Yank’s overly inflated opinion of himself. O’Neill made steel the common denominator in the contrast of their philosophies of life. In the previous scene, yank claimed that he was steel. “And I’m what makes iron into steel! Steel, date stands for de whole ting! And I’m steel--steel--steel! I’m de muscles in steel, de punch behind it” (Sc. I; p. 177). While Yank saw himself as the energy involved in the steel making process and the strength of the finished product, Mildred envisioned herself as “a waste product in the Bessemer process” (Sc. II; p. 183). She continued her self-portrait in an ironic self-deprecating tone; “or rather, I inherit the acquired trait of the by-product, wealth, but noe of the enery, none of the strength of the steel that made it” (Sc.
II; p. 183). She claimed to have “neither the vitality nor integrity” to become part of life, and her occupation as a social worker was, in her aunt’s word, merely a justification for “your slumming international.”

At the beginning of the second scene, Mildred was wearing a white dress. This particularly ironic because she was the most corrupt character in the play; she carried the taint of modern civilization with her. When the Second Engineer warned that her proposed trip below decks was likely to soil her dress, she replied, “It doesn’t matter. I have lots of white dresses,” and shortly thereafter, she repeated her lack of concern: “I have fifty dresses like this. I will throw this into the sea when I come back. That ought to wash it clean, don’t you think? (HA, Sc. II; p. 185). Mildred’s comments were more than sarcasm directed at the Second Engineer (whom she described as “An oaf--but a handsome virile oaf”); they exceeded her own intention at ironic distance and self-deprecation. In her disgusting display of conspicuous consumption, she unknowingly revealed her alienation from what Paddy had described as the cleansing maternal attributes of the sea. Mildred’s words reduced the sea from spiritual to commercial cleanser. Her white dress and the corruption that it ironically signified contrasted to Yank’s dirty occupation and appearance, and his spiritual purity. He was wrong in his self-estimate and audiences knew it early in the first scene. However, his error was honest, and his actions in accordance with it were vital, if misguided. In contrast, Mildred was a spiritually dead woman whom her aunt twice referred to as a ghoul.
By the time that Mildred descended into Yank's sanctuary in the third scene, O'Neill prepared the audience for Yank's eventual defeat by the civilization that Mildred Douglas represented. Although she lacked Yank's vitality, she had an impersonal hostile power that was "the acquired trait of the by-product, wealth," of her family's business enterprises. She was symbol of the anonymous overwhelming force of contemporary society that crushed Yank once he ventured into it. In fact, Mildred's lifeless disposition combined with her access to the family's power and allowed her to live through others' energy. Mildred sought constant stimulation from the outside, and since she wasn't a vital human being, she vicariously enjoyed the vitality of others. As a social worker, she involved herself with others and still kept her distance from them. Her description of the Second engineer, "An oaf--but a handsome, virile oaf," revealed her fascination and her hostility for the human specimens she studied. Compared to Yank, she was hypocritical, deceitful, and unenergetic and the world she represented was inimical to Yank's neo-primitivism. Her aunt described her as dead.

*Did the sociology you took up at college teach you that--to play the ghoul on every possible occasion, excavating old bones... Yes, you are a natural born ghoul. You are even getting to look like one, my dear.*

*(Sc. II; p. 181)*

Mildred's response confirmed her aunt's diagnosis. "Do you know what you remind me of? Of a cold pork pudding against a background of linoleum tablecloth in the kitchen of a--but the possibilities are
vearisome." Mildred's venomous words, uttered "In a passionate tone," revealed her appetite for destruction. She described her aunt as unflattering food to be eaten. Midred existed by sapping another's energy in order to compensate for her own lack of vitality in the same way that modern society existed; it killed the primitive spirit of its individual members. In his portrait of Mildred, O'Neill foreshadowed the lifeless world of modern society that existed in The Iceman Cometh.

In The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape, O'Neill clarified but did not change substantially his view of existence from the SS Glencairn cycle. He traced the vestiges of primitive behavior that remained in the SS Glencairn plays to their origin in The Emperor Jones and then advanced them to contemporary civilization in The Hairy Ape. Both The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape retained the circular form of the plot and the interactions of man and society but investigated the extraliterary basis of this formal circularity by focusing on its separate stages of development and decomposition. In contrast to the SS Glencairn plays' constant ebb and flow of group behavior, The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape analyzed specific moments of individual and communal interaction. Each play had eight scenes, and while one could detect a rising and filling action in each subdivision, there was as sharper delineation of beginning, middle and end of individual scenes than there was in the SS Glencairn plays. The process was analogous to inspecting individual slides under a microscope, each one representing a stage in man's evolution.
Each scene in The Emperor Jones was an episode in Jones' personal history until in the fifth scene, he was clearly a symbol of the black man's history in the United States, and in the seventh scene he represented primitive man. Discarding the last vestiges of modernity, Jones' appearance reveled, in Jungian terminology, 'a veneer of civilization over a dark-skinned brute.' Once Jones entered the Forest, he began to leave behind him the trappings of modern man, including the belief that science and reason were capable of explaining the phenomena of everyday life. His reaction to the non-rational occurrences in scenes two through eight displayed modern man's capacity for primitive behavior beneath his "veneer of civilization." Consequently, each scene showed Jones acting on the basis of drives and urges rather than rational motivation. Beginning in the fourth scene, Jones behaved non-rationally; for example, the stage directions indicated that in the fourth scene, Jones responded to the commands of a prison guard from his past.

The PRISON GUARD cracks his whip--noiselessly--and the that signal all the convicts start to work on the road. They swing their picks, they shovel, but not a sound comes from their labor. Their movements, like those of JEFF in the preceding scene, are those of automatons--rigid, slow, and mechanical. The PRISON GUARD points sternly at JONES with his whip, motions him to take his place among the other shoverlers. JONES gets to his feet in a hypnotized stupor. He mumbles subserviently.

(Ed, Sc. IV; p. 35)

Like the other convicts, Jones obeyed unspoken commands and became a nameless member of the chain gang. In this scene however, Jones
resisted his loss of identity by attempting to re-kill the guard. The visual image of Jones contesting urges he rejected rationally foreshadowed the eventual dissolution of his indivuality.

In *The Hairy Ape*, Mildred’s descent into Yank’s subterannean world prefigures his defeat by modern society at the end of the play. Having shown the continued existence of primitive urges and drives in modern man’s behavior, O’Neill also acknowledged the destruction of traditional man’s meaningful relation to his cosmos. And, in order to demonstrate what intimacy man once enjoyed with his surroundings, O’Neill had to transport him farther away from the influence of modern society than he had in the SS Glencairn works. Jones’ resistance to his eventual primitive behavior implied that an attempt to resurrect such a cosmos in modern civilization was possible.

In *On the Psychology of the Unconscious*, Carl Jung asserted that any attempt to resurrect primitive man’s religious intimacy with his universe was futile.

*The religions [primitive] have established this cycle of energy in a concrete wasy by means of ritual communion with the gods. This method, however, is too much at variance with our intellectual morality, and has morever been too radically supplanted by Christianity, for us to accept it as an ideal, or even possible, solution of the problem.*

The cycle of energy that Jung mentioned was the product of emotional and psychic oppositions. Primitive man responded to life’s inexplicability by means of various non-rational beliefs and actions. Like Jung, O’Neill also thought that a return to primitive man’s cosmic
intimacy was impossible in contemporary civilization. As the figure at the end of O’Neill’s circular dramatic journey into man’s past and back to the present, Yank was unable to “belong” in the worlds of primitive and modern man.

In the clash between Yank and modern society that was foreshadowed in an encounter with Mildred in the third scene of *The Hairy Ape*, the tension resulting from man’s inner polarity was evident as the conflict between the conscious and unconscious parts of man. Just as primitive man could not exist in modern society, modern man could not deny the non-rational drives and urges within him, and his intellect. The world in which man lived was inexplicable in rational terms as were his reactions to it. The religious rituals which characterized primitive man’s symbolic response to his surroundings reflected the recurrent appearance of “primordial images common to humanity.”

These images which crossed cultures and which took aeons to form were called archetypes and together made up man’s collective unconscious, “the repository of man’s experience and at the same time the prior condition of this experience.” Modern man suffered from his disavowal of the non-rational part of his psyche; and as O’Neill had stated, neither science or modern religion had given man any adequate substitute for his lost intimacy with the core of existence and the vitality associated with it.

The motif of death on a symbolic level is also shown in
O'Neill’s treatment of the social churchgoers on Fifth Avenue. They are described thus: “A procession of gaudy marionettes, yet with something of the relentless horror of Frankenstein monsters in their detached, mechanical unawareness.”\textsuperscript{14} This is what, according to O'Neill, society does to us. This use of mask-type figures would be developed further in \textit{Lazarus Laughed}, \textit{The Great God Brown} and \textit{Days Without End}.

Just as \textit{The Emperor Jones} ended with a spiritual and physical death, so too does \textit{The Hairy Ape}. Yet, \textit{The Hairy Ape} seems, ultimately, even more pessimistic as there is no apparent means for Yank to ever realize and transcend his tragedy, even as Brutus Jones would not.

In \textit{Desire Under the Elms}, O'Neill returns to the farm setting used in \textit{Beyond the Horizon}. Just as the farm in \textit{Beyond the Horizon} seemed to be imprisoned by the hills, the Cabot farm is imprisoned by stone walls. The difference is that the hills are natural, or a part of instinctive nature (which Robert Mayo battles) while the stone walls are man made and might represent Puritanical religion or an intellectual cage with which the Cabots do battle. O'Neill also returns to the naturalistic style of his earlier plays, leaving the Expressionistic style of \textit{The Emperor Jones} and \textit{The Hairy Ape} behind him. An important step in O'Neill’s work is taken with the introduction of Greek myth and tragedy. He will return to this later in \textit{Mourning Becomes Electra}.

In this play, we find the influence of \textit{Oedipus Rex} and the account of
Hippolytus and Phaedra as presented in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*. O’Neill also develops further the use of colloquial speech begun in his earlier plays.

The theme of death is examined throughout *Desire Under the Elms*. It is introduced at the beginning of the play when Simeon says to Peter: “Menn, my woman, she died.” From this point on, the image of death pervades the play. The characters constantly refer to death. Eben’s dead mother’s ghost seems to haunt his mind as well as the house. Death, in the form of North Eastern Puritanical religion, rules over the play. This is one of the central conflicts in the play. The conflict between the instinctual, feeling side (life) and the rationalized, stultifying religion (death). This conflict is symbolized through the conflicting images of cows (life and stones (death). The characters all experience this conflict to a greater or lesser degree. Abbies is ultimately governed by the “cow” principle (the instinctive side) whereas Ephriam Cabot has”... got t’ be -- like a stone -- a rock o’judgement?“ because “God’s hard, not easy.” Eben Cabot however, express the conflict most vividly. he is like Ephriam Cabot in most ways, which his brothers and later Abbie recognize, as they repeatedly say of Eben that he is the “dead spit’n’ image” of Ephriam (stone principle). Yet Eben is also like Abbie, and his father often says of him that he is soft and even refers to him as “calf” (cow principle). After Abbie kills their child in order to regain Eben’s love, Eben is shocked and goes to get the sheriff. This is religious morality at work.
but, ultimately, the instinctive, feeling side (life) wins out and he returns to Abbie and his true feelings of live, in spite of the religious ethic. It is in so doing, and accepting, without remorse, the punishment for his (and her) actions that he transcends the spiritual death of the stone principle (Puritanical religion) and attains true freedom (ironically, in physical death--much like Robert Mayo at the end of *Beyond the Horizon*). This freedom comes with the realization that one needs to be true to oneself and one's instincts, not to an imposed code (be it religious or social). Here, "O'Neill continues his attack on society's dehumanizing effect on man that he began in *The Hairy Ape* and *The Emperor Jones.*

This play also continues O'Neill's war on the materialism of American society. All of the characters are driven by the lure of gold or possession of the farm. This materialism is shown in a highly distasteful manner and, even at the end of *Desire Under the Elms,* when Ephriam Cabot has his farm to himself, his possession rings empty and dehumanized. He realizes this when he says:

*It's a-goin' be lonesomer now than ever in war afore... Wall--what d'ye want? God's lonesome, hain't He? God's hard and lonesome!*

Thus, O'Neill seems to suggest, possession comes at a price and often that price is feeling and respect. There will always be those who are willing to pay the price (Ephriam Cabot) or those who are ignorant of this fact. An example of the latter is the sheriff who says: "It's a jim-dandy farm, no denyin'. Wished I owned it!" But would he, and at
what price? this question will be examined further by O'Neill in *The Great God Brown* and *Marco Millions*.

Once more we find a cyclical structure within an O'Neill play. The play opens with a sunset at the beginning of summer and ends with a sunrise at the end of spring. There is a symbolic representation of the cycle of life and death and their interrelatedness in this cycle. Even the dialogue at the end echoes that at the beginning: “Purty. Ay-eh!.”

*Desire Under the Elims* is the dramatization of the effects of repression on life and O'Neill appears to play the role of the physician of souls. The basic theme of the play is the uncertainly of human nature in relation to the terrifying power of the unseen forces over which we have little control and which wholly defy our understanding. However, O'Neill sails through melodramatic elements of greed, sex, violence, incest, adultery and infanticide. Very artistically and skilfully he controls all such elements which suggest the past shape the present and determine the future. But later as the play advances, Abbie and Elen rise above the depressions of incest and greed, and embrace death for the cause of love. The end of these mysteries of love at the end of the play suggests a great paradox so much so that hope and despair, victory and defeat, death and love come hand in hand. Such a paradoxical situation summarizes O'Neill’s concept of the disblanced struggle between man on the one hand, and the incirtable deterministic forces on the other. ‘The Force Behind’ of O'Neill reminds the readers of
Hardy’s ‘Immanent Will’ or ‘The President of the Immortals’.

O’Neill’s philosophy finds an expression through Ephrain who is nothing but an embodiment of cruel and harsh aspect of Abraham. Carpenter says that “... to himself he is the chosen instrument of an Old Testament God.” (F.1. Carpenter: Eugene O’Neill p. 132). His God resembles the distorted Old Testament God, the God of vengeance and wrath, who knows no forgiveness and mercy. He says, “God’s hard, not easy! God’s in the stones!” (The Plays of O’Neill. Vol. III, p. 237). The heroism of modern man finds a vent through his diabolical designs, self-perpetuating tyranny, and self-righteousness in seeking to possess the farm. He almost dominates the play with his harshness. it is great irony that a man like him, on the wrong of the seventy, is so determined to live and behaves in such a manner as if he will never die. His desire for life is coupled with his desire to possess everything the farm, the woman, a defeated son and an heir. He may be called an ‘issueless father’ who wants enjoy youth at the age of 75. He marries young Abbie. He hopes that she will give him an heir of his choice. This shows that he wants to forget his past and regret the existence of his sons from his previous wives. He rather hates them because they are not hard like him but soft like their mothers.

Finally, in dealing with this play, we should examine the only physical death that occurs during the play, the killing of her own child by Abbie. She kills the boy under the deluded impression that this will prove her love to Eben and regain his love. This once again
reveals the conflict between intellect and instinct. One must also bear in mind that originally, this child was to have been the means whereby Abbie would gain possession of the farm. It is therefore ironic that she kills this child, effectively cutting off her right to possess the farm. Yet, she is doing so for a higher reason—that of love. It is also ironic that, from Eben’s point of view, this child, which was his revenge on Ephriam, should appear to be the instrument of Eben’s destruction. Ultimately, however, the physical death of this child leads to the spiritual death of the Puritanical religious ethic for Eben (stone principle) and the instinctive, feeling side of Ephriam (cow principle). This enables Eben and Abbies to attain the true freedom and self-realization, and to transcend their fate.

O’Neill’s protagonists achieve self-realization and transcend their fate by reaffirming his belief that one can only deal with reality without deception, by purging oneself of one’s intellectual code. In order to do so, according to O’Neill, death, in one form or another, is vital.

O’Neill continues his attack on society, begun in The Hairy Ape in The Great God Brown. It is probably most notable for the extensive use O’Neill makes of masks in the play. The masks represent the image that people present to society in ordre to exist, and also in order not to have to reveal their true selves. They are also representatives of certain types: Dion Anthony is a mixture of Neitzsche’s Dionysus and of Saint Anthony; Cybel is a mixture of the goddess Cybel, the
earth mother, and the eternal prostitute; Dion's wife Margaret is modern embodiment of Faust's margaret, and William Brown is the visionless demi-god of our new materialistic myth—a success-building his life on exterior things, inwardly empty. He prefigures Marco Millions in character.

These characters are almost archetypal in configuration. The first two acts concern the tragedy of Dion Anthony. In him we see the spiritual conflict between the ecstatic, visionary, creative artist, and the ascetic, long suffering martyr. The inner side is soft and vulnerable (Anthony) so in order to cover his the Dionsian mask, which, as the conflict drags on will becomes Mephistophelian in appearance, is taken up. This continuous inner conflict must inevitably lead to destruction. As Cybel, the earth mother/prostitute says:

You're not weak. You were born with ghosts in your eyes and you were brave enough to go looking into your own dark—and you got afraid.

This conflict between the artist and materialistic society is almost an irresolvable dilemma. O'Neill suggests that society is responsible for the death of creativity and deep feeling.

When Dion dies, Billy Brown, in his desperate plight to be loved, steals Dion's mask. Only in deceit is he able to win affection. Prior to this he has had to buy his love. In Act II, Scene I, Brown even goes as far as to offer the unmasked Cyel (whom he believes to be her sister) money on condition that she not see Dion again. But in stealing the mask he also gains Dion's insight into the truth and over the final
two acts, we see the torturous inner torment he undergoes as this is an even more incongruous pairing than Dion/Anthony. (This is the pairing of Dionysus and Brown, the ultimate materialist.) This will also, inevitably, lead to destruction. The destruction is initially a dying on the inside as we see the continuous degeneration of Billy Brown's own mask.

Marget represents the eternal girl/mother. To her the only duty is to the propagation of the line. To her the most important thing is that: "You (Dion) will live forever."25

Perhaps the most important character in the play is the least developed. Cybel as the earth mother/prostitute has perhaps the greatest responsibility of showing O'Neill's ideas. It is she who says that the wins at solitaire (or life) because she does not care about winning or losing, "all I care about is playing."26 She is able to give society what it want without sacrificing her inner self, or integrity. To her, (and O'Neill) that is the most important thing--" the you inside."27 O'Neill's feelings concerning the futility of existence is clearly shown in the line by Cybel: "What's the good of bearing children? What's the use of giving birth to death?"28 It is also Cybel who will reveal the cycle of inevitability as the suffering earth mother. At the death of Dion/Brown in Act 3, she says (with profound pain):

*Always spring comes bearing life!* *Always again! Always, always forever again!* *Spring again!* *Life again!* *Summer and fall and death and peace again!* *(with agonized sorrow) but always, always, love and conception and birth and pain again, spring bearing*
the intolerable chalice of life again! (then with agonized exultance)—bearing the glorious, blazing crown of life again.29

There is the disillusion of the torment happening again but at the same time, there is hope—the hope that sooner or later “life”—the vital, artistic creative side will triumph. Yet, O’Neill might also be using this motif in order to emphasize the futility of the cycle.

This cycle of life also ties into the structure of the play. Just as it began, at the pier on the night of the commencement dance, so it concludes. The next generation is about to embark on the cycle and for some (Margaret) the cycle is nearly complete. All that remains is death. For Cybel, there is the earth and its continuity as individual man passes through it on his spiritual journey.

What is really interesting as well as shocking that Dion who symbolizes are and creativity also suffers the wrath of destructive forces. Both Brown and Dion represent modern man as a composite and whole creature. He is also a symbol modern man’s struggle to exist that leads to self-destruction. His concept of pure love and selfless friendship was shattered by the evil and injustice of man in his childhood. He loses Margaret and alienated from his father. As such his downfall and death is inevitable. In fact he loses his right to live because he sells his talents which provided him the life force. Here creativity surrenders itself to materialism. The death of Dion is the death of the creative powers. The survival of Brown is the victory of the visionless materialism. Brown emerges as the God of success.

He
has one-point programme-material success and self-advancement. In the process he is devoid of consciousness and his strong desire to live the stolen life of Dion by wearing his mask makes him mad. He fails to here either his own life of material pursuits or the creative life of Dion.

This play has great importance in the O'Neill canon because it shows him attempting a new idea. He is trying to forge a theology to communicate a philosophy and to force his audience (and himself) into the rigors and terrors of reassessing the human condition.

The play *Mourning Becomes Electra* is an important part of the O'Neill canon because it is a turning point for O'Neill. The trilogy contains many elements used previously by O'Neill and also marks the beginning of a new direction for the playwright. Once again, O'Neill returns to the New England area with its background of Puritan religion (explored in *Desire Under the Elms*). The use of masks, which was a major element of *The Great God Brown*, is returned to, although in this play, the masks are part of the character's features. O'Neill suggests, in his description of each of the Mannons's, that their features have a "strange mask-like impression in repose." O'Neill also returns to the use of the Greek myth: *Mourning Becomes Electra* is a modern psychological version of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. It is in his use of modern psychology that one notices the new direction of O'Neill's work. In this play, O'Neill will begin the introspective
searching of his later plays. He will continue his attacks on religion, materialism and society, but his focus will shift more towards the internal struggles and motivations of his characters and himself. This internal side is stressed in the play. Even the Mannon house seems to have a mask: “The temple portico is like an incongruous white mask fixed on the house to hide its somber, gray ugliness. The house reflects the characters that dwell within. It seems to hide the ugly truth behind the mask, Ames, who is one of several people to act as a chorus in the play, describes Christine Manon: “Secret lookin’—’s if it was mask she’d put on. That’s the Manon look ... They don’t want folks to guess their secrets.” O’Neill will takes us behind the mask during the course of the trilogy and reveal the ugliness within.

The theme of death is one of the major themes in the trilogy. This becomes apparent even in the title *Mourning Becomes Electra*. The image of death is reinforced by the mask-like quality of the house and the major characters (the Mannons). Their outward appearance reflects the internal death of innocence, feeling and purity.

In examining the theme of Death in the trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the writer was struck by the fact that the one constant character in the play is Lavinia. Lavinia is there at the beginning, remains throughout the course of the play, and continues after the conclusion. She is a catalyst for most of the action of the play and her influence is responsible for each of the instances of death in the trilogy. She is the embodiment of the Puritan religious ethic as well as being
the voice of society. She represents the point of view of society and the church. It is because of her that death haunts the play. For O’Neill, as *Mourning Becomes Electra*, so Death becomes Puritan religion and society. For this reason, the writer will examine the path of Lavinia through the action of the trilogy and show her relation to the central theme: the theme of Death.

*Mourning Becomes Electra* dramatises the problem of how to communicate the feelings of human predicament in a fragmentary theatre. He presented the trilogy to suggest universal justice, the tridogg being subdivided into ‘Homecoming’, ‘The Hunted’ and “The Haunted”. All the three plays present death in one way or the other. The first one ‘Homecoming’ may be taken as the exposition in which Ezra is murdered. The second play shows Adam Brants murder which serves the purpose of denonment. In the third one Orin commits suicide that marks the catastrophe. The first play is a sort of homecoming for Ezra who dies on the First night of his return. ‘The Haunted’ see Orin’s return from the war. He brings sad news. ‘What a terrible homecoming this is for him! exclaims Hazel. Soon he follows his father by putting his life to an end. Similarly ‘The Haunted’ is coming for Lavinia in a lightly different sense. She does not die but she is self-confinement which is probably worse than physical death. In all these plays one thing is remarkable that O’Neill avoids meloromantic conventions by not presenting death on the stage. Ezra returns from the war only to be poisoned by his wife christive Orin Commits suicide because he finds
himself unable to seek for divine pardon. In fact, Orin’s death is accelerated by Lavinca who calls him a coward who is “too vile to live.” He takes it at heart and chooses death because he thinks it is the only way to get peace.

Lavinia who is the nominating figure in the play does not die. But she is the embodiment of austere will to face death-in-life. She lives but she is reconciled with death. She could also finish her life but she thinks that Suicide is a kind of escape from punishment one has to suffer in life. She deeply feels that her present life is far worse than death--Living alone here with the dead is a worse act of justice than death of poison.” When we put Lavinia beside the Electra of Sophocles who is living a life of loneliness because she has decided to do something which no one else could do, or the heroine of Euripides who is alone not because she has chosen to be so but because she has been rejected, or the Electra of Hoffmans that whom the society has refused to tolerate, we find that Lavinia is alone because she has chosen to shut herself in. She has even abandoned the idea of marriage. It appears, to quote Edin Egnel, that the theme of O’Neill’s play is “man’s yearning throughout his death-in-life .... a life pervested by the worship of God, the father of Death, birth and peace.”

O’Neill seems to be obsessed with death. The broading rhythm of the sea is addressed to river of life, swallowed by the Sea of Death, and sung at the approach of death. The House of Mannons symbolizes death. The house suggests a kind of prison for those who...
live in it and also their fate. But it is an entirely new approach to Death which is a release and return to an island of peace and love. It is sufficiently exhibited through the story of Lavana, hazel and Orin.

In the first play of the trilogy, Homecoming, Lavinia has discovered that her mother, Christine is having an affair with Adam Brant. She confronts her mother with this knowledge and, in order to evade a public scandal, says that she will not tell her father as long as Christine promises never to see Adam Brant again. We see, in her actions, the voice of society—her family's reputation and honour is at stake and she would rather have Christine forego her love (feelings) in order to avoid a social scandal. Christine recognizes this and says: “And I know how anxious you are to keep the family from more scandal.” The people in town also suspect the affair, and there have been rumours but nothing concrete has yet emerge. Christine agrees to not see Brant, yet, with her as well as Lavinia, there is more going on beneath the surface (i.e., behind the mask). Lavinia also loves Adam Brant, and is using social arguments to cover her jealousy.

Lavinia repeatedly expresses the term “duty” in relation to people’s actions: Orin had his duty as a Mannon to go to war, Christina has her duty as a wife, Lavinia has her duty to her father, etc. These are all duties to society and, as such, (to Lavinia) the individual has no choice.

Lavinia also took it upon herself to write to her father, Ezra, and to her brother Orin, concerning Christine’s affair. She therefore
feels she is in a position to hold her mother’s “duty” ransom. It is this final element that will act as the catalyst for Christine and Adam’s plan to kill Ezra. Lavinia, (and thus society) has forced her into a desperate position, as she says, in laying the plan with Adam: “It’d be the only way.”

His death must appear natural to avoid suspicion (from society.) Christine has therefore laid the foundations for this by suggesting that Ezra has a weak heart.

Upon Ezra’s return, Christine carries out the plan and instead of giving him his medicine, she gives him poison. But Lavinia enters as Ezra is dying and she discovers the poison. Once again, she is the voice of society and will demand justice (in the Puritan ethic of an eye for an eye) she says: I’ll make you pay for your crime! I’ll find a way to punish you!”

Upon her brother, Orin’s arrival, Lavinia convinces him of Christine’s guilt in their father’s death and then, playing upon his intense, almost incestuous love for his mother, she reveals the truth about Christine and Adam Brant. Orin then carries out the will of society and the religious ethic (Lavinia) by killing Brant. Yet, the revenge seems hollow, because he is not, like Lavinia, a representative of the religious/social ethic; As he says: “It’s queer! It’s rotten joke on someone!”

Lavinia, representing the religious/social ethic, has once again been instrumental in bringing about death. She had to have Adam killed in order to suit society’s call for justice and the Puritan religious concept of an eye for an eye. This death will now be a direct catalyst for another. Orin and Lavinia inform Christine of
Adam's death, and in so doing they destroy her dreams. Christine dies spiritually at this time as we see when: "She has stopped moaning, the horror in her eyes is dying into blackness." This line recalls that at the end of Beyond the Horizon when Ruth gives up all hope. For Christine, now physical death can be the only answer. Meanwhile Lavinia, representing society, claims:

*He paid the just penalty for his crime. You know it was justice. It was the only way true justice could be done.*

Puritan religion and society must have their way even if this means destroying the individual spiritually and/or physically. But with her spiritual death, Christine chooses physical death over Lavinia's (society's) insulting suggestion that "You can live." She choose death and therefore freedom rather than live a life prescribed by society and religion. Finally, Lavinia, speaking for society and religion states implacably "It is justice." There is no feeling of latitude for understanding. To live on society's terms is to live a lie and to do so is death for the individual. Lavinia will cover her mother's suicide in a cloak of the socially acceptable—she was grieving for her dead husband.

Once again, the mask hides the ugly truth.

In the final play, The Haunted, Lavinia and Orin have gone to his dreamed of South Seas Islands. Orin blamed himself for his mother's death and Lavinia removed him in order to avoid a scandal. But his dreams of an island of peace turn out to be an illusion or a pipe dream and they return to face the ghosts—the reality of their past, in
order to purge themselves of the guilt. Lavinia appears to have “become” Christine—she outwardly resembles her but, as we shall see once again, this is only a mask. She is still society (death) on the inside. Meanwhile, we see that she became enamored of the dream of the islands, and this is the reason for the change in her. She is now “only half Mannon.” She has a pipe dream of her own—a life with Peter. But Orin, with the death of his illusions, is the voice of truth and reality. As he says to her:

*Perpetual night—darkness of death in life—that’s the fitting habitat for guilt! You believe you can escape that, but I’m not so foolish.*

Orin now lives without any illusions—he faces life without hope and, therefore, death. It is in this frame that he can see the truth about Lavinia—that she is “the most interesting criminal of all” because even though she represents the religious/social ethic, she is evil beneath the mask of honour and decency. As Orin goads her into facing reality, Lavinia repeats the threat Christine made when Lavinia had blackmailed her in *Homecoming*. She says: “Take care, Orin! You’ll be responsible if...!” The cycle is not almost complete. Orin holds Lavinia to ransom thus forcing her into an act of desperation. She will bring about his death as Christine brought about Ezra’s. It is at this point, when he proposes the most despicable act (incest), that the old Lavinia (society) reasserts itself over the romantic side: she demands justice once again and claims that: “You’re too vile to live! You’d kill yourself you weren’t a coward.” Orin, in his deranged state, sees death as an escape from
the torment of the ghosts and his guilt. He says: “Yes! It’s the way to peace--to find her again--my lost island--Death is an Island of peace, too!” He goes to commit suicide but he does so for an illusion or a lie—he believes “Mother will be waiting for me there.” He dies without transcending his fate, lost in a vacuum of self-deceit.

His death coincides with the death of Lavinia’s dreams of a future life with Peter. Once again, she is the religious/social representative, protecting the family’s honour: “Wasn’t it (Orin’s death) the only way to keep your (the Manon’s) secret too?” She makes one final attempt to escape, asking Peter to take her away, but mistakenly she calls him Adam. She then realizes: “Always the dead between! It’s no good trying any more.” There will always be the guilt and knowledge of past sin. She finally rejects the dream of love (Peter) and returns to face her reality of the “darkness of death in life.” She will live in the “sepulchre” of the house among the Mannon dead because: “I’m the last Mannon. I’ve got to punish myself.” So Lavinia will: “Live alone with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let then hound me, until the curse (of life) is paid out and the last Mannon (man) is let die!” O’Neill reveals a philosophy of hopelessness at this point. Society (Lavinia) is forever cursed to pay for the crimes it commits upon Man, or the individual (Mannon). It is damned to live with its guilt in order for man to punish himself for existing in or living a life of deceit (behind a mask).

O’Neill, in his final plays, will turn his search inward in an
effort to discover a way whereby man need not live a "life of death", and perhaps by being true to his inner instinct, realize himself and thus, finally, transcend the meaningless aspect of his existence.

After a self imposed exile from American drama, which lasted from 1936 to 1946, O'Neill reappeared with probably his two finest plays: The Iceman cometh (1946) and A Long Day's Journey Into Night (1955). These plays are the culmination of his previous works and O'Neill's introspection is clearly evident. These plays, more than any others, offer us insights into O'Neill's life and philosophy.

In The Iceman Cometh, the masks used by the actors in The Great God Brown are not necessary as they have become the character's reality. These characters live their lives in illusion or a "pipe dream". As Larry Slade, the objective philosopher says: "The life of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober." These pipe dreams are specific to each of the characters, each one has his or her own dream that makes existence (not living) possible. These "pipe dreams" are their "saving lies" (Ibsen).

Larry, as the philosophical spokesman, is often identified with O'Neill, yet this is perhaps only true to a certain extent. In these his later plays, a strong ambiguity in motivation and character has entered O'Neill's work. This is possibly in conjunction with his new philosophy. He is tied in much stronger with the existential dilemma of no meaning, of the problem of projecting value in a world devoid of
absolutes. He goes so far as to reject this process. In the words of Larry Slade: “To hell with the truth! As the history of the world proves, the truth has no bearing on anything. It’s irrelevant and immaterial.”\textsuperscript{53} Larry has rejected all hope or illusions—he has taken a “seat in the grandstand of philosophical detachment.”\textsuperscript{54} All that remains for him is”... the comforting fact that death is a fine long sleep ... and it can’t come too soon.”\textsuperscript{55}

The death symbol is a very significant one in this play. In the title The Iceman Cometh we have a metaphor for death whose coming is inevitable. The characters that inhabit the saloon are those for whom life has died. There are many references to, allusions to and inferences to death in one form or another. The only thing left to sustain these characters are their individual “pipe dreams”. Into this situation come “The Iceman” (Hickey) the one who has killed his pipe dreams and is coming to kill theirs. But the “peace” that he offers is death. It is existence totally without a single dream. It is the Existentialist Void, the Nonthingness of Existence. As with Brutus Jones, the rejection of all illusion, and the belief that he can exist in such a space, is the ultimate delusion. It is rejection of life itself and even without realizing it, Hickey has taken up yet another “saving lie”, the fact that he believes he killed his wife Evelyn to give her peace.\textsuperscript{56} It is only when he realizes this fact that he understands that the salvation he promised is empty. There is no escape from the pipe dream. Even as he realizes this fact, he assumes the ultimate “saving lie:” “You know I must have been insane, don’t
you.” Only in insanity is there a chance that one can escape any moral judgements (by society) for one’s actions.

This notion is immediately grasped by the inmates of Harry’s Saloon. This now can save them. If Hickey is insane then all his advice about “facing oneself” and facing the truth must be false. They can return to their pipe dreams in peace. There is still a hope in the world.

The only physical death that takes place in the play is that of Don Parritt. He must die because he has committed the ultimate crime for a revolutionary—he has been an informer. He has been goading Larry for this advice throughout the play, and finally, when he ironically echoes Hickey’s words (but in reference to his mother) of: “You know what you can do with your freedom pipe dream now, you damned old bitch.” Larry furiously turns on him, and tells him to “get the hell out of life,” which he does.

Once again, death in this play works on both physical and spiritual levels. Ultimately, it is only Larry who is “the only real convert to death Hickey made” because: “Life is too much for me! I’ll be a weak fool looking with pity at the two sides of everything till the day I die.” He is the only one who realizes that all life is an illusion and that he can never know “the secret”. On this level, the play is pessimistic, but on the level that he realizes he wants life and feels compassion, the play is optimistic.

For Nietzsche, the Apollonian and Dionysian duality was
the artistic justification of the thing-in-itself, the will. It was most easily visible in man's immediate environment, nature, and was represented in the SS Glencairn plays by the sea. Larry's association of the sea and death rejected man's intimacy with his natural environment; it denied a meaningful response to the core of existence. The Apollonian and Dionysian tension still existed in The Iceman Cometh, but the occupants of Harry Hope's bar, like their counterparts in contemporary society were unable to appreciate it. While the world outside the saloon relied on reason to explain the data of everyday existence, the group in the back room of Harry Hope's bar tried to remain perpetually oblivious to rational explanations of the phenomenal world. As Nietzsche had remarked in The Will to Power, visible analogues to the Apollonian Dionysian forces were considerably removed from the artistic tension at the center of existence. In The Iceman Cometh, the opposing powers were even less vital; the pipe dream and alcoholic oblivion were weak substitutes for dream and ecstasy.

While the world outside the bar pretended that life could be explained by reason, the drunkards clung to their illusory explanations of existence. However, pipe dreams were loosely constructed; they were not objective truths. No single pipe dream had priority over others, and none was tested against the date of daily existence. Each was supposed to protect an individual from the pain of his present life by glamorizing the past or future. Nietzsche's Dionysian vision was reduced to alcoholic oblivion at Harry Hope's
bar. The clash of pipe dream and drunkeness was a weak analogue to the vital opposition observed in nature. In *The Iceman Cometh*, O'Neill was presenting a picture of contemporary man’s inability to cope with existence. Lacking the meaningful response of primitive man to his immediate experience of existence, modern man used reason and science to explain the phenomenal world, or he sought refuge from a world he didn’t understand. In the back room of Harry Hope’s bar, the alcoholics escaped from a society they couldn’t endure, and from life in general, which they found frighteningly indecipherable.

Ultimately, Larry Slade was the only tragic figure in the play. However, within the bar a watered-down version of Nietzsche’s Apollonian and Dionysian opposition was preserved between the urge to perpetuate illusions about an individual’s ability to survive in society and a determination to avoid testing that illusion by subordinating any sense of individuality to the group. Like Nietzsche’s Apollonian and Dionysian tension, the opposition existed between individual and group identity. While an audience knew more about some members of the group of alcoholics than about the sailors aboard the SS Glencairn, the drunkard’s identities were incompletely sketched. Stories about their pasts enabled them to engage in communal interaction; they weren’t meant to be accurate detailed biographies. Like the crew of the SS Glencairn or the liner in *The Hairy Ape*, the characters in *The Iceman Cometh* tried to obliterate their individuality, and pursued a group identity.
Larry Slade’s description of Harry Hope’s bar as “The Last Change Saloon? was an accurate evaluation of modern man’s desperation. No longer having the relatively untouched frontiers of the jungle or the sea available, the various representatives of modern man took refuge from civilization in the back room of Hope’s saloon. The name of the owner, Harry Hope, was ironic; he was the last hope for many of the drunkards. His establishment was their stopping-off place on the way to the grave. O’Neill collected the remnants of his sailing crews and their prostitutes, added to them other representative professions and nationalities, and deposited them in one of the few spots where they were relatively secure from intrusion of the outside world. The universe had shrunk to a space smaller than Yank’s world below decks in The Hairy Ape. Within the back room, whose dirt-covered windows restricted light from entering, the characters shed the individual identities of modern man and assumed a oneness with the rest of the group, however temporary and fragile this communion was.

Throughout The Iceman Cometh, the movement of the plot was circular, similar to the SS Glencairn cycle, The Emperor Jones, and The Hairy Ape. Although O’Neill divided the play into four act, the movement from the beginning to the end described a circle; the play ended where it began. Like the SS Glencairn plays, The Iceman Cometh had very little action directed at an identifiable end. Although O’Neill had created a highly articulate philosopher figure capable of explaining
the behavior of the bar’s occupants, he subordinated Slade’s thematic commentaries to the formal significance of the plot. In fact, as the play progressed, Larry Slade’s penetrating analyses of existence were finally revealed to be his defense against an involvement in life that terrified him. While the content of individual episodes, discussions, or pipe dreams was not most important, the formal repetition of the plot revealed O’Neill’s view of existence.

By the end of the play, the characters were once again supporting each other’s illusions; they quickly forgot Hickey’s interrupting their death-like tranquility. Although they promised to aid Hickey after his arrest (Hope even promised to talk to some former cronies at City Hall), they were soon oblivious to his plight. In fact, Hickey’s departure initiated the first enthusiastic choric response since he arrived at the bar. The characters were unaware of Parritt’s suicide and ignored Larry’s inability to join in their singing. What had happened throughout the play was lost on them. They clung desperately to their illusions and their alcohol, despite losing Hickey and Larry. Their numbers depleted, they resumed the pursuit of oblivion. The play ended where it had begun. Only the phase of their cycle of interaction had changed; instead of nearing the end of the alcohol-induced slumber, the group’s frenetic behaviour at the end of the play signalled the completion of another choral episode and return to temporary unconsciousness.

After Hickey departed, each alcoholic rationalized his
inability to act in accordance with his pipe dream. Hope discredited the salesman; by calling Hickey a lunatic, Hope excused his own inability to leave the bar.

*) Bejees, it does queer things to you, having to listen day and night to a lunatic's pipe dreams—pretending you believe them, to kid him along and doing any crazy thing he wants to humor him. It's dangerous, too. Look at me pretending to start for a walk just to keep him quiet. I knew damned well it wasn't the right day for it. The sun was broiling and the streets full of automobiles. Bejees, I could feel myself getting sunstroke, and an automobile nearly ran over me. (TIC, Act IV; pp. 249-250)

Although Hope was lying, Rocky supported the fiction. “De automobile, Boss? Sure, I seen it! Just missed yuh! I thought yuh was a goner? (IV; pp. 249-250). Hope's lie was important; it prompted each character to dissociate himself from his failure to exist in the world outside the bar. More importantly, Hope was warning against future attempts to test pipe dreams outside the safety of the back room. Although Hope lied about his near collision with a passing auto, he was correct in saying that it was dangerous to discard one's life-lie. Without pipe dreams, man was forced to acknowledge the terror of existence and lacked a meaningful way of coping with this acknowledgement. The speed with which each character disassociated himself from the previous day's events confirmed the accuracy, however unintentional, of Hope's words.

The alternatives to communal oblivion through life-lie and alcohol were unpleasant; death or acceptance of life's inexplicability.

With Slad as an unwilling accomplice, Parritt acknowledged betraying
his mother, further, he admitted hating her. However, O'Neill rejected Parritt's vision of life in the play. While the majority of characters refused to admit that life was a contest of opposing forces and human behaviour was ambivalent, Parritt distorted his hate for his mother. Earlier in the play, he exaggerated his love for her. As Hickey confessed his true feelings for Evelyn, Parritt admitted that he betrayed his mother because he hated her. Like Hickey, Parritt was unable to accept the simultaneous existence of two opposing feelings, and distorted both.

While O'Neill treated his other characters sympathetically, he made Parritt an unattractive figure by the end of the play. Parritt finally vented his venomous feelings for his mother: "You know what you can do with your freedom pipe dream now, don't you, you damned old bitch" (IV; p. 247). Throughout the play, he shed layer after layer of illusion about the betrayal of his mother, finally accepting hate as his basic feeling toward her. Unable to live with the paradox of emotional ambivalence, he denied that existence was an ongoing process. Parritt was a pathetic figure who couldn't understand that life was an oxymoron. Love and hate were part of any intense emotional involvement, as his alternate feelings toward his mother revealed. Parritt's behaviour at the bar followed a familiar cyclical pattern. The difference between the form of Parritt's behaviour and that of the group of alcoholics was that he couldn't move beyond his admission of hatred. Unlike the sailors aboard the SS Glencairn who fought each other at one moment and then acted as a unit the next, Parritt couldn't forget
was he had done in the past, couldn't tolerate ambivalence in the present, couldn't achieve a state of alcohol-induced oblivion to life's absurdity, and therefore committed suicide.

Unable to participate in the communal loss of self, Parritt attached himself to Slade. Early in the first act, Slade tolerated Parritt's presence; however, after sensing that he was beginning to get involved with the young man, Larry tried unsuccessfully to reassume his customary detached posture. For the rest of the play, the interactions between the two men were characterized by a cyclical pattern of engagement. Emotional intensification, and disengagement. Their interactions described, in miniature, the form of the group's behaviour. And their relationship provided an insight into Slade's previous behaviour toward the regular inhabitants of Hope's bar. Despite his protestations of indifference, Larry was a sensitive intelligent fellow whose cynicism maked a genuine concern for his companions and himself. As Parritt unburdened himself of his hatred for his mother, he drew Larry out of the philosophical grandstands. Early in the play, before Parritt's desperation forced Larry to abandon his pose of mellow indifference, Jimmy Tomorrow exposed Larry's pipe dream. After Larry had interrupted Jimmy's highly sentimental autobiography, Jimmy mildly rebuked him. "No, Larry, old friend, you can't deceive me. You pretend a bitter, cynic philosophy, but in your heart you are the kindest among us" (TIC, Act I: p. 44).

In addition to Parritt, Hickey was responsible for luring
Lany out of the grandstand of philosophical indifference. Formerly an embodiment of the spirit of celebration, Hickey now came to the bar intent on bringing peace to his fellow celebrants by depriving them of their pipe dreams. Unable to live with his ambivalent feelings about his wife, Evelyn, he had killed her. However, he rationalized her murder, claiming that she was finally free of the suffering he had caused her.

And then I saw I'd always know that [killing her] was the only possible way to give her peace and free her from the misery of loving me. I saw it meant peace for me too, knowing she was at peace.

(TIC, Act IV; p. 24)

Like Parritt, Hickey couldn't tolerate the conflicting emotions he felt toward a loved one, and therefore killed Evelyn in order to remove the source of his ambivalence. He surrendered his previous life-lie, that ultimately he would end his alcoholic binges and occasional sexual infidelity in order to preserve his more important pipe dream, that his feelings for Evelyn were unambiguous.

Hickey was a much more attractive figure than Parritt, and their similarity ended with their inability to tolerate ambivalent feelings. Prior to his present visit, Hickey's occasional pilgrimages to the bar had signalled the beginning of a festive period of communal celebration. O'Neill emphasized the importance of Hickey's former appearances by making them coincide with Harry's birthday; they precipitated an extended period of choric carousing in honour of life. The fact that, like the other inhabitants at the bar, Harry survived from year to year
through a pipe dream of his continued political clout in the district, or that like Hickey, he idolized his wife, was unimportant. The vitality and genuine comraderie of the celebration was most significant. Again, O’Neill focused an audience’s attention on the non-rational life-giving purpose of Hickey’s attendance at the yearly birthday parties. His good humour, generosity, and friendship contributed greatly to the success of the celebrations of life and hope (Harry’s last name).

Prior to Hickey’s final visit, he had only hinted at the possibility of having ambivalent feelings toward Evelyn through his oft-repeated joke about her sleeping with the iceman. However, he never realized that his standard joke was a manifestation of the hostility he also felt for Evelyn. Near the end of the play when Hickey admitted to killing his wife, however, he also acknowledged his anger at her.

*I felt as though a ton of guilt was lifted off my mind. I remember I stood by the bed and suddenly I had to laugh. I couldn’t help it, and I knew Evelyn would forgive me. I remember I heard myself speaking to her, as if it was something I’d always wanted to say: “Well, you know what you can do with your pipe dream now, you damned bitch!” (He stops with a horrified start, as if shocked out of a nightmare, as if he couldn’t believe he heard what he had just said. He stammers) No! I never ..........!*  

(TIC, Act IV; pp. 241-242)

Like Parritt, Hickey openly acknowledged his hostility toward a person he claimed to live; however, in contrast to Parritt, Hickey was genuinely surprised at his realization. And, as his immediate response to his recognition--"I never--!"--indicated, he would not allow the statement of his long-suppressed hostility to remain as the final judgement on
his relationship with Evelyn. While Parritt came to the bar looking for absolution of his sin, Hickey arrived genuinely convinced that he could help his friends find peace.

What Hickey admitted in his revealing speech was sell important than the form in which he expressed it. The innocent spontaneity of his hostility followed by an immediate retraction of his epithet articulated his ambivalence more accurately than the exaggerated intensity of either emotion expressed separately. Without knowing anything about Evelyn, we can infer that she was neither bitch nor saing; these distortions were merely the result of Hickey’s inability to accept an underlying' reality of all intimate human relationships--where we are most intimately involved, we are more vulnerable to the rational paradox of opposing emotions. To deny one side of emotional ambivalence ultimately results in a distortion of both feelings. However, once Parritt openly admitted that he hated his mother, he was incapable of acknowledging he also loved her. Hickey’s spontaneous outburst of anger and immediate retraction of it testified to a range of human emotion that far exceeded Parritt’s.

O’Neill made Hickey a more sympathetic character than Parritt. Given the opportunity, the alcoholics dismissed Hickey’s attempt to deprive them of their pipe dreams and his murder of Evelyn as the aberrations of an otherwise genuinely warm human being. And they were correct. O’Neill forced his audience’s attention on the formal implications of Hickey’s behaviour, past and present, rather than
allowing them to concentrate exclusively on the content of one particular episode. In response to Hickey's first admission that he killed Evelyn, Larry tried to place the salesman's action in a proper emotional perspective.

>You mad fool, can't you keep your mouth shut! We may hate you for what you've done here this time, but we remember the old times, too, when you brought kindness and laughter with you instead of death.

(TIC, Act IV; p. 227)

Larry's rejoinder forced Hickey, and therefore us to recognize the wholeness of an individual's existence, rather than to dwell on one incident, however distasteful it was. Hickey had, after all, previously "throughout kindness and laughter ...instead of death."

Ultimately, after forcing each character to abandon his pipe dream, Hickey allowed his friends to resurrect their individual life-lies. None of the characters could exist without their life-lies. Rocky described the return of the characters, once each had admitted the emptiness of his pipe dream. "Dey showed up tonight, one by one, lookin' like pooches wid deir tails between deir legs, dat everyone'd been kickin till dey was too punch-drunk to feel it no more" (TIC, Act IV; p. 216). Life was unbearable without pipe dreams. As Hickey prepared to exit the bar with Moran and Lieb, two detectives, he denied the worth of his mission, claiming he was insane.

HOPE
(Eagerly)

And you've been crazy ever since? Everything you've said and done here---
(For a moment forgets his own obsession and his face takes on its familiar expression of affectionate amusement and he chuckles) Now, govenor! Up to your old tricks, eh? I see what you're driving at, but I can't let you get away with—(Then, as Hope's expression turns to resentful callousness again and he looks away, he adds hastily with pleading desperation) Yes, harry, of course, I've been out of my mind ever since! All the time I've been here! You saw I was insane, didn't you?

(\textit{TIC, Act, IV; p. 243})

Although Hickey's motives for discounting his previous efforts to divorce the individuals from their pipe dreams were mixed, the effect of his words was to allow an almost immediate return to communal celebration. The play ended shortly thereafter with each of the characters, except Larry Slade, engaged in choric hilarity.

Without denying the emotional intensity of Hickey's departure, O'Neill quickly moved his audiences' attention away from the salesman, directing it toward the play's final image of life's paradox, ambivalence, and rational inexplicability—the visual and aural juxtaposition of the alcoholics' communion and ecstasy, and Larry Slade's isolation and despair. Immediately after Hickey left, the characters came back to life; even in his absence, Hickey became a reason for celebrating. Forgetting the recent painful experience Hickey had forced them to undergo, the celebrants recalled him, in Harry's words, as "the kindest, biggest-hearted guy ever wore shoe leather" (\textit{TIC, Act IV; p. 251}), and promptly resumed the pursuit of alcoholic oblivion that Hickey's presence had interrupted. O'Neill the dramatist
avoided the error of overlooking the ongoing rhythm of the play.

While O’Neill chose not to end the play with Hickey’s exit, he also refused to close it with an exclusively celebratory image. Although he spared his audience an on-stage view of Parritt’s suicide, O’Neill still had to preserve the underlying tension of what Nietzsche called the Apollonian and Dionysian forces. As “the only real convert to death, Hickey made...,” Larry Slade had been jolted out of his previous posture of pretended non-involvement. More importantly, once he had been forced to relinquish his pipe dream of emotional detachment, he was unable to resurrect it. Consequently, he was incapable of further participation in group interactions, and assumed a seat on the sidelines for the first time in the play. O’Neill confirmed Slade’s isolation by seating him alone at a table at the far left of the stage. Even Hugo, the resident anarchist and former friend who had sat at Larry’s table at the beginning of the fourth act, retreated to a position at the right of the stage by the end of the play. As he left Larry, he confirmed the visual importance of his departure by dismissing Larry verbally. “Crazy fool! You was crazy like Hickey! You give me bad dreams too” (TIC, Act, IV; p. 254).

Hugo’s dismissal left Slade at the table next to the window, waiting for Parritt to commit suicide. Larry was, as her later claimed, waiting for death. However, unlike Parritt, who took his own life, or Hickey, who arranged to have his taken from him, Slade did nothing. His intellectual appreciation of life’s absurdity and his fear of death
prevented him from prematurely ending his experience of it. Unable to acknowledge the contrarities of life, specifically the simultaneous existence of love and hate, Parritt perverted first one and then the other. His was the largest distortion of the on-going process of existence, and therefore his death was grotesque; Rocky considered the thud of Parritt’s body hitting the ground to be the result of a mattress falling off the fire escape. Parritt’s death precipitated an admission from Larry that he no longer had a pipe dream.

*Be God, there’s no hope! I’ll never be a success in the grandstand—or anywhere else! Life is too much for me! I’ll be a weak fool looking with pity at the two sides of everything till the day I die! (With an intensebitter sincerity) May that day come soon! (He pauses startedly, surprised at himself—then with a sardonic grin) Be god, I’m the only real convert to death Hickey made here. From the bottom of my coward’s heart I mean that now.*

*(TIC, Act IV; p. 258)*

From this point on, Larry remained silent and alone; his silence and isolation contrasted sharply to the group singing on the opposite side of the stage.

The final visual and aural image O’Neill left his audiences with in *The Iceman Cometh* preserved the tension between Slade’s rational despair at the inherent meaninglessness of existence, and the musical dissonance of the chorus of celebrants, whose vibrancy argues against Larry’s interpretation of life. Although Larry and the group were oblivious to each other’s presence, their simultaneous appearance conveyed O’Neill’s tragic view of existence to his audience in a form that didn’t contradict his vision. Because every member of the chorus...
sang a different song—each of which was particularly suited to his pipe
dram—the resulting lyrics were indistinguishable. O'Neill described
the result as "A weird cacophony." The dissonance dissolved into
laughter at Hugo's continued singing of his revolutionary anthem, "The
Carmagnole." and, while the final sound in the play was the noise of
Hugo and the rest of the chorus laughing. O'Neill's final stage direction
mentioned the solitary philosopher figure, unaware of the festivities
taking place around him.

As a drama of ideas, *The Iceman cometh* was nihilistic.
Larry's comment that "Life is too much for me!" had a general
application; life was too much for the inhabitants of the bar's back
room to understand or tolerate. Existence defied man's best attempts
to explain or justify it. In order to survive its inherent meaninglessness,
modern man clung desperately to his vapid reconstructions of everyday
realism. By insisting on the truth of his pipe dream, he focused attention
on the superficial occurrences in the phenomenal world and tried to
ignore the underlying reality that terrified him. For example, rather
than suffer the discomforting thought that life lacked meaning. Hope
insisted that he was still a political force to be reckoned with, and
therefore endowed his daily existence with importance.

Although O'Neill acknowledged the necessity of
maintaining pipe dreams, he also felt that life was more than a void
that man avoided through the use of transparent visions of success.
The life-lies of the inhabitants of Harry Hope's back room parodied
the equally transparent evasions of reality of the society they shunned. Obviously, Willie Oban’s claim that he could return to a law practice or Cora and Chuck’s belief that they could achieve marital bliss on a farm in New Jersey was false; so too was modern society’s assumption that life was a series of phenomena that science and reason could explain and ultimately control. In Nietzschean terminology, modern man suffered from the Socratic premise that he could understand existence intellectually. O’Neill’s philosopher figures, from the poet in Fog to Larry Slade in The Iceman Cometh were O’Neill’s flesh-and-blood denials of Socratic optimism. Each of O’Neill’s sensitive beings who pondered the meaning of life suffered for his sensitivity and ontological curiosity. Not only did philosophers like Larry Slade despair at life’s absurdity, but their awareness alienated them from their fellow beings, whose communal interactions provided relief from life’s meaninglessness.

The pipe dreams of the sailors aboard the SS Glencairn, of Yank’s mates in The Hairy Ape, and of the community of alcoholics in The Iceman Cometh were more than empty evasions of the underlying reality of existence, of Dionysian wisdom. O’Neill always drew an audience’s attention away from the specific content of individual lives, as he did, for example, in the final scene of communal dissonance in The Iceman Cometh. He balanced the rending cacophony at the end of the play with a harmony that accompanied the loss of individual identity. In the SS Glencairn plays, The Emperor Jones, The Hairy
Ape and The Iceman Cometh, an audience gained a very sketchy knowledge of characters, other than their pipe dreams. O'Neill emphasized the commonality of existence, and supplied little information that differentiated one person's past from his mates. Even the outcast Smitty in The Moon of the Caribees and In the Zone, had, in fact, experienced little that would have separated him from the rest of the crew; it was his sensitivity to his past and his inability to avoid pondering it that alienated him from his crewmates.

In addition to the lack of emphasis O'Neill placed upon the distinguishing details of an individual's existence in the sea plays, The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape and The Iceman Cometh, there was a corresponding focus of attention on the form of the communal interactions. Contrasting to the pessimistic implications of the obviously empty reconstructions of superficial reality, the pipe dreams, the moments of choric behavior they supported were examples of genuine feeling. The vitality of these communal episodes, in which individual characterization vanished, was due to the powerful attraction and vitality of group identity. That the sailors in the Ss Glencairn plays or The Hairy Ape had a difficult, if not impossible time searching out a song that they could sing wasn't as important as their banding together to sing. At the end of The Iceman Cometh, each character, with the exemption of the philosopher figure Larry Slade, sang snatches of his pipe dream, each as oblivious of his own song as he was of the specific content of his companions' songs. Their singing celebrated the oneness
of their identity; for the brief time they achieved this communal ecstasy, they were no longer hapless individual miscreants, waiting death to release them from a life that was "too much for them."

Even the brevity of their moments of intense communion confirmed that life was more than a meaningless hoax perpetrated on defenseless souls. These emotional peaks were part of a process of interaction that described a circular form. This form was repeated endlessly throughout the Ss Glencairn plays and The Iceman Cometh. Although the circular form of group interaction occurred in The Emperor Jones and The Hairy Ape, it was subordinated to O'Neill's development of his sensitive alienated individuals, his philosopher figures. However, even in these two dramas, O'Neill presented his audience with examples of circular choric interaction. And, more importantly, his treatment of the two major individuals, Jones and Yank, contrasted the emptiness of maintaining individual identity with the vitality of communal ecstasy. Yank developed his rational critical awareness of life's inexplicability at the loss of his membership in the chorus aboard ship while Jone's primitive behavior in the jungle further underscored the vapidity of his former life in civilized society.

In The Iceman Cometh, the hints of intimacy with Nietzsche's primordial core of existence that O'Neill had given his audience in the SS Glencairn plays, The Emperor Jones, and even the first half of The Hairy Ape, were absent. The sea and the jungle had been replaced by the back room of Hope's bar, a spot whose dingy and
depressed atmosphere was only further emphasized by its absence of sunlight. Yet, the formal circularity of group behavior persisted, and despite Larry Slade’s rational analysis of life’s meaninglessness, the circular form of the interactions peaking in choric outbursts of emotion suggested genuine feeling and vitality. It didn’t refute Slade’s philosophical conclusions about existence (which were also O’Neill’s); it merely suggested the limitations of a purely rational attempt to explain and cope with existence. Slade’s rational pessimism was counterbalanced by the vital form of group behavior. It was also challenged by his behavior; despite his claim of non-involvement and his seat in the philosophical grandstand of life, Larry Slade was a benevolent being whose kindness and sensitivity were recognized by his fellows in the bar.

The tension resulting from O’Neill’s balancing of life’s inherent meaninglessness and the vitality of communal behavior was the modern analogue to Nietzsche’s Apollonian and Dionysian opposition. From the SS Glencairn plays to The Iceman Cometh. This tension was increasingly apparent in the opposition of the individual and the group. O’Neill’s sensitive philosophers suffered for their awareness of life’s rational inexplicability. Their refusal to accept comfortable objective truths, pipe dreams, allowed them to see through the hypocrisy of society’s explanations of existence. However, their rational analyses of life eventually inhibited them from participating in the non-rational but life-saving communion with the whole; Larry
Slade’s appreciation of the absurdity of existence in *The Iceman cometh,* for example, separated him from the rest of the chorus. At the end of the *The Hairy Ape,* Yank reacted pathetically to his alienation from society and his shipmates; in vain, he tried to gain a oneness with nature that primitive man had enjoyed. And by the end of *The Iceman Cometh,* Larry Slade’s brutally honest awareness of life’s meaninglessness isolated him from the communal celebration of his companions.

O’Neill offered the modern-day analogues to Apollonian and dionysian forces by dramatizing the devastating philosophical insight that life was beyond man’s rational capacity to understand, and opposing this insight with an appreciation of the non-rational, fecund, and complex wholeness of existence. Although he presented this opposition through the underlying intensity of seemingly superficial group inter-actions, he also dramatized it through his non-rational structuring of scenes and his use of visual and aural dissonance. The vision of life which O’Neill was developing throughout his career, and which he presented with depressing clarity in *The Iceman Cometh,* was tragic. However, as he matures as a thinker and a dramatist, O’Neill became increasingly capable of articulating his non-rational belief that there was more to existence than the thin veneer of material phenomena.

Nietzsche’s philosophy, particularly as it was expressed in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* influenced O’Neill’s thinking and his dramaturgy. Not only did O’Neill find
support for his conclusion that life couldn’t be explained rationally, but he also discovered an alternative to the formal implications of this depressing philosophy. For Nietzsche, and ultimately for O’Neill, life could only be justified aesthetically. The circularity of O’Neill’s plots—their seeming repetition of the same idea, that life was beyond an individual’s ability to understand—explored the inexhaustible texture and breadth of existence. For Nietzsche, this circularity of existence was the eternal recurrence. And, although O’Neill ultimately rejected Nietzsche’s ancillary notions of “Amor fati” and overman, he embraced Nietzsche’s aesthetic justification of existence, unavailable as it was to rational analysis.

Further, O’Neill also implemented Nietzsche’s thoughts on the non-rational use of visual and rural dissonance on the stage. Dionysian wisdom, the tragic vision, could not be dramatized simply as a philosophy; to do so would have made O’Neill an existentialist dramatist. Following Beckett’s admonition in the opening quotation of this essay, O’Neill was always striving to marry form and vision in his plays. By the time he wrote *The Iceman Cometh*, O’Neill was close to being an absurdist playwright; his philosophy of life influenced his no-rational formal means of dramatizing it. He drew audiences’ attention away from the superficial phenomena of the material world, and forced them to acknowledge and underlying level of reality. In so doing, he was always trying to more than depress them; he was attempting to give them an appreciation of life’s inexhaustible depth,
O'Neill was not an optimist who believed in the ultimate perfectability of man, and he had little use for the misplaced optimism of science. Man would never explain existence, let alone exercise control over it. Yet he was equally unwilling to consider life as little more than a depressing philosophical joke.

His [O'Neill's] reason kept leading him to the coldly despairing conclusion that life was a stupid, meaningless joke, and his rational honesty made that view the central philosophical statement of all his last works. But his nonesty led him equally to a detailed appreciation of the values in human relationships which implicitly deny that statement, ...

Therefore, while O'Neill refused to use a pipe dream, an objective truth about existence as a basis for the form of his plays, particularly after The Iceman Cometh, he also wouldn't use his rational insight into life's inexplicability as an excuse to abandon his plays to formlessness. The wholeness of existence could be sensed in the irresoluble tension of Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian forces. Man could not rationally experience this opposition and therefore O'Neill had to appeal to his audience's non-rational faculties. He accomplished this through an image of spatial confusion and musical dissonance at the end of The Iceman Cometh.

Modern man needed his pipe dreams, not because they were true, but because they allowed him a chance to participate, however remotely and unknowingly, in the vitality of the primordial core of existence. With the cacophony of voices at the end of the play, the
content of each character's pipe dream was indecipherable; it had merged into a single unintelligible yet vital chorus. And, the final line of the play belonged to the resident anarchist, Hugo Kjalmar. Again, the content of "Tis cool beneath the willow trees!" (TIC, Act IV; p. 260), was unimportant compared to the chorus' using it as a means for further celebrating their renewed integrity as a group. The enthusiasm and vitality of their choric celebrating contrasted sharply to Slade's despair and isolation from them. O'Neill resolved the scene in favor of neither; the tension between Slade and the group was preserved. O'Neill understood that without an awareness of life's meaninglessness, man accepted his pipe dreams as objective truths; and without the non-rational communion of the individual and the group which pipe dreams made possible, modern man was paralyzed with despair at his inability to explain existence rationally.

The Iceman Cometh ultimately made the implication that perhaps pipe dreams or a living lie might be more sane and more life-giving than moral self-righteousness. But it never idealized the dream. It simply implied that if that is what it takes to live, then use it. This notion is examined in Long Day's Journey Into Night.

In Long Day's Journey Into Night we find people who realize the delusions but will not recognize and transcendent them initially. The play comes to us rich in symbol and metaphor. It is immediately recognized as autobiographical of O'Neill's family. He is continuing
the trent he started with The Iceman Cometh where the characters were friends. The go motif in the play is a symbol of the drugs which Mary uses, and the extensive use of alcohol in order to block out "reality", by the rest of the Tyrone family and the inmates of the saloon in The Iceman Cometh. Jamie Tyrone's face has a "Mephistophelian Cast"62 echoing the mask of Dion Anthony in The Great God Brown. All of these elements make this play a culmination of many of the ideas and themes in O'Neill's work.

The image or symbol of death is yet again prevalent in the title. The "Night" in the title is similar to the "Iceman" as metaphor for death. However, there will be no physical death in this play. There is far stronger element of spiritual death, but there is also the ambiguity that we find on O'Neill's later works.

This play is very much a vehicle for O'Neill's philosophy (that he has reached at this point). As early as Act II, Scene II, Edmund (O'Neill) says: "... then Neitzsche must be right. God is dead. Of his pity for man hath God died."63 Many of the references in the play are to writers and artists who influenced O'Neill, such as Nietzsche.

The death motif varies in relation to each character. For Edmund, the spectre of death due to illness prevails, for Mary there is the death of faith, hope and the end of her sojourn in "reality" without drugs. For Jamie, it is the death of illusions and for the father a death of hope--hope for his career and hope for his wife. He is described
thus when he realizes Mary's regression to drugs: "He suddenly looks a tired, bitterly sad old man." The play runs its course with each of the characters accusing, then denying accusations. Every character speaks in two voices, two moods, one of rage, the other of apology. This is similar in style to the use of masks in The Great God Brown.

One thing remains apparent however, none of them (until Act 4) recognize the problems for what they are in order to transcend them. Edmund, in Act 4, begins to realize when he says: "Nothing was what it is. That's what I wanted—to be alone with myself in another world where truth is untrue, and life can hide from itself." He echoes Larry Slade in this as he is moving towards the recognition that Larry reaches. He says that he felt like a ghost within a ghost, but that it exactly what Mary Tyrone becomes; "a ghost haunting the past."

It is only as part of the purging of the "fog" from his existence that Edmund finally recognizes and transcends the Nothingness of Life that Larry realized. He says:

\[
\text{I became drunk with the beauty and singing rhythm of it, and for a moment I lost my life. It was set free. I dissolved in sea, became white sails and flying spray, became beauty and rhythm, became moonlight and the ship and the high dim-starred sky! I belonged, without past or future, within peace and unity and a wild joy, within something greater than my own life, or the life of Man, to life itself.}
\]

This passages echoes that of Anton Roquentin, Sartre's protagonist in Nausea, when he recognized the absurd or the "Nothingness of pure Existence." For both Edmund and Roquentin, the recognition of
existence is reliant upon the elimination of man-made meanings. Only
by expurgating the connotations or meanings of words (which man or
society arbitrarily assigns to things) is one able to exist in the true sense-
to belong to life. He continues:

*Than the moment of ecstatic freedom came. The peace, the end of the quest the last harbour, the joy
of belonging to a fulfillment beyond man’s lousy, pitiful greedy fears and hopes and dreams.*

He becomes one with nature, is part of it. This continues the line of
O’Neill’s (and Sartre’s) rejection of society and socially imposed values
and beliefs. Only by transcending man’s fears, hopes and dreams,
(which are socially imposed) is one able to attain true self-realization
and true existence without hiding behind false values or arbitrarily
assigned meanings. Thus, finally:

*Like a saint’s vision of beatitude. Like the veil of things as they seem drawn back by an unseen hand. For second you see—and seeing for a second there is meaning.*

This is the transcendance that O’Neill and his characters have come
on this “long day’s journey” to realize. This is the end, but it is also the
beginning. The birth of a new philosophy, the beginning of a new cycle.
The image of the veil again echoes that of Sartre, when Anton
Roquentin suggests: “And suddenly, suddenly, the veil is torn away, I
have understood, I have seen.” But, alas, for Edmund (O’Neill): “Then
the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again, and
you stumble on toward nowhere, for no good reason.” And for Anton
Roquentin (Sartre):
And then suddenly, the park emptied as through a great hole, the world disappeared as it had come, or else I woke up—in any case, I say no more of it; nothing was left but the yellow earth around me, out of which dead branches rose upward.74

There is a death—the death of the vision, the death of true meaning and a return to the “fog” and the night. The ultimate destination remains “nowhere”--death. Edmund echoes Yank in The Hairy Ape: “It was a great mistake, my being born a man... who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death!”75 Although the “fog” returns, the transcendance and relization has occurred.

The “journey” of each character can be described as follows. For the Mother, it is a sad journey into the fog of dope and dream. For Jamie, it is a hopeless journey into the night of cynicism and despair. For the father, it is a tragic journey down the wrong road, away from an earlier triumph. But for Edmund (O’Neill) it is, prophetically, a journey beyond night. Dramatically, the story of these conflicting characters’ journeys is the essence of the play.76

In this vision of meaning, we see perhaps, the hope of reconciliation between O’Neill and life and death. The progression from pessimism to transcendance to meaning is implied yet, always, there is the ambiguity with which O’Neill loads his works. We also find, in these his later works, more of a philosophical, questioning attitude and influence in his work. Although obviously influenced by Sartre, O’Neill suggests a slightly more positive destination for his characters, himself and for the readers. He does not, however, suggest
that self-realization is easily attained but rather that each of us will need to go on our own “long day’s journey into and beyond night” in order to do so.

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