The different fates of the intruders and the characters intruded on in Anna Christie and Desire Under the Elms demonstrate the transition of Eugene O'Neill's dramatic concept from romantic dreams to tragic exposition. In Anna Christie, both Mat Burke, the intruder, and Anna Christie, the intruded upon, are dreamers. Mat Burke's intrusion upon Anna creates a situation wherein they struggle to realize their dream of happy union. The intruder, Mat Burke, and Anna Christie, the main character intruded on, are both, as Doris Folk remarks, "searchers", who

are seeking their proper place in the scheme of things, seeking "to belong": but their home--the answer to their needs--is not to be found in any mystic force outside themselves. It is to be found only in the vast and foggy realms of their own unconscious, where they seek a self which they can visualize only as a self-image, an abstract identity which will give their lives a direction in which to move.

For the searchers, in Anna Christie, one of the chief barriers to reaching a meaningful identity is their failure to see beyond their own limitations. Chris never perceives that the barrier is himself and the social environment which creates him as a frustrated individual. Although Mat Burke is able to point our Chris's mistake in accusing 'dat ole davil sea" for his miseries, his own survival of the ship-wreck is realized through mystic power. Anna has to rely on both the mystic power of the sea and Mat Burke's romantic love for her own transformation from a fallen girl to a pure lover.
As Sophus Winther argues, O'Neill, as dramatist of Anna Christie, "could not completely shake his inner romantic convictions although intellectually he could express his scorn for them". Such ambiguity in his concept is projected on the searchers of Anna Christie and makes them waver between hope and despair.

In contrast, in Desire Under the Elms, the intruder, Abbie Putnam, brings about an absolutely chaotic and tragic conclusion. In this play, the intruder and the intruded are destroyed dreamers. There is no more idealistic celebration of what Frederic Carpenter calls "the beauty and impossibility of the romantic dream" ("Romantic Tragedy"). Instead, O'Neill focused on the exploration of the frustrating elements of reality, and dramatized the intruder and the intruded as "finders" who search for identity in themselves and their interrelationships. According to Falk, the intruder, Abbie, and the intruded on, Eben, "find their integration in sacrifice," while Ephraim "finds his in its opposite, pride," and reality has found through the lovers "its paradoxical destructive-affirmative expression; in their death they have found life". It is a tough life and the search for it costs highly.

Anna Christie suffers from the contradiction between the tragic and the romantic elements in the motif of intrusion. The wavering focus renders the play what Virginia Floyd calls "a pseudo-tragedy with a happy ending", a bifurcating development between romance and tragedy. The same motif in Desire Under the Elms is handled with admirable coherence and stability, and consistently develops toward a tragic collision that crushes the loves but, at the same time, "transfixes, ennobles, and saves them". The victimization of the intruder and the intruded on is shocking but the human qualities the play chooses to
praise makes life worthy of the struggle for both Abbie and Eben.

The development from Anna Christie to Desire Under the Elms marks an important step toward the maturity of O'Neill's dramatic art. The former is, however, an important preparation for the latter in that it embodies element which are later fully developed into O'Neill's tragic view of human reality in Desire Under the Elms.

The significance of the transition from O'Neill's early experiments to his maturation has not reveived enough critical attention. However, in the brief chapter on Anna Christie in her book The Plays of Eugene O'Neill: A New Assessment, Virginia Floyd insightfully identifies the cause of one of O'Neill's "most interesting failures," remarking: "When he began the two-year period devoted to Chris Christopherson -- Anna Christie, O'Neill had not developed the skill to manipulate the intricacies of plot while sustaining believably motivated characters". O'Neill's immature handling of the plot of Anna Christie is reflected in the conflicting romantic and tragic elements of the intrusion motif. An examination of how O'Neill handled the focus will bring to light how O'Neill's dramatic art matured when he moved from Anna Christie to Desire Under the Elms.

Anna Christie begins impressively with a focus on the motif of intrusion, when the bartender hands over to Chris a letter which announces the impending visit by his daughter Anna Christie. Overjoyed by the news, which means the recovery of his daughter, whom he has not seen for fifteen years, Chris decides to put Anna on the barge with him. Yet he is immediately plunged into a dilemma: he has to "gat Marthy shore off barge before Anna come! Anna raise hell if she find dat out. Marthy raise hell, too, for go, by golly!". It seems at
this moment that Marthy is to play a critical role in the father-daughter relationship.

Anna's return to the seaside creates a critical situation that involves all three dramatic characters: the degraded daughter, the irresponsible father, and the prostitute Marthy, who is Anna's counterpart by profession. Chris seems to be harshly judged by his daughter because of his passivity, his submission to immediate pleasure, and his evasion of family responsibility. Contrasting to Anna's condemnation is Chris's happiness at recovering his daughter and obtaining the opportunity to express his parental love. The beginning of the play, therefore, creates a dramatic tension, and conflicts seem to happen among Anna Christie, Marthy, and Chris. Both Chris and Marthy will probably be challenged by the unexpected intruder with respect to their special relationship.

Unfortunately, at this crucial moment Marthy exits, too early and permanently, after some good-humored exchange of comments on each other's "number" with Anna. The development of the plot is thus cut short, and the structural success of the beginning is discontinued, since the play does not choose to fix its focus on the intrusion motif, but turns it to the opposition between the father and daughter's different attitudes toward the sea, which distracts from a concentration on the intruder-intruded relationship and causes the rest of the play to bifurcate between romance and tragedy.

Before the appearance of Mat Burke, the Irish sailor, Anna Christie embodies obvious tragic implications. With the knowledge of all the bitter experiences of the people in his village, Chris, a retired sailor, condemns the sea as the cause of all hardships and losses. To
protect his daughter from the ruinous sea, he puts her on an inland farm run by his cousins. Ironically, she is seduced by one of his cousins, reduced to the status of a prostitute, and becomes sick, discouraged, and worn out—not by her own weaknesses but by the destructive forces in society.

The focus of the play so far is on the father-daughter opposition, and at one moment the dramatic tension of the play is effectively intensified. When Anna asks Chris why he didn't ever come out West to see her, he feels guilty, but accuses "dat ole davil sea" of making the sailors into "crazy fools" "with her dirty tricks", and fog is the worst one of "her dirty tricks" (83-89). Anna's vision of the sea is the opposite. At the beginning of the second act Anna "is staring out into the fog astern with an expression of awed wonder", saying, with "a trace of strange exultation", "I love the fog! Honest! It's so--funny and still. I feel as if I was--out of things altogether". As the reward for her feeling of closeness to and love for the sea, she is mysteriously purged and transformed into her new self. Surprisingly, as soon as she sees the sea, she finds out that it makes her feel "clean" as if she has taken a bath; therefore, she would rather have "one drop of ocean than all the farms in the world", saying:

> like I'd found something I'd missed and been looking for--'s if this was the right place for me to fit in? And I seem to have forgot--everything that's happened--like it didn't matter no more. And I feel clean, somehow--like you feel yust after you've took bath. And I feel happy for once--yes, honest!--happier that I ever have been anywhere before!

Chris keeps cursing "Dat ole davil, sea," because "she ain't God." At the same time, he senses that "something was going to
happen". The sea is treated as a force that constantly sets the father and daughter to oppose each other.

To Anna, the sea is obviously "redemptive and gentle," while to Chris it is mysterious, menacing, and destructive. Travis Bogard argues that in Anna's discovery of the sea as a redeeming force—her purgation, her rise, to cleanness and hope "lies the real morality for O'Neill". However, there has been no indication that Anna and Chris will reach any compromise between their opposing visions of the sea.

Apparently, O'Neill resorted to the supernatural force of the sea for the transformation of Anna from a degraded prostitute to a perfect woman. But, unfortunately, "little effort is made to motivate her conversion, her sudden emergence as a purified woman". In doing so, O'Neill failed to keep the focus on the father-daughter conflicts, but shifted to the sea motif.

Another shift of focus is caused by the appearance of Mat Burke, whose intrusion challenges what John V. Antush calls "the premises of the traditions modern sea story in which the sea is the neutral backdrop of moral struggle isolating and clarifying man's heroic efforts in an indifferent universe", and it explodes "the premises of the traditional love story in which love finds a way over parental opposition and conflicting religious belief". Nevertheless, Mat Burke and his sentimental affair with Anna creates another focus, moving away from the previous focus on the father-daughter relationship.

Critics have paid too much attention to interpreting the meaning of the romantic sentimentalism of the play, neglecting the damage such sentimentalism has done to the structural success of the
play. Despite the immediate popularity of the first production in 1921, *Anna Christie* has been condemned by many for its romantic sentimentalism. O'Neill himself never said anything about his failure in handling the focus of *Anna Christie*; instead, he tried hard to defend the play by advocating its romantic tendencies. In a letter to George Jean Nathán he argued for the melodramatic quality of the play:

> From the middle of the third act I feel the play ought to be dominated by the woman's psychology. And I have a conviction that in dumb people of her sort, unable to voice strong strange feelings, the emotion can find outlet only through the language of the heroics in the novels and movies they are familiar with—that is, that in moments of great stress life copies melodrama.

(qtd. in Falk 48-49; my emphasis.)

When he decided to exclude the play from the selection of his best *Nine Plays* in 1932, eight years after the first production of the play, he seemed to be convinced of the weakness of the play--the romantic sentimentalism in the dramatization of both the intruder and the intruded--but still did not relate the thematic weakness to the play's structural disadvantage.

The intruder, Mat Burke, and the intruded, Anna Christie, are both depicted as typical romantic lovers; passionate, sentimental, supernatural. They are "buffeted by ill fortune, rejected and ignored by a callous and repressive society", passive, introverted, and estranged. Their images remind us of such romantic characters as Byron's Childe Harold, who is "a weed,/ Flung from the rock, on Ocean's fo'em to sail/Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail" (qtd. in Wilson 51-52). However, different from the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century, O'Neill did not seize upon the plight of the melancholy heroes as an opportunity to indict a social order that fails
to provide avenues through which the characters could channel their enormous spiritual resources in constructive directions, but rather tried to create an ideal pattern of life wherein both moral idealism and self-fulfillment could be simultaneously realized.

Obviously, Mat's intrusion reverses the tragic implication established in the first act of the play, disrupts the father-daughter opposition, and redirects the plot toward two relations: on the one hand, the romantic love between Anna and Mat, and on the other, the more dominating opposition between Mat and Chris. It is at this point that the play stops its tragic exploration of the intrusion motif and sweeps toward a happy ending—Anna's recovered virtues are to be rewarded by love, Mat is to demonstrate his qualifications as a romantic hero and lover by transcending his narrow-mindedness, and Chris is not to lose the daughter, but instead to win fellowship through reconciliation.

In contrast to the naturalistic father and daughter, Mat Burke is characteristic both physically and spiritually of the romantic hero. He is handsome, "in the full power of his heavy-muscled, immense strength". He is about thirty, in the prime of life, and has a "hard, rough, bold, defiant way" of behavior. He is what Francis Hackett calls "a broth of a boy, boastful, chivalrous, romantic, blasphemous, superstitious". In addition, he is also an adventurous figure who has just survived the shipwreck in which he is almost killed. Above all, he is mystic and supernatural. Surprisingly, after five horrible days in an open boat, he is able to start talking of his "mermaid out of the sea" after a drink of whisky Anna offers him, and falls in love with Anna as if the romantic convergence is predetermined. He is, as regarded by James D. Wilson, typical of "the tradition of sentimentality permeating
late eighteenth-century fiction and drama", and his intrusion is characteristic of pure romance.

The tragic mode established in the first act of the play is thus overshadowed by the romantic atmosphere surrounding the intruder and the intruded. John Raleigh calls the love between Mat Burke and Anna Christie as typical of "wildly romantic--'the world well lost'--love affairs". When Mat Burke starts flirting with and proposing to Anna, he has hardly recovered his senses after the adventurous floating on the sea for five days. Although Mat Burke is in many ways "a caricature, an Americanized stage Irishman whose appearance turns potential tragedy into sentimental pathos", he has more dimensions that either Anna or Chris. First of all, he functions as a savior, not just a lover. He is to save and transform the female character on whom he intrudes, Anna Christie, a tall and handsome girl with a heart of gold, but reduced to a rootless, bitter creature, unable to speak her needs. Despite her reunification with her father, she remains mysteriously lonesome and melancholy. She seems to have been waiting for a sort of unnameable force which will complete her purgation and provide her with love and happiness.

O'Neill manifested full attention to the dramatization of the complete circle of the romantic love between Mat and Anna, who have to gain mutual trust before they become ideal lovers. If it is impossible for Anna to prove her innocence in regard to the past when she worked as a prostitute, at least, she successfully makes Mat forgive "what's dead and gone" and forget it. When Anna, at the end of Act III, confesses her inglorious past, Mat breaks into a painful lamentation of grief and regret, and it seems his whole world collapses. For a moment,
being captivated by the conventional prejudice against prostitutes, Mat is about to fall victim to the conventional force in the withdrawal of his love for Anna, his calling Anna a woman with "the rottenness in her," and his regarding himself as "the fool of the world", yelling, in regret and pain "God help me! I'm destroyed entirely and my heart is broken in bits!". However, this is but temporary frustration, a strategic descent before a glorious rise. Eventually, the intruder successfully breaks the bondage of traditional norms, conquers social conventions, and grains his identification as a qualified savior and a romantic bridegroom. Involved in the motif is a complex of distrust, regret, anger, self-repudiation, and triumph.

Thirdly, Mat Burke has the mystic power to cleanse Anna of her impurities. He regards the purge of Anna as his duty. In Act IV, he explicitly announces that he is in possession of a transformational power: "I have a power of strength in me to lead men the way I want, and women, too, maybe, and I'm thinking I'd change you to a new woman entirely, so I'd never know, or you either, what kind of woman you'd been in the past at all". Anna is instantaneously transformed from a depressed, dreamy, and romantic character into a practical person who is willing to perform her duty as a housewife. She assures Mat and Chris of her role as organizer of domestic life, which she is to play while they are away sailing to Capetown. In contrast to the romantic role she has been playing so far, Anna is now realistic and materialistic, thinking about the comforts and stability of a home: "I'll get a little house somewhere and I'll make a regular place for you two to come back to". Meanwhile, Mat Burke has risen to a heroic stature after the manifestation of his supernatural ability to transform himself. When
the motif of intrusion moves to the Mat-Chris relationship, it contradicts the fervent idealization of the Anna-Mat relationship and turns to explore the bitterness in the Mat-Chris relationship, which cannot be overcome. Between the Anna-Mat relationship and the Mat-Chris relationship there is a striking difference: Anna does not need to relinquish her vision of reality since she agrees with Mat in seeing the sea as a force of purgation and she submits to Mat's passionate love, while Chris feels unable to change his vision of the sea as an evil force. The two different, almost opposite, types of intruder-intruded relationships render the play a blend of both the exploration of a romance with a happy ending and the dramatization of the tragic gloom as represented by Chris. If Mat's confrontation with Anna is purely romantic, his intrusion upon Chris has an obviously provocative and uncompromising character. His unexpected intrusion upsets the psychological balance that Chris has just regained through the recovery of his daughter and strikes fear into the heart of the old sailor. Being desperately challenged and driven into the corner by the intruder, Chris turns to condemn the sea, shaking "his fist out at the sea--with bitter hatred", yelling:

\[
\text{It's dat ole davil, sea, do this to me. Den she [the sea] bring dat Irish fallar in fog, she make you like him, she make you fight with me all time! If dat Irish fallar don't never come, you don't never tal me demtangs, I don't never know, and everytang's all right. [He shakes his fist again.] Dirty ole davil!}
\]

At the end of the play he again turns to beg God, whining in pain, "But py God, you don't do dat! Not while Ay'm living! No, py God, you don't!" Chris has to fight the union of human and supernatural opponents: the intruder, Mat Burke, and the "ole davil" sea. Therefore, Chris is doomed to lose the battle for his own belief and dignity.
Chris appears "a fugitive". If his withdrawal from reality thwarts and inhibits the romantic lovers, it conspires to obstruct traditional romantic love by introducing into the situation the interaction of irreconcilable opposites. However, it is not clear whether O'Neill was creating a Utopia for the intruder and the intruded or toppling the one the lovers have been struggling to create. Although Chris seems to have become less reserved and actually dropped his hatred for Mat Burke, he is still possessed by a somber mood. When Anna and Mat drink together to their engagement, Chris again utters the resonant premonition: "Fog, fog, fog, all bloody time. You can't see where you vas going, no. Only dat davil, sea--she knows!". Chris's melancholy greatly moderates the romantic cheerfulness in the Mat-Anna relationship.

The philosophy of life presented in *Anna Christie* is not a uniform one, and it causes difficulty in deciding whether the play is a tragedy or a pure romance. Frederic I. Carpenter argues that "the play is not a tragedy, and should not be damned for its 'failure' as one," but "it is a serious study of modern life, which dramatizes that mixture of comedy and tragedy most characteristic of life". Horst Frenz points out that other critics "assumed that this happy ending represented O'Neill's own idea of how such a situation might 'come out all right'." O'Neill is accused of "wriggling out of the problem by means of conventional compromise," because critics "found the happy ending irreconcilable with the incompatibility of the characters and everything in their future". Doris V. Falk finds in the controversial conclusion of the play "additional evidence" of O'Neill's "double vision of life as suspended between hope and despair". The contradiction in the form
of the play might not be the evidence that O'Neill had abandoned his original principles "as a sop to popular taste". The dramatist was angry at the critics' failure to see that "he has not expressing his own belief in the compromise reached by Anna, Mat, and Chris," but was showing that "they, by believing it, were once more committing themselves to an illusion". According to O'Neill's interpretation, his intruders and the intruded in Anna Christie do not fail to transcend the limitation of searchers, but they choose to look at life differently, in his own words, as "illusion."

When we stop to reconsider the entire situation, we find that it is a failure in the structural treatment of the motif of intrusion rather than in the ideological basis of the play. The weakness lies in O'Neill's uncertainty in his handling of the focus. The play wavers between two opposing modes: in Mat Burke's intrusion upon Anna, the mode of the play is prevalently romantic, while in Anna's intrusion upon Chris at the beginning of the play and later in Mat's intrusion upon Chris, the mode turns to be pessimistically tragic. Travis Bogard believes that O'Neill tried to show that what appeared happiness was only "another trick of the 'ole davil." On the one hand, he introduced into the play from the first "all the essential points of happiness and fulfillment that are to be found in great comedy," and let Anna and Mat "force their way to happiness." But on the other hand, he "mistrusted their future" by adding Chris's broading lamentation. Here O'Neill seems to have run into the contradiction between a happy ending and the tragic nature of reality.

It is a problem which becomes apparent at the end of the play; yet the failure in handling the focus is a factor which is decided
early in the play. According to Lukacs, "from a given beginning", only one "single given result can follow," for the ending is "preconditioned by the ethical structure which is known to both the dramatist and the public". By establishing a triangular relationship between the intruder and the intruded--namely Mat Burke, Anna, and Chris--O'Neill intended to complicate the plots. What "actually conspires to destroy the situation O'Neill has created" is that the triangular relationship fails to focus upon one "single result". In other words, it is the wavering focus on the motif of intrusion that results in the bifurcating conclusion of the play: it is neither a pure romance nor a tragedy.

Frederic I. Carpenter points out that there are technical differences between O'Neill's early plays and his later ones, saying that "the chief difference between his early plays and his later ones lies in the nature of the romance described and in the technique by which it is dramatized. The handling of the focus of the motif of intrusion is one of those differences. When Virginia Floyd sharply calls it "a play gone wrong", she means that during the two-year period devoted to Chris Christopherson and Anna Christie, "O'Neill had not developed the skill to manipulate the intricacies of plot while sustaining believably motivated characters". It is in Desire Under the Elms that he achieves the integration.

O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms is his successful attempt at a play which deals with the tragic fate of both the intruder and the intruded. The intrusion occurs within a family where "the isolated persons clash and destroy each other, not simply because their particular relationships are wrong, but because life as such is inevitably against them". When we pause to reassess O'Neill's dramatic achievements in
Desire Under the Elms, particularly in comparison with Anna Christie, we find that two factors are vitally important to the play: the sharp and stable focus upon the quest of the destiny of both the intruder and the intruded, and O'Neill's abandonment of such idealistic elements as romantic love and salvation by supernatural force.

The first part of the play focuses upon the preparation of the background for the intrusion. The first act of the play successfully creates the dramatic intention in a family which is hopelessly disintegrating both spiritually and structurally. It is a house of males where the absence of a mother figure leaves a crucial blank and makes the family especially vulnerable when it is subject to an intrusion. Although the father, Ephraim Cabot, and his three sons—Simeon, Peter, and Eben—are linked by family ties, they are more strangers or enemies who are hostile to each other than members of the same family. It is one of the best beginnings in modern drama in terms of its direct and swift establishment of dramatic tension.

With rapid development, the play successfully increases dramatic tension by focusing upon a family which is fragile and broken, since it has no common spiritual principle. Old Ephraim, the patriarch of the family, desires to "escape from his tragic sense of aloneness" by possessing the farm he has made out of impossible land, since human love fails him from each of his wives and his sons. Eben, the youngest son, remains in a struggle for the possession of what he thinks was his mother's. He renounces the patrimony of his father, a tough rival, who is old but obstinate and unyielding. Such is the family. Although all its members are threatened by "the feeling of instability or insecurity", yet they continue to struggle to realize their desire to possess because
they, as human beings, have no control of the desire but, on the contrary, are swayed by it.

Seeing no hope in their struggle for property at home tired of the hard labour and torturous domestic conflicts, and hating to be "slaves t' stone walls," the older brothers run away to try their fortune in California with the money they steal from Ephraim, hoping that they can find gold and freedom. At the end of Part One, the characters of the play are cleanly simplified. Only the father, Ephraim Cabot, and the youngest son, Eben, remain at the center of the arena. Thus the play obtains an unusually concentrated focus on the Ephraim-Eben opposition.

Neither Old Ephraim nor Eben has a positive view of life. Their visions of the life are "without foundation, without creeds or beliefs". Throughout the play, O'Neill stresses the characters's spiritual sickness in pursuit of material satisfaction. Doris M. Alexander remarks that O'Neill's interpretation of the human desire for wealth reflects Nietzsche's view of personal weakness. Nietzsche once lamented: "Wealth they acquire and become poorer there by. Power they seek for, and above all, the lever of power, much money--these impotent ones!". Obviously, the Nietzschean philosophy is the starting point for O'Neill's condemnation of the tragic human status, the roots of which are found in what Alexander calls the "inner weakness and sterility" of the intruder and the intruded. The tragic fates of the characters, the intruder and the intruded on, are decided by the internal causes found in their limitations rather than by the causes symbolized by the external elements, such as the protective and subduing elm trees on each side of the house, the rocky land, and the tomb-like parlor where the
seduction takes place.

It is in such a circumstance that O'Neill's female intruder, Abbie Putnam, is involved. The newly wedded young wife of Ephraim is the reverse of Mat Burke, the male intruder in Anna Christie, in three respects, not to mention the difference in gender. First, she is realistic instead of supernatural and mystical. Second, she is a victimizer and a victim instead of a savior or redeemer. Finally, she is punished for her sin by her destruction, but meanwhile the lustful lover is transmuted into a passionate fighter for human dignity through her own efforts instead of a third force.

Abbie is a realistic creation—plain, practical, and close to earth. Different from the mystical adventure Mat survies over the sea, she is from a realistically identifiable background. While Mat Burke, the true "citizen of the sea", intrudes as a creature coming into the scene from outside reality, the credibility of Abbie as a realistic character is unquestionable. In Anna Christie, the mysticism in Mat Burke is a strategic as well as a thematic necessity for the purpose of redemption. Henry F. Pommer calls such a treatment of the intruder figure "a spiritual ambition within the theater". On the contrary, Abbie is not designed for such a spiritual ambition. Judging by her frustrated family background, her desire for property is not greed, but part of her self-righteous struggle to improve her economic situation.

She tells Eben, at the beginning of her intrusion upon the Cabots, and in the plainest language, about her exploitation and frustration:

"My Maw died afore I'd growed. I don't remember her none. I'm not the wust in the world--an' yew an' me've
got a lot in common. I kin tell that by lookin' at ye. Waal—
I've had a hard life, too—oceans o' trouble an' nothin' but
wuk for reward. I was a orphan early an' had t' wuk for
others in other folks' hums. Then I married an' he turned
out a drunken spreer an' so he had to wuk for others an'
me too agen in other folks' hums, an' the baby died, an' my
husband got sick an' died too .......

She relates her struggle for identification to practical and
realistic petty, material achievements. To have a home of her own means
personal dignity as well as security and stability: "an' I was glad sayin'
now I'm free fur once, on'y I diskivered right away all I was free fur
was t' wuk agen in other folks' hums, doin' other folk' wuk till I'd most
give up hope o' ever doin' my own wuk in my own hum . . .". It is
justifiable for her to desire the basic comforts of a home.

Her marriage to an old man like Ephraim Cabot is because
"a woman's got to hev a hum". When, for the first time, she confronts
Eben, who chalenges her triumph in having a home of her own, she
argues most candidly: "Waal--what if I did need a hum? What else'd I
marry an old man like him fur?". Besides the realistic consideration,
there is not the least romantic element.

Abbie's practical considerations in her struggle for the basic
necessities of survival cannot be denounced as animal desires. What
she seeks is what Winfield Parks calls "serenity and order", and the
"sense of belonging in a mysteriously alien universe". In other words,
when she intrudes upon the Cabots as an outsider, she is not a destructive
intruder but a plain country woman who is fighting for survival.

Nevertheless, the tragedy of Abbie lies in the fact that she
has no fixed value by which she can avoid the overwhelming force of
destruction, a combination of her most basic human desires--"greed,
ambition, power and carnal love." In Sophus Keith Winther's words,
she "never finds a principle by which she can reconcile her practice with a fixed standard of conduct". As the result of the absence of a principle, Abbie is transformed by the situation into a blind victimizer, preying upon everyone in the family as part of the game of her desire. At the same time, she is also a victim to her own blind impetus.

As in Anna Christie, the plot involves a triangular relationship. But the difference between the two plays is that, in Anna Christie, it is not easy to decide who the major character is. Each of the three characters can claim to be the major character in a sense, and the focus is shifting all the time from the study of one character to another. On the contrary, in Desire Under the Elms, the intruder, Abbie, remains all the time right at the center of the triangle, and at the same time both of the two characters intruded on, Ephraim and Eben, are closely related to her in their entangled struggle. Therefore, all the characters, the intruder and the intruded, who are caught, to use Winfield Parks's term, by the "web of circumstances" are closely examined under the well-directed focus on the interrelationship between them. Ironically, each of them feels triumphant in fighting against the external odds at certain moments, but eventually turns out to be a victim.

Ephraim Cabot, who initiates Abbie's intrusion by marrying her, is the first to be victimized. He is "hard, and lonesome and old," and is a "self-centered, loveless man who has projected his own personality into that of his God, a tyrannic, ascetic, restrictive embodiment of Puritanism". Before Abbie's intrusion starts the undermining of his patriarchal position, he has been himself the victimizer of two wives. The second wife, Eben's mother, gentle, sensitive, over-worked, and love-starved, is a more fully presented
pathetic victim, who loses both her land and her life. Ironically, Ephraim Cabot is now turned into a victim himself, and partially by his own hand. If the victimization of the first two wives was presented as part of the dramatic activities, Ephraim Cabot could not have aroused the least bit of sympathy when the young wife and his son join forces with each other to usurp him.

Like Anna Christie, *Desire Under the Elms* also involves supernatural elements, such as the brooding, crushing, jealous, and absorbent elms over the house, the stone wall, the wooden gate, and, above all, the overshadowing spirit of Eben's mother. These elements are manipulated to create an overall milieu, but are not so disproportionately developed as to demand a shift of the focus onto themselves. For instance, in Scene 3 of Part Two, in the parlor where the seduction takes place, the overshadowing spirit of Eben's mother is coherently integrated into the atmosphere and increases the confused character of the Abbie-Eben relationship. According to O'Neill's description, the parlor is a "grim, repressed room like a tomb in which the family has been interred alive." Abbie looks "awed and frightened" and "ready to run away". Being overcome by wild passion, Eben is still able to see the supernatural power of punishment, saying: "I see it! I see why. It's her vengeance on him--so's she kin rest quiet in her grave!". The supernatural elements intensify Eben's confused mental situation, but they never overshadow the human struggles. Instead, they are reflections of the fear and confusion in the minds of the characters involved in the motif.

The relationship between Abbie and Eben is perhaps the most passionate and the most shocking relationship in modern drama.
between an intruder and a character intruded on. It is the core of the intrusion motif of the play and remains directly in focus throughout the play.

Like a haunted animal, Eben, has been suspicious of Abbie's motive of love. He is aware of his status at home and his disadvantage in fighting his father, the tough rival, whose position has been recently reinforced by marrying a young woman who is full of productive vigour and desire for property. He hates her, scorns her, and calls her a whore. However, he drops his defense at the moment when he is possessed by Abbie's assumed maternal love and his mother's spirit of vengeance. After the parlor love scene, he feels he has completed a conquest so that his mother can go back to her grave and sleep in satisfaction. Obviously their souls are struggling separately for different reasons, even though their bodies unite.

Abbies is tortured by the difficulty of finding a way to transcend her purely physical relationship with Eben so that they can both be identified as true lovers. But she is caught in circumstances so complicated and complex that there can be no way to communicate with Eben without misunderstanding. On the other hand, Eben cannot free himself from the complex of "lust, greed, and the desire for revenge". What frustrates the intruder and the intruded is the lack of communication, which, as George Lukacs describes in his article "The Sociology of Modern Drama", means that "men become simply incapable of expressing the truly essential in them and what truly directs their actions; even should they in rare moments find words to fit the inexpressible, these words will at any rate go unheard past the spirits of others, or reach them with meaning transformed. In Abbie's attempt
to communicate, "what is said becomes ever more peripheral to what is not expressible". The murder of the baby is her desperate last resort; she hopes that the killing will then convey to Eben her sincere, physical, physiological, sexual, and emotional love for him, in a voice louder and more convincing than her own verbal explanation.

When Eben returns to Abbie for her forgiveness and to surrender himself to the sherriff, "walking hand in hand with Abbie to the gate," modern drama is provided with the best illustration of O'Neill's statement that "In all my plays sin is punished and redemption takes place". When both Abbie and Eben are brought away for the punishment of their sin, Ephraim seems to have become a "mythical, immortal giant" who arouse sympathy. It is cruel not to save him, but in refusing to save him with cheap redemption, O'Neill lets us see his particular stress on the personal weakness of those who strive for wealth and desire and the consequence of such strife.

In contrast to Abbie and Eben who eventually gain the vision of their integratio and the impossibility for them to win it without their own desctruction, Ephraim is the only one to live on, but "within the eternal illusion which is living death--the illusion represented by the farm, the mask of his fatal pride". Here lies the irony of the conclusion of the play: the "finders" of truth have to be victimized, while those who fail to gain the vision survive the destructive reality.

The ending of the play focuses on the transformation of the intruder, Abbie, and the character intruded on, Eben, symbolized by the door. After Eben and Abbie have kissed each other to reassure their mutual love, "they go out the door in the rear" which is symbolic of the threshold. Across this threshold, there are two worlds. Both the
intruder and the intruded are to leave behind their haunted past in the
old world and step into a new world where they are transformed,
ennobled, and redeemed so that they are able to find their identity. The
price is high, yet the vision they have gained is not what a happy ending
can provide.

When the two plays, Anna Christie and Desire Under the
Elms, are put side by side, we see through O'Neill's treatment of the
intrusion motif his fundamental way of looking at life. In Anna Christie,
the intruder and the intruded have survived their destruction and are
able to realize their love, but their idea of love cannot be connected
with reality. Instead, they have to rely on the romantic nature of their
love and supernatural power that helps them with the realization of
their love. In Desire Under the Elms, the intrusion motif is free of
romantic and supernatural elements, but the love between the intruder
and the intruded on has to be realized in their destruction.

From Anna Christie to Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill
achieved progress in the maturity of his dramatic art. But the progress
also reveals that he apparently had difficulties in connecting "the
negative concept of social criticism with the positive concept of love
for others". The hope he sees for human beings in the intruders and the
intruded on who may have the courage to love and to possess their
own destinies is undermined in Anna Christie by the romantic quality
in their search for love and in Desire Under the Elms by the destruction
of the finders of love.