Chapter-3  

**Tragic Vision in Eugene O’Neill’s Plays**

There is no present or future, only the past, happening over and over again, now. (Eugene O’Neill)

O’Neill reaches maturity with his plays which were written after the first devastating war. Hitherto, the existing tradition of dramatic literature had been one of moralistic humanism. Aristotle provides the framework with which the tradition of drama could be safely anchored. War and its aftermath had brought a revolutionary turmoil and caused a break in the tradition so hallowed in the past. A rebel against the moralistic tradition O’Neill wrote unconventional dramas in the twenties and thirties of this century which sounded a death-knell to the complacency of middle-class world order which Ibsen and Bernard Shaw took great pains to protect from crumbling.

O’Neill presented the America of his day in diverse plays like the *Emperor Jones* on one end and *Mourning Becomes Electra* on the other. The scope of problems treated in his dramas during one decade which may perhaps be termed as the middle or peak period of his creativity, was remarkable. The dramatist appears to touch on every aspect of American life and his treatment of problems in each play meant an achievement for American theatre. O’Neill chose to present in his dramas subjects like social injustice and the conflict of races. The conflict of capital and labour and the problem of man versus machine also attracted his attention. He was preoccupied with the theme of the fate of art and artist in a society which suffers from spiritual sterility. These themes recur in his plays of different periods.
The plays written in his middle period may safely be divided into two groups. In one group of plays, tragic characters are just ordinary humans who have no tragic stature like Macbeth or Julius Caesar. They speak the language of their rustic surroundings. They achieve tragic height just because of the fact that, they wage-a heroic battle against the circumstances of their life which eventually prove stronger. O'Neill does not try to make his characters nicer or nobler. There is not the slightest condescension in his portrayal of the poverty-stricken and ignorant people driven by instincts. He does not make a judgment about his rough characters endowed with primitive emotions. Maya Koreneva observes, “Thus, O'Neill's approach to the central object of art-man- was truly innovative from the very beginning. That was what allowed American drama to make a gigantic leap that took it over the abyss dividing Craftsmanship and art. He rejected the restrictive principle of separating lofty things from low ones and thus relieved American drama of its fear of life.” (1)

Thus O'Neill introduced realism into American theatre. The wonderful objectivity of the artist was manifested in this approach. In The Emperor Jones, The Hairy Ape, All God's Chillun Got Wings and Desire Under the Elms, action of each play is concentrated on the tragic fate of its protagonist. Judged in the context of O'Neill's plays, they may be said to represent psychological studies and become stages in the playwright's progress towards the form suitable for his concept of modern tragedy.

This form is described in the second group of plays. O'Neill's tragic vision encompasses the life of the acquisitive middle class. Characters belong to the acquisitive middle class. Characters belong to the higher strata of society. Individual is at the centre of such plays as The Great God
Brown, Strange Interlude. Psychological analysis is again the means of developing individual characterization. But the playwright uses different devices in each particular case. He introduces masks, interior monologue and asides to show the split in protagonist’s consciousness. Disintegration sets in the personality of the individual which again is the sum of disjointed attributes taken together. But the individual can never recover the harmonious whole because what produced his disintegration lies outside him. Its root cause is social reality over which individual has no power. Bourgeois society with its acquisitive mentality poisons the protagonist’s consciousness and make them thirst for possessions and thus deprive them of the possibility of having human relations. Thus interpretation of life as the source of tragedy is what brings O’Neill’s tragedy close to classical Greek tragedy in such play as Mourning Becomes Electra.

Gone are the days of dignified aristocratic tragedies of eighteenth century. O’Neillian tragic characters are not called upon to restore the broken order of an Athenian court or of a code bound society. Lavinia of Mourning Becomes Electra finds in the end of the play her own individual moral order. She will forgo the bliss of married life so that the family curses of the Mannons may not visit upon the life of next generation. She will punish herself for being born a Mannons and close the door behind her. As opposed to the Aristotelian concept of tragedy O’Neill may be said to write naturalistic tragedies. There is no supernatural destiny presiding over O’Neillian universe. Family past, racial heritage, man’s biological past and capitalistic social structure made by man prove catastrophic to man’s realizing genuinely human aspirations upon earth. In this group may fall The Great God Brown, Macro Millions, Lazarus Laughed, Strange Interlude and Mourning Becomes Electra.
THE EMPEROR JONES

Brutus Jones appears to be an ordinary criminal who is said to have killed a white man in the states and has fled to an island in West Indies. He is an ex-Pullman Porter who has become emperor of the island through corrupt practices and possesses great wealth. He has exploited the natives to the point of utter subjugation. He is proud of his shrewdness and tact which give him a sense of superiority over the natives. He explains his position to his helper Smithers in the opening scene which gives an extensive exposition of the protagonist's consciousness. “I tell you, Smithers. Dere’s little stealin’ like you does, and dere’s big stealin’ like I does. For de little stealin’ like you does, and dere’s big stealin’ like I does. For de little stealin’ dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin’ dey makes you emperor”. (2)

The Scene shows the extremes of Jones ‘consciousness which will eventually fail to bring into harmony those extremes. These possibly, are his human aspirations and anti-human norms imposed by the environment. He proclaims to his helper, Smithers that showmanship is the thing which secures success in life. “Ain’t man’s talkin’ big what makes him big, long as he makes folks believe it? Sho’ I talks large when I aim’g got nothin’ to back it up.” (3)

It does not take long for Jones to understand that his spell would not work upon the natives anymore. In the end of the expository scene he is told by his helper, Smithers that native are plotting rebellion against him. They would not turn up if he rings the bell. A dismayed Jones rings the bell up but the natives do not turn up. The character of Jones suffers a moral change. He understands that the day of reckoning perhaps has come. But he falsely believes that he
would be able to escape the punishment that the islanders who rebelled had in store for him. “Well, I’s changed in mind den, I cashes in and resigns de job of emperor right dis minute.” (4)

He starts for the door in rear. Smither tells him, “goin' out to look for your ‘orse? Yer won't find any. They steal the 'orses first thing. Mine was gone when I went for 'em this morning. That's wot first give me a suspicion of wot was up.”(5) Jones' conscious ego starts breaking down. Disintegration in his consciousness is depicted stage by stage. Natives are after him. He decides to leave his emperordom. He will cross the forest on foot. He knows the forest and had earlier crossed it several times. If the natives get hold of him, he has got "five lead bullets in dis gun good enuff fo common bush niggers — and after dat I got de silver bullet left — to cheat 'em out O'gittin 'me.(6)

The ambivalence of the protagonist's consciousness is tormenting. The native niggers are not portrayed as characters of flesh and blood. Jones's potential adversaries are his mental inhibitions. His real enemy is his unconscious mind. Jones's consciousness reflects the ambivalence of his position as a tyrant and usurper, as a criminal waiting for the revenge for the wrong he had done.(7) He has exploited the natives and now they are at the point of rebellion. They have already plotted against him and Jones must now flee for life. Jones has convinced the natives that only a silver bullet can kill him. He is under the impression that the natives would hardly find a silver bullet. He has forged a silver bullet for himself, the sixth, in his gun under the assumption that he would kill himself before the natives get to him.

Jones makes a flight through the forest to the accompaniment of drumbeat which begins at normal pulse beat and grows faster and louder. He is lost in the forest he had thought he knew
M well. He is confronted with one ghost after another from his past. These represent his past, his hidden motives, and his fears. He fires his six precious bullets to dispel these *little formless fears*. These visions of his past stem from Jones' *personal unconscious* and collective *unconscious*. The natives have shot Jones with the silver bullet which they, made from money, Jones is revenged and thus, at his own coin. It seems that Jones' fate is outside his character. It is his memory of his racial past which works out his destiny. The stress on the racial past of American Negro makes Jones an archetypal figure. His consciousness of his past provides the psychological motive of his action. The principal means of characterization in the play is O'Neill's use of interior monologue. The whole play unfolds as a continuous interior monologue of the protagonist; Jones is the victim of his inner sense of guilt. He knows that he is accountable for the cruelty with which he ruled over the islanders. The revenge by the natives is therefore inevitable. This arouses Jones's fear. His attempt to escape his punishment turns into a race inside the vicious circle at the end of which his destiny awaits him. Jones is not merely a criminal who committed crimes. Had he been so, he would not have attracted our attention. O'Neill's Jones is not merely a psychological study devoid of social significance. The sin of others has condemned him. He is the typical American black son who is the victim of social evil. Therefore, the playwright does not simply recreate the protagonist's past but connects it with the history of American black people. He introduces elements of collective memory which Jones did not experience himself. There is the slave auction scene and the scene on board a ship carrying its live cargo of blacks to America. The crimes committed by the whites against his people are kept alive by the memory of his ancestors. So Jones's behavior is determined by this psychological reality which is social reality as well. “Jones does not have the
mental and verbal ability to express all the intricate associations, connecting his personal story with the history of his people. But he has a rich imagination; and visionary scenes, flashing through his inflamed mind, brilliantly convey both his mental processes and his psychic state. At the same time, they increase the dramatic tension emphasizing the protagonist's inability to control his thoughts; and this, in turn drives Jones to his tragic end.” (8)

The disintegration of Jones's consciousness and his attempt to escape it makes the core of the play's action. But Jones remains a victim of a social order where blacks must remain as outcasts. “The playwright denounces the fundamental injustice of the social order that his characters confront and depicts it as the main source of tragedy. But the tragedy of Jones or that of Jim and Ella demands, implicitly, a change of social order.” (9)

O'Neill's expressionist hero Jones has affinities with the heroes of his earlier plays. It will perhaps be wrong to limit our study of the play by our knowledge of German expressionism.

As Tiusanen observes, “An error of another kind is to read O'Neill's expressionistic plays too narrowly through the theory of orthodox German expressionism, seeing in their heroes only ciphers. It is hardly feasible to imagine audiences not getting emotionally involved with Jones and Yank, two figures so powerfully characterized. Both of these monologue plays are constructed to have an emotional impact, developed by the continuous presence of the hero on the stage and by a wide variety of scenic means. (10)

Probably this is the only O'Neillian play which conforms to the Aristotelian conception of the unity of time, place and action. Time is just one night. To escape his punishment, Jones is to cross the forest in twelve hours' time, place is mostly the forest where the action takes place,
beating of Tom-tom and dream fantasy bind the action and provide a controlling unity. In the course of his run through the forest, Jones is visited by phantoms and formless fears. He fires six shots to dispel the fear of darkness. He makes an unending effort to remain emperor till the end. He refuses to surrender to his racial past which is symbolized by the crocodile God. He fires his silver bullet; his racial God disappears but Jones, his last resource of emperor-hood exhausted, lies whimpering on the ground. His refusal to surrender and his struggle is heroic. In the *Hairy Ape*, Yank surrenders to the gorilla in the cage in an effort to belong.

Jones is a renegade. He will not surrender to God which is evil the dark God punishes him. In the pulses of Jones, one might feel the beat of the jungle drums. Jones’s black ancestors paid services to the primitive God. But Negroes no longer serve their dark Gods. As Bogard observes, “In white civilization, he (Jones) has become a new entity an individual not one of a horde, howling in communal self-abandonment. He has acquired a white man’s name, an occupation and has assumed the responsibilities of law judgment punishment. Evolving from the primitive, he has become something other than his anonymous native essence and has superimposed a new self on his truth.”(11)

He starts denying his primordial God and this defiance becomes tragic. This reminds us of Robert’s defiance of sea in *Beyond the Horizon*. Jones is destroyed by his sense of guilt and fears. His encounters with fears give us a sense of irrational experience. We forget the spatial and temporal reality and are hypnotized by the drum-beat. These expressionistic devices make a psychological analysis of Jones’s inner process as well as ours. There is a cathartic effect we pass through. As Doris Falk observes, “In his use of symbols in the *Emperor Jones* O'Neill
acknowledged, as do most modern authors, the validity of Jung's theory that great literature strikes a responsive chord in all men because its central metaphors can be traced to archetypal images buried in the unconscious mind of humanity.”(12)

Jones becomes a victim of his own past as well as the past of his race and in broader context, of humanity. Barret H. Clark puts it in another way. “As pure theatre, The Emperor Jones is one of the best of all the O'Neill plays, though most of it is only dramatic monologue. It is a kind of unfolding, in reverse order, of the tragical epic of the American Negro”. (13)

*The play Emperor Jones* contains evidences of O'Neill's social consciousness in the sense that it is the tragedy of a rough character endowed with primitive, animal emotion. O'Neill does not try to make his character nicer. Jones is entirely driven by instincts. It is in Jones himself that we are to observe sharp criticism of the civilization of the modern white man, for Jones is Negroid only in physical appearance and in speech in the opening scene. As Edwin Engel observes, “He is rather, the American success story in black face. His rise to wealth and power, from stowaway to Emperor in two years had been achieved by virtue of his possession of none of the characteristics commonly associated with the Negro, such as shiftless laziness or lack of initiative. During the ten years in which In- had served as Pullman car porter he had listened to the white quality... and adopted their ways. What he learned in those years was the white man's cynicism, shrewdness, efficiency, philosophy of self interest. He had explained to him, for example, the distinction between little stealing and big stealing. For de little stealing, he informs the cockney Smithers, dey gits you in jail soon or late. For de big stealing dey makes you
Emperor... Having absorbed the ethic of the white quality, he is quite as ready to exploit the natives as the white is to exploit the Negro”. (14)

In the person of Jones, the fate of the American Negro's African past is acted out. Jones particularly during a paroxysm of fear reveals primitive characteristics. The real action is the grievous history of Jones's Negro ancestors. The Greek tragedies act out the fate of ruling families. These were heroic in the sense of belonging to a past legendary age, intermediate between Gods and man. Hence the action of the play used to have a generic and representative eminence. As Raymond Williams observes, “Aristotle himself, from whom these descriptions ultimately derive, was always concerned with the generic action rather than with the isolated hero.” (15)

The play Emperor Jones reads as a play about the racial heritage of the American Negro. O'Neill told the story of the play's origin in an interview printed in the New York world of Nov. 9, 1924. “The idea of Emperor Jones came from an old circus man I knew. This man told me a story current in Hayti concerning the late president Sam. This was to the effect that Sam had said they'd never get him a lead bullet, that he would get himself first with a silver one. This notion about the silver bullet struck me, and I made a note of the story. About six months later, I got the idea of the woods, but I could not see how it could be done on the stage, and I passed it up again. A year elapsed. One day I was reading of the religious feasts in Congo and the uses to which the drum is put there: how it starts at a normal pulse and is slowly intensified until the heart beat of every one present corresponds to the frenzied beat of the drum.... It was the result of my own experience while prospecting for gold in Spanish Honduras.”(16)
Jones, inspire of his typicality retains individual traits which make him convincing to us. He approximates other O'Neillian heroes who rise to material success but he is wiser in his grasp of the situation. Jones had climbed to the peak of success and power but he had never forgotten that fortune is fickle. He had therefore, prepared for the inevitable downfall. By his foresightedness, he proved himself to be a wiser man than any other of O'Neill’s heroes who rose to material success. Andrew Mayo spent eight years in the grain business running away from himself; the poet Marco Polo foolishly chose to be a businessman; Sam Evans was simple minded and immature. Observes, Edwin Engel, “Jones, to be sure, had no dreams, no illusions, no conflicts; he faced the facts of reality squarely, as no other O'Neill Protagonist was to do. It would seem that he deserved a worthier adversary than abject terror... Jones was to be the victim of a psycho-biological force, the primitive past which the hysteria of fear dredges up. For the task of proving that instinct, emotion, necessity, must triumph over man's best laid plans, his free will, his reason; O'Neill employed the concepts of racial memory and of atavism”.(17)

But the fact remains that Emperor Jones is an individual tragedy at the centre of which lies the protagonist Jones. Tragic flaw in his character may be traced to his inordinate ambition and greed for money. The natives finally kill him with the silver bullet made by them by melting coin.

This is symbolic of the tragic sense, the destruction of self by its own pride. Jones dies as he lived with a kind of grandeur. He returns to conscious level of experience and experiences the tragic awareness of his situation. In final analysis the tragedy of Jones perhaps enacts the tragic plight of modern white man who is the victim of greed and power.
O'Neill emphasizes heredity and environment as the great tragic forces which lead man in their grasp. This deterministic philosophy makes Emperor Jones convincing. As Winther observes, “In the end he loses the battle, conquered but not by the physical strength of the natives for they did not even change their position. All they did while Jones circled wildly through the forest was to beat their drums. He was destroyed by the forces of the past.”(18)

THE HAIRY APE

Like Robert Jones, an expullman porter, Yank, the hero of this play is an ordinary stoker in the ship. The play The Hairy Ape seems to be a social tragedy. In this play, a determined attempt is made to adapt tragedy to the habits and thinking of ordinary man. The hero is not marked by a social status like his counterpart in Greek or Elizabethan tragedy. He is an ordinary stoker in the ship who is subjected to inhuman torture. His rank becomes a class and once it does so, a new definition of tragedy becomes inevitable.

Like Brutus Jones who is an ex-pullman porter, Yank is a stoker in the ship and is sure of his physical strength. He thinks that as he moves the engine of the ship, he belongs while the owner of the ship does not have the muscle power to ensure his belonging in a meaningful way. Yank's physical power makes him unnerved in the face of potential danger and he likes to impose his will on the order of the society. He will not surrender his will and consequently will have to face the consequence of his action. O'Neill does not make Yank a nice character. He is rude and speaks a shrill language which the sea-people usually utter to relieve the tension in mind at the sea. Perhaps, for the first time in American drama Yank, the commonest of man who represents the Calibans of Modern Civilization becomes a tragic character. He attains
tragic stature because of his inordinate faith in the superiority of his physical vigor. In fact, he is the power behind the ship. He expresses his strength in the words. “I's de ting in gold dat makes it money; And I'm what makes iron into steel; Steel, dat stands for de whole thing And I'm Steel-Steel-Steel I’m de muscies in Steel, de punch behind it Slaves, hel. We run de whole woiks, All de rich guys dat think dey're Somep'n day aim't nothin' Dey don't belong. But us guys, we’re in de move, we’re at de bottom, de whole ting is us.” (19)

Yank is sure that he and his companions in the stokehole are better than the first class passengers. He understands that labour is the source of all the riches in the world and the basis of his superiority. The earth does not belong to those who possess but to those who work. The parasitical nature of the rich is juxtaposed with the pride of a man who moves the ships and thus moves the world. This is expressed in Yank's great speech in the opening scene of the play. “Hell in de stoke hole? Sure: It takes a man to work in hell. It's me makes it move! I'm at de bottom, get me: Dere sin't nothin' foither. I'm de end: I'm de stert: I start Somep’n and the de woidl moves!” (20)

His self image is destroyed by Mildred, a young woman whose father is the president of Nazareth Steel, chairman of the Board of Directors. Mildred is a specimen of her class, an artificial product of a decadent society. As Doris Falk observes,

“Mildred is a decadent, aimless, artificial product of society, who dabbles in social work to uplift the masses.” (21) She enters the stoke-hole at the bottom of the ship to see how the other half lives. When she sees Yank, she falls back in horror and cries,
“Take me away oh, the filthy beast.”(22) She faints, Paddy, Yank's companion remarks, "Sure, 'It was as if she'd seen a great hairy Ape escaped from the Zoo.”(23)

After this incident, Yank loses his sense of belonging. It seems that Yank has been insulted in the very core of his pride. He can think only of Mildred's image of himself as a brute. The muscular strength which made him feel superior before, now only identifies him with animals. Mildred has stripped away his ideal. It seems to him that he is imprisoned in the cage of the machine.

As Doris Falk observes, “From this point onward, Yank devotes himself to an attempt to escape the prison in which he cannot be content to belong, but every effort to escape only makes him more aware of the strength of the barrier; and the more conscious he becomes of it the more hopeless it is for him to attempt to tear it down and to see himself again as a heroic human being. Ultimately, he abandons the search as futile and surrenders himself to the only self image of which he can be conscious- that is symbolized by the Ape and the cage.” (24)

Yank, the worker is pitted against the inhuman structure of a machine age which plays the role of the antagonist. The Playwright points out the malady of an acquisitive society and shows how in our modern machine made world, the workers are deprived of the sense of harmony and mental well-being. Yank's disintegration the moment he realizes that he does not belong to his machine, that he is a part of the machine itself. This thing is beautifully explained by Winther “Man's work is a necessary part of his personality; it is an extension of his ego, it makes him feel that he is a necessary part of the life of the world in which he lives. Modern industry tends to destroy this psychological counterpart of work, and in so far as it does, it
leaves the worker a nervous, irritable and dissatisfied misfit. Yank was such a worker and at the same time conscious of the thing he had lost. He did not want a job simply because it would be a means to earning a living; he wanted a job in which he could live.” (25)

Increasing dis-integration of the protagonist's consciousness is obviously connected with the emergence of an acquisitive order in America. The antagonist is the reality of the bourgeois society as the playwright saw in twentieth century America. The characters who represent this bourgeois world are the steel king Douglas and his daughter Mildred or the fashionable crowd on Fifth Avenue. Yank is in conflict with his class enemy who has exploited him. Long, his companion awakens in him a sense of modern society divided into hostile classes. Instead of personal vendetta against Mildred, Yank decides to destroy the whole system which puts him and his like to savagery. This webs his tragic destiny and ultimately leads him to defeat and death. Unity of action is provided by Yank's continuous effort to resolve the tragic conflict in his mind set up in his character by Mildred. A Revenge motive visits upon him when he comes across the Church goers who parade the Fifth Avenue scene all in white stiff-collar. This scene presents a social milieu. Eugene M. Waith is of the opinion that the society which the playwright presents in the play with the heiress Mildred Douglas and automation of the Fifth Avenue parade scene has a social meaning. “The Sunday morning crowd on Fifth Avenue in The Hairy Ape were given masks, and so were the crowds, Jewish, Greek, and Roman, in Lazarus Laughed. Thus, in the plays of the mid-twenties O'Neill repeatedly used masks not only to present the divided man but to bring out some relationship between the individual and society or between the individual and the realm of the supernatural, and thus to give the characters a significance beyond themselves”. (26)
It is long who seems to be Yank's lumbering consciousness. Ho takes him out of the stoke-hole and makes him acquainted with the ways of life of the upper class to which Mildred belongs.

The moment he is out of his natural surroundings, the stokehole, Yank becomes an isolated being. The very steel, which lie thought, he himself was, no longer appears to be the source of his strength. It belongs to Mildred's father. The image of his self as a productive power is shaken. He no longer feels integrated with machine which belongs to the owner. He goes to the office of the workers' union and offers his services in bombing the steel mills. He is thrown out as a spy or fool. Yank finds that he is pitted against his own self of ignorance. The knowledge dawns upon him that he does not belong to the rest of mankind. He goes to the gorilla in the cage to shake hands with the caged animal. He feels a kinship with gorilla because like him it is in chains.

He opens the cage but the gorilla does not reciprocate Yank's brotherly feeling. The animal grasps him in a hug and kills him. Yank falls on the ground and perhaps is integrated with the image of himself as society gives him, as the hairy Ape. Playwright comments, And, perhaps, the Hairy Ape at last belongs. (27) This seems to be ironical in the context of Yank's life long search for identity in a hostile society. Through his tragic defeat, continuity of his struggle for identity is affirmed. The search for identity extends beyond the symbolism of Yank's struggle. It remains not only a personal problem but collective and in certain senses a universal problem of mankind. O'Neill explained the meaning of the play in a letter to The New York Herald Tribune of November 16, 1924:
“The Hairy Ape was propaganda in the sense that it was a symbol of man, who has lost his old harmony with nature, the harmony which he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way.... The public saw just the stoker not the symbol, and the symbol makes the play either important or just another play. Yank can't go forward, and so he tries to go back. This is what his shaking hands with the gorilla meant. But he can't go back to belonging either. The gorilla kills him. The subject here is the same ancient one that always was and always will be the one subject for drama, and that is man and his struggle with his own fate. The struggle used to be with the Gods, but is now with himself, his own past, his attempt to belong.” (28)

Hairy Ape then, symbolizes man in the person of Yank. O'Neill busses his work, to a great extent, on human character and not on a type or abstraction. There are critics who feel hesitant to accept Yank as one of human kind. They find a lack of humanity in Yank. Travis Bogard is most critical of Yank as an individual. According to him, “The Hairy Ape deals with what may loosely be called anthropological subject matter, expressed in terms of a search for the origins of life and making reference to atavistic remnants of primitive man appearing in modern society," In the same vein, the critic continues, "O'Neill's Ape is a Neanderthal stoker, controlling the furnace gang in his ship with animalistic power and the confidence that is born of total security in his place.” (29)

The mind of the critic perhaps reflects the mind of many civilized Americans. This is that they do not like to extend their concepts of humanity to the level of Neanderthal stoker. This contradiction in the structure of American society in O'Neill's time is reflected in the scope of
the play. Bogard is not the only one who holds a poor view of O'Neill's stoker hero Yank. Desmond Mac Carthy goes a step further in his denunciation of Yank. He advances the argument that “Symbolically considered, The Hairy Ape is the blind cyclopean Demos that cannot build but only destroy; malformed, powerful — when he stirs fair cities topple — thick-witted, dangerous, and ugly.” (30)

An intellectual idea underlies the conception of the play in the mind of the playwright. It grows not out of a single human situation but from certain deductions made by the dramatist about life and society. O'Neill had first-hand knowledge of the stokers and sailors of the ship. At Jimmy-the-Priests saloon, he struck a friendship with Driscoll, an able Irish sea-man. This man committed suicide by jumping overboard in mid-ocean. It is the why of Driscoll's suicide that gave him the germ of the play. The play is "a dramatic extension of the unpublished short story about ship's stokers written in the summer of 1917. (31) The period coincided with O'Neill's own sense of unbelonging in a hostile, materialistic world. He still was not sure about himself. He wrote to Elizabeth Sergeant that the play was unconscious autobiography. He chose to write about the hairy stoker, victim of modern industry, a man far removed in circumstance, “Miss Sergeant later recorded, “in order to voice through Yank that social rebellion and sense of buffeted frustration which was his philosophic message at the time.”(32)

Yank's inner conflict is objectified and made concrete by means of symbols adapted to the stage. It seems to be a social tragedy in the sense that tragic tension in the mind of the protagonist reflects an outward contradiction of physical forces. This is achieved by means of words, symbols and fantasy. The elements of fantasy are there in the introduction of the cage
which stands as a symbol of social oppression. There is brutishness in Yank's character and his animalistic vigor. But Yank's brutishness and failure must be studied in right perspective. This background is beautifully provided in the description of the stokehole. Present writer fails to agree with the contention of critics like Eleanor Flexner who observe that there is no attempt to explain the social forces responsible for Yank's brutishness and failure. (33) Yank submits himself to the gorilla in the cage. It is like committing suicide. By his death no revolutionary affirmation is announced much to the dissatisfaction of those who desired a positive revolutionary ending of the play. We have crossed a long way from the time of Greek tragedy. O'Neill's Yank represents a part of all men — the unending struggle for attaining a better goal in life. O'Neill supports this view in regard to the dramatic identity of Yank's character. "The individual life is made significant just by the struggle, and the acceptance and assertion of that The Hairy Ape , individual making him what he is, not, as always in the past, making him something not himself. As far as there is any example of that in it is his last gesture when he kills himself. He becomes himself and no other person." (34)

We take pity on Yank, the average little man in our society. Hence the tragedy of Yank is unlike that of Macbeth or Oedipus. The final effect of his tragic defeat is analyzed by Gump. "Yank arouses our pity; despite his crudity, despite the fact that he has been likened to a hairy Ape, he remains very human to the end in his tragic search for his place on earth." (35) The Hairy Ape is a modern tragedy. It does not present man at odds with supernaturally controlled destiny as ancient tragedies do. The forces which Yank contends are the inhuman forces of modern civilization. Clifford Leech observes, "The playwright, in fact, criticized his civilization here and in the Emperor Jones, not because Negroes and sailors ought to have more education,
more comfort, but because Jones was infected by the flashy tricks of the Whiteman a Yank was not seen as a fellow human being by those who profited from his work.” (36)

Tragedy does not end with the destruction of the hero. The tragic experience of Yank belongs to us ourselves. Whatever happens to O'Neill's Yank, man's struggle for belonging will continue in newer forms.

ALL GOD’S CHILLUN GOT WINGS

While Yank, the hero of the play The Hairy Ape is a victim of the inhuman structure of the machine age, the protagonists of All God's Chillun Got Wings Jim and Ella are presented as victims of social inequality. The action of the play is concentrated on the tragic fate of its protagonists. In the context of all O'Neill's plays, All God's Chillun represents psychological studies on a grand scale. Jim Harris, a Negro marries a white girl Ella, his childhood friend against the convention of the society. They have known each other from childhood and consciously decide to marry and thus to override the conventional order of a society which throttles all human values. Now the members of an adult society governed by prejudices, Jim and Ella cannot in all likelihood enjoy the bliss of black and white children playing together. Neither the black people nor the white can support a socially unequal marriage. The fated characters commit themselves to such an action which will prove fatal to the peace of soul. In the existing framework of society, Ella and Jim are denied anything like marital bliss and they cannot be accommodated in class-conscious American society. Jim, America's black son decides not to surrender to the code-bound ethics of a sick society and he suffers the agony of non-
conformism to the existing order. He wages a relentless struggle against a social order which proves stronger and in the process acquires tragic stature.

In defining the play as psychological study, I do not mean that the play is devoid of social significance. As against middle class mentality of the commercial theatre, O'Neill introduces into this play of miscegenation, new aspects of social reality. He begins the play with children on the stage. The scene presents black and white children playing together. This represents an ideal. The children are free from the prejudices of their elders in real situation. The contrast between the ideal situation where human relations are natural and the real situation where the relations are marred by social forces acts as the background of the destructive love-relationship of the protagonists. This contrast is presented at the beginning of the play.

The first act is laid at the intersection of two streets, one occupied by the whites and the other, by the blacks. The sound of laughter without any emotion comes from the white street and a natural, spontaneous laughter comes from the black-quarters. This dichotomy in the background is reflected in the characters and puts a barrier upon the mingling of the children of both the races. The scenes are set in late spring. The reaction of the black to the fertility rites of the spring is unlike that of the whites. The whites are soulless. A soulless city life has stunted the growth of the children who come to play on the streets. There is a contradiction between human desire and the limits set upon it by a stratified society. The children whose early development is retarded turn into gangsters, pimps and whores when they grow up.

Jim incurs the hatred of the black because of his ambition of marrying above his station. Ella becomes a whore being frustrated in life. Only when she is sick and defeated by life, does she
consent to marry him. The marriage is to her a symbol of final degradation. She sees her personal life through the eyes of the society. She as well as Jim is to suffer the public consequences of their marriage. Ella is given to establish her superiority to Jim at all cost. She is to destroy his self confidence so that he becomes unable to pass the law examination for which he has been studying. They are the victims of a false society and are locked in a Strindbergian duel which is destructive to both. Their room, in which they live, becomes a trap to them. O'Neill uses realistic technique to dramatize the awareness of the trap. The room shrinks in size as the play progresses. The ceiling lowers, Congo mask becomes more dominant and threatening. Life goes inward and gradually withdraws from real social life. They are aware that their life depends on a false illusion. The fated individuals are isolated from the outside world and even from themselves. They feel that the peace which they experience in isolation is an illusory peace. It is on based an evasion of both the social and personal issues between them. Their awareness of living in a false world grows and Ella gradually withdraws and isolates herself by a wall of fear and shame. But Jim is not reconciled to this. He convinces Ella that they must” be really free inside and able then to go anywhere and live in peace and equality with ourselves and the world without any guilty, uncomfortable feeling coming up to rile us.”(37) In an effort to live a socially excluded married life they moved into the countryside in France. But at Jim's urging, they return to America. Jim must rise above the rank society has placed him in. He must pass the law Examination & become a lawyer. Passing the law Examination means for Jim passing socially. Jim is a fated man. In Act I, Mickey, the white gangster, tells him to stay where he belongs, (38) but the word belongs is used differently here than in other of O'Neill's plays. It does not mean as with others of O'Neill's protagonists that Jim belongs to some
supernatural force. Jim belongs to his people and has the duty of working, as a lawyer to ameliorate them. Although at one point he says gloomily, *we’re never free except to do what we have to do*, (39) he fights to overcome the handicaps society has placed on him. Like his father, who had progressed from semi-slavery to a respectably prosperous condition, Jim too must rise. He cries to Ella that he needs to become a lawyer, *more than anyone ever needed anything. I need it to live.* (40) Ella at one point tells him that she wants him to be the best lawyer in the country, thereby showing the world that he is the *whitest of the white*. Because of Ella's fear, Jim's mind changes, Hattie (Jim's sister) rightly calls such an ambition traitorous to his race. Passing the bar examination becomes for Jim a way of passing racially. It is as false as drinking chalk to change his color had been, and in the end, neither Jim nor Ella can accept it. Jim fails. Bogard observed, “The sense of shame of being black, shame born bitterly of his love for Ella, brings him into conflict with the play's principle racial symbol, the congo mask presented to them by Hattie who is the interpreter of its symbolism. Ella's first sight of it causes her to recoil as she recognizes in it all the elements of blackness which have terrified her. She recognizes in the mask, the source of her shame- Jim's black heritage. Her attempt to deny the power of the mask by preventing Jim's achievement of his ambitions turns the mask to a sinister force in their lives. Yet it is the symbol of a rich culture, rooted in religion and expressed in works of art. In contrast to the cheap, gaudy furnishings of the room, the mask by virtue of its workmanship and its religious spirit achieves a power that is revengeful, even diabolical... In a demented frenzy at the end of the play, she stabs it and cries, *The Devil's deed. See, it could not live, unless you passed. If you'd passed it would have lived in you.* Thereafter, her triumphant
escape into madness forces Jim to give up his goal and to live with her in the diminishing cell.” (42)

Ella's racial prejudice against the black stands in the way of her love for Jim. Her prejudice lies deep in her people who demand of the Negro that he becomes a slave, Jim Crow. In the symbolism of the play O'Neill drives home the wider ethnic concern. Ella's problems are the problems of the white race. Bogard points out, “Ella’s murder of the mask is symbolic genocide.” (43) Modern Megalopolis has its own contradiction. Racial hatred and imbroglios form the substance of the play. According to Raleigh, “All Gods, for example, covers some sixteen or seventeen years, during which New York passes from the nineteenth into twentieth century, a transition from the organically rhythmic to the mechanically rhythmic.” (44) This transition is aptly demonstrated in the dramatic treatment of the scenes of the play.

In Act I Scene I two streets are seen one is all black and other, all white. The Negros laughs frankly but the white laugh awkwardly and constrainedly. The happy children of scene I laugh and grow up to their tragic adulthood which is the dark and mechanized city life.

Racial prejudice was a phenomenon in 20th century America. Because of his Irish origin O'Neill could have enough insight into racial intolerance. Observes Raleigh “It is often overlooked or forgotten that O'Neill, along with Mark Twain and Faulkner is one of the great writers on the subject of American Negro,—O'Neill is the dramatist of the Negro ghetto of the Northern megalopolis.” (45)

Jim becomes a victim of his racial past, the fate of his African ancestors. Tragedy of Jim is the tragedy of those uprooted people who are divorced from their inheritance. Jim has an African
past. African Negros has a culture of their own which may stand comparison to western culture. Jim is torn loose from it and transplanted to America. He loses his cultural roots and is subjected to an adopted culture. In Act II Scene I the apartment of Jim's mother is described. “On one wall, in a heavy golden frame, is a colored photograph - the portrait of an elderly Negro as one of Napoleon's Marshals in full uniform.” (46) The racial origin of the black creates Jim's deterministic world against which he fights but he is doomed inspire of his glorious struggle to raise his status in a race deterministic world.

O'Neill's hero denies his God that has dispossessed him of his rights in a free & democratic society. He invites his nemesis because he attempts to live above his position in society. It is evident that the roots of Jim's disintegration are nourished by the American experiences of his ancestors. This survival of ancestral habits—servility, the persistence of the doglike devotion of slave for master- predestines him to fail in his quest for equality and justice, a quest which he pursues down a double path. For, he not only continues to study law, he also is to be married to a white woman. Edwin Engel observes, “Outside the church after the marriage ceremony, aware of the unconventionality of the step which he has just taken, conscious too, perhaps, of the fact, that he has challenged his fate, he is on the verge of collapse... The discrepancy between God's promise of equal justice and the impossibility of its fulfillment is the ultimate source of Jim's anguish and the tragic theme of the play.”(47) Jim in his retreat reaches the final acknowledgement of despair. He has met defeat on every side. He has proved incapable of protecting Ella “Shield you from evil and sorrow.” (48) He has failed to pass the examination. He fails to realize on earth the ideals of equality and justice. Doris Falk observes, “Now that Ella is the helpless invalid, the child who needs his protection rather than a threatening alien force, he
accepts her affirmatively as his destiny.” (49) He says, “Forgive me, God, and make me worthy. Now I see your light again. Now I hear your voice, let this fire of burning suffering purify me of selfishness and make me worthy of the child you send me for the woman you take away, To Ella's words, “Don't be old Uncle Jim now. Come and play," Jim replies, “Honey, Honey, I'll play right up to the gates of Heaven with you.” (50) The playwright leads the tragic events to their denouement in an ideal condition. The final scene of the play may be taken as the expression of the ideal Here Ella is depicted as a woman who has been driven insane by the racism of a ruthless society. She instinctively goes back to that game of her childhood when her love for black Jim did not appear criminal to her playmates. But the natural relations of children are beyond the character's grasp when they grow up. Ella can return to them only through madness when she imagines herself as a little girl. But now their lives become impossible, from now on it will always be an adult concern for a hopelessly sick child. (51) God's children got wings; they get happiness though in a different plane of existence. Existing social order provides no other solution. What makes this last scene effective is Jim's belief, at the very moment when all his hopes are frustrated, that he has found happiness that he has got wings. It appears that despair and defeat present itself to him in the guise of victory.

Critics are divided in their opinion about the nature of tragic affirmation in this play. Jim has found his wings. He has found peace. Does it mean that the revelation of order and meaning in the universe comes to him at the end Doris Falk observes, “But Jim is no tragic hero and this is no tragic epiphany or self recognition. It is rather a travesty of the resurrection implied in true tragedy. For the order which Jim temporarily disrupted (his slavery to Ella, his aspiration to
whiteness) is not a real order not inevitable or meaningful outside his own sick mind. The struggle is over and the antagonist, the unconscious mind, is the victor.” (52)

Doris Falk perhaps mistakenly shifts the emphasis from the real sources of Jim's tragedy which are primarily social. Edwin Engel asserts that, “out of the hopeless and horrifying spectacle of the broken mind, out of the psychologically convincing fact of Ella's regression to childhood, O'Neill abstracted the religious experience. Jim has not only consummated his mystical union with God, he has, by implication, recognized the truth of the gospels.” (53)

*All God's Chillun* is not a passion play. To read it as a play of religiosity is to miss the play's sociological background. These outside forces have to a great extent, contributed towards building a tragic gloom in the play. "The real tragedy" O'Neill once explained in discussing the play, “is that the woman could not see their togetherness-the oneness of mankind. She was hemmed in by inhibitions. Ella of the play loved her husband but could not love him as a woman would a man, though she wanted to, because of her background and her inherited racial prejudices... But the Negro question, which, it must be remembered, is not an issue in the play, isn't the only one which can arouse prejudice. We are divided by prejudices, prejudices racial, social, and religious. Tracing it, it all goes back, of course to economic causes.” (54)

The social pressure of a divided society that could not overcome its race prejudice makes Jim a failure and drives Ella to insanity. Winther observes that the problem of Jim Harris, the principal character of *All Gods Chillun* is to belong. It is the story of Yank with a difference. Like Yank, Jim seems to have a means of livelihood. It is not a problem of starvation but of psychological persecution. This persecution leads Jim to think that through marrying a white girl he can win
the position in life that he craves and that is necessary to his happiness. (55) Thus the protagonist Jim is presented as victim of a society where blacks remain outcasts forever. “The playwright denounces the fundamental injustice of the social order that his characters confront and depicts it as the main source of tragedy.” (56) The action of the play therefore is concentrated on the tragic fate of its protagonist Jim. Hence, the play is a psychological study of Jim, American black in the background of the structure of American society.

There are striking similarities between All God’s Chillun and Long Day’s Journey. Ella and Jim are the real names of O’Neill’s parents. The central theme in both the plays is the tension between love and hate. Another theme is the isolation of wife as a result of her socially unequal marriage.

Looking for really tragic significance and characters of statures, Francis Fergusson sees in the evasive finale an extraordinary failure of Mr. O’Neill to master his material. (57) Fergusson’s Aristotelian view is echoed by Carpenter. (58) There is some fluctuation in Nicoll’s opinion. Having denied that All God’s Chillun is a tragedy, he, in the last chapter of his book has written later, convinced perhaps by Krutch that O’Neill’s tragic heroes deserve sympathy (p. 802). Plays by Becket have in the intervening years, taught us that nobility of characters is not a necessary requirement in modern tragedies.

DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS

The Cabot peasants, the protagonists of the play are not the victims of machine-age or social oppression but are the victims of a hard and stony soil and tyrannic God of Puritanism as is identified with the farmland. O’Neill achieves stature in Desire Under the Elms
written in 1924. Now his tragic vision encompasses American past of 1850, the cruel struggle of
Cabot peasants on a remote farm land. The speech of the characters springs from their
rootedness in earth. The language of the people is inarticulate and they rely on gesture and
broken utterances. O'Neill brings to his early plays a vernacular vigor which was certainly new
in the modern theatre, but increasingly he used this to communicate an assumed pattern,
especially in *Desire Under the Elms* and *Strange Interlude*. O'Neill writes in 1917: “The tragedy
of Man is perhaps the only significant thing about him. What I am after is to get an audience
leaving the theatre with an exultant feeling from seeing somebody on the stage facing life,
fighting against the eternal odds not conquering, but perhaps inevitably being conquered. The
individual life is made significant just by the struggle.” (59)

This might be read as the ordinary version of post Renaissance tragedy. O'Neill expresses his
feeling of exultance about tragedy: “The struggle of man to dominate life, to assert and insist
that life has no meaning outside himself where he comes in conflict with life, which he does at
every turn; and his attempt to adopt life to his own needs, in which he does not succeed is what
I mean when I say that Man is the hero.” (60) The isolated persons clash and destroy each
other, not simply because their particular relationships are wrong, but because the
circumstances as such are inevitably against them. The possessive instinct, the institution of
ownership gives rise to abnormality in human relation. Ephraim Cabot, a vigorous, greedy
farmer of seventy five is the symbol of primordial father who governs his grown up sons with an
iron hand. His sons are in rebellion against him and the first part of the play concerns with the
revolt of the Cabot brothers against their tyrannical father Ephraim. Ephraim projects his own
personality into that of his restrictive and tyrannic God of Puritanism. He is a God whom he
identifies with the farm itself. Ephraim has by hard labour won a living from the rocky soil. His God is as hard as stones. He has dedicated his life to this hard and stony God and this God is the reflection of his own ego Ephraim has already dehumanized his sons by enslaving them to the farm, but the most pathetic sacrificial victim was his second wife (mother of Eben, the youngest son), a gentle, sensitive woman, whom he married not for love, but for land. She died overworked and love-starved. Opposing the puritanical forces of the play in whose name love has been desecrated, is the spirit of this woman-herself sacrifice, her longing for beauty, her need of natural sexual love which demands-fulfillment. This second force is symbolized in the Elms that tower over the farmhouse, dominating the entire play. As Doris Falk observes, “The violated maternal spirit works its vengeance through Eben, the son of the wronged woman, and through Abbie, the third wife, now Eben's step mother... Abbie, however, falls in love with Eben. Upon consummation of that love, the maternal ghost is somewhat placated-love has finally had natural sexual expression.” (61) It seems that in O'Neill Oedipus is modified by modern psychology. Original Oedipus situation is transformed into modern Freudian Oedipus. In his essay on *The Pressure of Puritanism in Eugene O'Neill's New England plays*, Frederick Wilkins quotes the playwright's comment that the battle of moral forces in the New England Scene is” what I feel closest to as an artist.” (62) Wilkins discusses this battle in term of opposing characters in Desire. Abbie and Eben are able to free themselves from their sordid surroundings and from the puritan conception of sin in opposition to Cabot who, alone and sterile, remains unaware to the end of the great guilt that is his.” (63)

Cabot's own mind is a battlefield. O'Neill expresses this conflict in his mind symbolically through his relationship to stone and cow. Cabot is attracted to cows. He marries Abbie not for
lechary but the conflict of his youth has once again surfaced. Inspite of his love for stone he 
speaks of cows out of affection. Since his return to New England his life has been loveless. He 
surprises his sons by marrying Abbie. Abbie gives birth to a son, symbol of filial love. Old man 
celebrates his sexuality by dancing. When he discovers the identity of the son that it is Eben's 
child, Cabot resolves to burn the farm and free the cows. He renounces the ethic of work and 
self-denial to which he devoted his life. In freeing the cows he releases his suppressed desire. 
He has no means of going to California. Eben has left him without financial means. Once again 
New England God is in control. Hard God calls him to a life without son, wife. His private battles 
are resolved. Alone, he is surrounded by the wall of stone.

Tragic destiny of the Cabot’s symbolically portrayed by the appearance of the Elm trees which 
cast a baleful glance upon the life of the fated victims. “Two enormous elms are on each side of 
the house. They bend their trailing branches down over the roof. They appear to protect and at 
the same time subdue. There is a sinister maternity in their aspect, a crushing, jealous 
absorption. They have developed from their intimate contact with the life of man in the house 
an appalling humaneness. They brood oppressively over the house.”(64) Along with the Elm 
trees, the stone walls and the wooden gate at the entrance are fused with the action of the play. 
They gather symbolic significance and heighten the tragic effect of the action of the fated 
individuals. The atmosphere of Greek tragedy is there in the background of the play. As 
TimoTiusanean observes, “The play, a rustic tragedy of possessiveness and family hatred, 
depends heavily for its effects on plot, atmosphere, and characterization, on elements that are 
kept with important exceptions, within the limits of realism. The plot is marred by a rash, 
melodramatic solution; an expressive setting and references in the dialogue to supernatural
influence from beyond the grave help to evoke the intended atmosphere; and the play deals with fundamental human passions as Greek tragedy does.” (65) The play is perhaps a pagan affirmation of life. Nietzschean affirmation set in many of O'Neill's plays in the twenties. Ephraim is more a satyr than a saint. He remains away from the farm for two months and returns from his sexual quest with his third wife Abbie. She is the incarnation of fertility and like the Cabots, a part of earth. Elm trees being the symbol of fecundity and maternity, we recognize that Abbie is the Elm. Eben looks upon his new step-mother as dangerous intruder. He hates her. She proceeds carefully and seduces Eben with all her charms. During the process, she falls in love with him. A son is born to them but Ephraim believes it to be his own. But truth is not concealed for long. Ephraim in a mood to take revenge upon his son tells him that Abbie only pretends to love him, to make sure of the property. Eben, in fury, decides to leave home. Abbie's despair is anybody's guess. The irony of the situation turns to be tragic. She fails to convince him that though she earlier seduced him with her charms, now she is in love. She frantically tells him that she loves him but he will not listen. Abbie now must prove at any cost that she is sincere in her love. She strangles the child. Eben is horrified at her act and runs off at once and tells the police of the murder.

Passion sublimates into love in the last scene. Eben confesses that he is an accomplice in the crime and is ready to pay the penalty. They are taken off by the sheriff and his men.

Barrat H. Clark observes, “It is in the scene where Abbie begins to realize that she has precipitated a power she cannot cope with O'Neill proves himself a master. There is little trace here of theatre: A trick would spoil everything. He must push on relentlessly to his conclusion.
What does Abbie do? She cannot give Eben up, and she cannot remain with Ephraim. She has to show by violent means, that she cares nothing for the property. One thing stands between them, the child she therefore kills him.” (66)

Unity of action in the play lies in the character of Abbie. She cannot convince Eben of her love for him without killing the child. This action of infanticide directs the plot towards the tragic end. But the background of the action is the farm. To Ephraim, Abbie incarnates the farm. Ephraim needs a son to ensure his possession of the farm. The farm needs a son, he says to Abbie. Abbie replies” I need a son.”(67) She assures him Ye'll have a son out O'me, I promise ye.”(68) Eben stands as a foil to Ephraim's desire. His mother's ghost asks for revenge. “The psychoanalysts see in the Elms a symbol of maternal spirit and interpret the play in terms of Eben Cabot's struggle between two masks, two conflicting conceptions of his own self—one proud and paternal, the other submissive and maternal.” (69) Eben is soft and earthy. Ephraim cannot tolerate his youngest son. He expresses this to Abbie. When Abbie says that he is like his father, “He's the dead spit n' image of Yew.”Euphraim replies, “He's so thunderin soft-like his Maw,” (70) Eben is soft like his mother; also he is like his father. These parental opposites are at destructive war within him. Both demand expression. Life on the farm land makes his identification with one parent difficult. The struggle is not limited to the mind of the hero. In fact, sometimes there is no hero. “The maternal and paternal forces whose warfare is clearest in one character ultimately sway the destinies of all the characters. The parental images are indifferent Gods who plot the action of the drama as they wager and contend for human lives.” (71) Eben constantly asserts that he is the heir of his mother, his brothers remind him that he is the image of his father. Of course, he reflects the personality of his father Ephraim. He buys his
brothers' share of the farm to be himself the sole owner. He shows his father's greed and desires possession of his father's third wife, including a neighboring prostitute. He, like his father, becomes the victim of lust when he yields to Abbie's passionate embraces. O'Neill's play is pagan and not Christian. Present writer thinks that this consummation of lust perhaps is an act of incest in the background of New England farm and does not fit the scheme of Oedipus story as Timo Tiusanen prescribes. (72) Background of this incest lies partially in bitter hatred between father and son. Dostoevsky's underground man perhaps fits O'Neillian vision. This vision may be traced back to the condition of primal horde in New England farm in 1850. Here the knowledge of Freud perhaps may help in understanding the situation. Oedipus story appears in modern tragic situation under many disguises. Bentley thinks that the modern triangle drama might be one of such disguises for oedipal theme. (73) According to him modern playwrights are not so much obsessed with adultery as with incest. The incest theme shows through Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession as it already had in Ibsen's Ghosts, and Rosmersholm. Such is the conversion of Oedipus story to late nineteenth century problem plays. Problem plays are social and psychological at the same time. O'Neill's play Desire Under the Elms is perhaps a commentary on incest in New England farm in 1850.

Edwin Engel finds that Oedipus complex does not explain the situation fully. "But it is ironical that in freeing himself from his Oedipus complex, he (Eben) should have transferred his love to his step mother." (74)

Even Ephraim declares his grudging admiration for Eben's love. "Having loved not wisely but too well, the lovers must pay a penalty, their crime being infanticide. As for adultery and incest,
these offences they refuse to recognize. As they are led off to jail they stop to kiss, to reaffirm their love, to admire the sunrise. Burning with desire, panting like two animals, Eben and Abbie, once their passion is consummated are converted into self-sacrificing lover and tender, forbearing mistress.” (75)

Abbie and Eben achieve tragic recognition in their love. It is the transformation of the passion of desire into the passion of love. O’Neill says about the plot of the play in a letter to George Jean Nathan. “What I think everyone missed in Desire is the quality in it I set most store by —the attempt to give an epic tinge to New England’s inhibited life —but, to make its inexpressiveness practically expressive, to release it. It’s just that—the poetical vision illuminating even the most sordid and mean blind alleys of life -which I’m convinced is, and is to be my concern and justification as a dramatist.” (76)

Poetic sensibilities of O’Neill are manifest in the setting, New England rustic dance in which Ephraim takes part. He is celebrating the birth of his son (which is really Eben's). Supernaturalism is introduced in the setting of scene three, “grim, repressed room like a tomb in which the family has been interred alive.” (77) Abbie feels the presence of a spirit when she enters the room for the first time. She tells to Eben, “when I first came in—in the dark—they seemed something here.” (78) The element of supernaturalism is closely connected with the central theme of the play, the possession of the farm. Hence the impression is that of realism. Shakespeare knew that there was no ghost in Elsinore but he required the ghosts for his purpose. Those supernatural forces are organically related to the happening at the court of Elsinore, the murder of the kind and the crucial act of avenging the crime. Desire Under the Elms
contains supernaturalism and hence, departs from traditional tragedy. As Chester Clayton Long observes, “Here O'Neill has created a type of play which does not represent anything that Aristotle actually formulated. The plot represents, as does the plot of The Hairy Ape, a new departure in tragic form. It is not an episodic plot, a simple plot, nor a multiple plot, but a complex plot with a single issue: the transformation of the passion of desire into the passion of love.” (79) The play keeps us in suspense. Masquerade continues on the occasion of the celebration of the birth of the child. But both Abbie and Eben rebel against the ceremony as they are denied the public proclamation of their love. Their love destroys them both and it is the tragic irony of the play. Eben cannot share the child with Abbie. He will share death with her and thus recognition comes to him at death. It is unlike a traditional ending of a tragedy. Substantial critics of O'Neill as Engel, Falk and Eric Bentley make their judgment with the moral limits of the traditional Aristotelian framework. Even when Bentley cannot like O'Neill because he can't do a successful stage production, it is quite obvious that his real difficulty lies in his inability to grasp O'Neill's concept of tragedy. Miss Falk's study of the tragic tension is penetrating and profound even when it assumes that O'Neill accepted the moral view of hamartia, which he perhaps did not (80). Perhaps he followed Ibsen and Strindberg, and in following them he violated the doctrine so hallowed by tradition.

In this play, O'Neill begins to see the problem of tragedy in modern drama as opposed to classical and traditional interpretation. In this play he departs from the traditional interpretation of Aristotle, a departure that made it possible for him to develop his later tragedies like Mourning Becomes Electra, Iceman Cometh and Long Day's journey into Night. In this play Desires, tragic hero Emphraim is apart from other men. He seeks identification with
the God, the stone and thus towers above others. Winther observes, “In the character of Ephraim, O'Neill has developed a modern tragedy. The traditional conception of tragic hero 'with his flaw, the idea of purification through suffering, the sense of a divine order based on the punishment of evil and reward for the good —all this is irrelevant to the tragedy of this play. Ephraim has a sense of the ultimate realities, the forces that relate man to the physical world.” (81)

Ephraim's stone God embodies earth spirit. It invites man to life and struggle. There is no escape. Therefore the tragic struggle of Ephraim is heroic.

The fact that the action of *Desire Under the Elms* takes place in the middle of nineteenth century is important for understanding the further evolution of O'Neill's art. The next phase is marked by his return to contemporary subjects. Trying to create modern tragedy, the playwright found that he could synthesize the two forms, the form of individual's tragedy developed successively in the plays of the first group and the form of universal tragedy developed in *Desire Under the Elms*. Under the concept of universal tragedy, the antagonist disappears from the scene. In the play *Desire Under the Elms*, the protagonist's position is shared by three characters Abbie, Eben end Ephraim while the antagonist is not objectified in any of the characters. Environment is at the background. In the plays that follow, the protagonist is a personality in the first place whose character is evolved by means of psychological analysis while the antagonist, the hostile environment is utterly impersonal.
THE GREAT GOD BROWN

With *The Great God Brown* O'Neill introduces mask symbolizing the split in protagonist's consciousness. What produces the disintegration in individual's consciousness lies outside him. Its root cause is social reality over which individual has no power. Under the influence of the concept of Universal tragedy — the antagonist disappears from the plays of this period never to return again. The environment is now presented as a background of the action. If one tries to identify the conflict of this play with the collision between the protagonist and any other character, the tragedy will inevitably lose its scope, and the comprehensive vision of reality will be reduced to a fragmentary view of events. *The Great God Brown* is most likely to become the object of this kind of interpretation. (82)

The conflict of the play appears to be the one between Dion Anthony, the artist and Billy Brown, the businessman who exploits Dion's talent. Yet the playwright's concept is bigger in scope. Although O'Neill uses two types of consciousness to reproduce the central conflict—the nonconformist consciousness of the artist and the conformist middle class mentality of the businessman—the dividing line does not pass between Billy and Dion O'Neill creates the tragedy of the artist in a spiritually sterile society. Here the artist's antagonist is not the pitiful Billy but the society itself. This is emphasized by Dion's use of masks. He can take his mask oil when he is alone or with Cybel, the symbol of mother earth. Nobody else accepts his true self. The environment is the antagonist as in *Emperor Jones* or in *All God's Chillun*. From the point of view of universal tragedy, Billy has lost his identity. This is made explicit at the end of the play. The answer to the policeman's question about the identity of Billy Brown shot dead by him, is
one word Man. “O'Neill wished his play to be regarded as the tragedy of man.” (83) In Desire Under the Elms, the position of the protagonist is shared by three characters, Old Cabot, Eben and Abbie. The Great God Brown deals with two protagonists, Dion Anthony and Billy Brown whose personalities are unified one moment and next become many identities. Great God Brown is Dion's brother. They are foil to each other and, yet they are bound together by the same ties of alienation which mark the relationship between Eugene O'Neill and his elder brother Jamie.

According to O'Neill's biographer Arthur and Gelb, O'Neill began writing the play in 1925 when he was in inward mourning for his family. They have also pointed out that O'Neill conveyed his dismay over his disastrous relationship with his parents, in this play. (84) As in Mourning Becomes Electra and Long Days Journey, the playwright identifies the family as the destructive entity in this play. Raymond Williams observes, “More clearly than Strindberg, O'Neill identified the family as a destructive entity.” (85) A speech in The Great God Brown is characteristic. When a son mourns his father, he says, “What aliens we were to each other', when he lay dead, his face looked so familiar that I wondered where I had met that man before. Only at the second of my conception. After that, we grew hostile with concealed shame.” (86) The emphasis, here, is not only on the inherent hostility and guilt, but also on the fact of recognition in death, when some kind of living contact can at last be made. The primary relationships are a profound alienation. By the end of 1925, O'Neill completed The Great God Brown, which he described as a devastating, crucifying new one. (87) O'Neill’s evaluation was largely accurate. Brown was devastating, crucifying. He did utter the line of mysticism. “This is Daddy's bedtimes secret hi today. Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is Glue.” (88)
Dion is a sensitive artist. Brown is visionless. He is the symbol of materialistic America seeking money and comfort. Bogard observes, "The brothers are cast in the mold of Robert and Andrew Mayo, of Eben and his brother, of Eugene and Jamie O'Neill."(89)

Dion is described as a lean and sensitive man. His fatigue, despair and debauchery are perhaps the qualities associated with O'Neill. Dion Anthony is gifted with artistic sensibility but hides his true self behind a mask of Dionysian sensuality and cynicism. Public faces, he assumes, are opposed to his inner self which is tormented. His wife Margaret loves the masked Dion but cannot tolerate the brooding man when he is unmasked. She is not the sort of woman to see behind the mask and is, therefore, not the worthy refuge tormented Dion seeks. She remains aloof and frightened and hence, Dion puts on his mask and loves by proxy. From very boyhood, Dion is sensitive and artistically given. He was unprotected from the rough weather of a hostile environment. His traumatic experience at pre-school age did condition his entire life. This experience was provided by Brown. Dion confides,

“One day when I was four years old, a boy sneaked up behind when I was drawing a picture in the sand he couldn't draw and hit me on the head with a stick and kicked out my picture and laughed when I cried. It was not what he'd done that made my cry, but him I had loved and trusted him and suddenly the good God was disproved in his person and the evil and injustice of man was born, everyone called me cry baby, so I became silent for life and designed a mask of the bad boy pan in which to live and rebel against that other boy's God and protect myself from his cruelty. And that other boy, secretly he felt ashamed but he could not acknowledge it; so from
that day he instinctively developed into the good boy, the good friend, the good man, William Brown.”(90)

Thus Dion's God died young as it happened in the case of Eugene himself at his impressionable age. Observes Edwin Engel, “Thus at the impressionable age of four, when less sensitive and precocious children innocently believe in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, Dion experienced the sudden shocking awareness that God is to be neither loved nor trusted. Humble, meek and pure in heart the little child discovered not the kingdom of heaven but a world of evil and injustice. Far from inheriting the earth, he was driven by his meekness to wear a mask in self-defense.” (91) He wears thin mask before his parents who reflect the bourgeois culture, before his wife who fails to understand the artist in him and before the entire world. The struggle between his masked appearance and his inward tormented self is self-defeating. He becomes a divided personality and finds it difficult to resolve the conflict in his mind between the forces of paganism and Christianity. The play The Great God Brown represents the predicament of the American creative artist. It appears to be a personal allegory depicting the ordeal of Eugene O'Neill. Dion Anthony is a recurrent type of O'Neill hero — shy, lonely, misunderstood, unhappy in his relationship with his parents and with his wife. “Transformed into an inebriate not only by unfulfilled love but also by a frustrated yearning for religious faith he seeks a solution in pagan naturalism.” (92) Dion resembles faust in his inordinate quest for fulfillment. He is guilty of heresy as Faust was. Like Goethe’s hero, Dion is self-torturing. Faust’s nemesis came upon him because of his inordinate desire to grasp the infinite. Dion was visited by his nemesis because he attempted the recovery of his lost spiritual comfort and protection. O'Neill was interested in Goethe's tragedy as he saw in Faust's quest for infinite knowledge, the quest of
modern man for faith. Besides, Faust’s inordinate ambition for knowledge corresponds to the unbounded capitalistic ambition of the Americans of his time. The play is also concerned with William Brown's materialistic ambition as well as Dion Anthony’s compulsive quest for the recovery of lost spiritual comfort. Dion wears Mephistophelean mask because Mephistopheles and the Faustian Dion are identical. Dion is at odds with himself, with his j wife, with God and his environment, everything about him. He is at odds with every form of materialist culture. He fails to meet the j demands of outer reality. He is unable to paint or to support his j family. His wife Margaret goes to Brown, his boyhood friend and j now a great architect who offers Dion a job as designer in his architectural firm. Dion accepts this job under compulsion. But] this enforced compulsion makes his condition worse. His agony because of maladjustment with his working condition becomes tormenting. Doris Falk observes, “Dion's expensive self, masked as a Satan, is capable still of originality, but the inhibiting pressures of self-hatred and of society have distorted the spontaneous creative process into an artificial, grotesque parody of itself.”(93) He designs a cathedral which he describes to Brown, “And this cathedral is my masterpiece, it will make Brown the most eminent architect in its state of God's country, I put a lot into it—what was left of my life! Ifs vivid blasphemy from sidewalk to the tips of its spires! — but so concealed that the fools will never know. They'll kneel and worship the ironic silenus who tells them the best Good is never to be born (Act II. Scene III)”. (94)

Dion's ambition to build spires towards the infinity, his need to transcend himself becomes his heresy. It appears to be pantheistic heresy of which he is guilty like Faust. His real self is lost. He longs to return to Cybel the mother earth who wears the mask of a prostitute. O'Neill explains the character of Dion; “Dion Anthony, Dionysus and St. Anthony—the creative pagan acceptance
of life, fighting eternal war with the masochistic life denying spirit of Christianity as represented in St. Anthony, the whole struggle resulting in this modern day in mutual exhaustion—creative joy in life for life's sake frustrated, rendered abortive, distorted by morality from Pan into Satain, into a Mephistopheles mocking himself in order to feel alive. Christianity, once heroic in martyrs for its intense faith now pleading weakly for intense belief in anything, even God-head itself “(95)

It appears that O'Neill's discipleship to Nietzsche is evident in this play. In the soul of the protagonist, the playwright portrays the struggle between the principles of Dionysus and Christ. The very name Dion Anthony typifies conflicting forces of Dionysus and St. Anthony. It is symbolic of anti-thetical forces In Act II, Dion dies in self-pity.

“His face is that of an ascetic, a martyr, furrowed by pain and self torture, yet lighted from within by a spiritual calm and human kindliness.“(96) In Cybel, Dion finds motherly kindliness. He places his head in the lap of mother earth, the archetypal image of protective mother. “His kindliness is oriented toward Cybel, a comforting prostitute, however, rather than toward his wife and children. He has been especially enraged at being compelled to work as an assistant to Billy Brown, now a successful architect. And so he passes away, loved by everyone on the stage.” (97)

The Great God Pan is dead and replaced by the bourgeois Christian ideal represented by common-place Brown. It seems that the play is an allegory. The characters represent the conflicting selves, at the same time they reflect the conflicting elements in modern society. The Great God Brawn is concerned with the tragedy of Dion Anthony as well as of William Brown.
The play consists of two distinct cycles of action. Dion destroys himself but leaves to Brown his mask. Brown assumes Dion's mask which immediately starts working upon him. “The poor bourgeois has only taken over the creative self tortures of an artist.” (98) Additionally, he is in real difficulty of concealing the death of the real Dion. He buries Dion's body in his own garden, and hides the fact of Dion's death. Thus putting on Dion's mask, he parades his love to Margaret. This may be read as a symbolic story of Jekyll and Hyde. Unable to bear the tension of maintaining double identity, he attempts to kill the Billy Brown in himself and to be integrated with one person, Dion. Cybel, the earth mother is the only refuge to which he returns. Mask of Brown is left in the office. It looks as the body of Brown. Dion (Brown) is accused of murder and police follows him. In a finale reminiscent of the Dreamy kid, the innocent murderer is shot to death by the police. He is stripped naked except for a loin cloth, the dress of the Emperor Jones in his dying scene. Cybel is present and recites a paean to eternal recurrence”. (99) Uncreative Brown destroys himself. He cannot create as he has no vision. In childhood he destroyed Dion's Sand-Castle. As he can not possess any vision, he will destroy and finally he destroys himself. It seems that Brown is the antagonist, the principle of evil in present society. O'Neill himself provided the explanation as printed in the *New York Evening Post*, Feb. 13, 1926.

“Brown is the visionless demi God of our new materialistic myth—a success—building his life of exterior things, inwardly empty and resource less, an uncreative creature of superficial preordained social grooves, a by- product forced aside into a slack waters by the deep main current of life desire.”(100) From the point of view of universal tragedy, Billy is shown to have lost his Identity. It is the tragedy of man as the artist sees it.
MARCO MILLIONS

Marco Millions is linked with O'Neill's earlier romantic tragedies like Beyond the Horizon and The Fountain in its picaresque and romantic style. O'Neill became interested in the story of Marco's Journey to the exotic East in 1921 while he was doing research on The Fountain. Like O'Neill's romantic dreamers like Andrew Mayo in Beyond the Horizon, Marco is a thirteenth century Venetian journeyman. It appears that the play, like The Great God Brown was written to satirize the American big business. The play was completed in 1925 before the production of The Great God Brown. Contemporary American situation is at the background of this play. The novels of Sinclair Lewis, Main Street (1920) and Babbitt (1922) exerted a potential influence in the shaping of the play. Bogard observes, “Another tangential influence was at work in the novels of Sinclair Lewis, Main Street published in 1920 and Babbit published in 1922, the year before O'Neill began to work on Marco Millions. Lewis's image of a soulless, corrupt, Mercantile America served to define the attitudes of many who to that time had been restless but not to the point of protest... Lewis fed O'Neill's sense of what wrong with America.” (101) At the age of fifteen, when we first meet him Marco is endowed with two selves. He is an ambitious dreamer, poetic lover and a businessman. He is unlike the other soulless merchants of Venice. He writes verses dealing with romantic love. Within three years, before the end of Act one, Marco loses his soul. Raleigh observes, “The great question for O'Neill in determining human worth comes down to whether the individual has soul. It turns out that Marco does have vestigial anyway a soul, atleast according to Kukachin.” (102) To put the other side of Marco, the old Khan remarks that men like Marco (businessman) memories everything and learn nothing, look at everything and see nothing, lust for everything & love nothing. What they have
is shrewd greed. This tension between artist and businessman creates the conflict in Marco. The polarity between Western greed and materialism and classical Chinese wisdom wages a struggle in the play. In Marco the two strains, tragic and comic run side by side and unfolds the tragedy of princess and her grandfather. Tragic and comic are united by kukachin's hopeless love for the unaware Marco. Marco began his career as a normal child with an idealistic attitude towards life. He was romantic in love and sensitive to beauty. But under the training of his father and uncle, he lost the sweetness of his soul. By the time he reaches China, Marco's soul has been destroyed by his acquisitive instinct. Marco's character is seen as the combination of poet and a materialist. Eventually the materialist urges emerge in him. The prostitute who tears his poem early in the play tears his soul. He is a dead man who wanders among the wonders of the world. Along with other merchants he reaches outside the Great Wall of China at the age of eighteen. He exchanges dirty jokes with other merchants and talks with the prostitutes on the basis of business. Materialist west reaches the doors of beautiful and Pagan East. Observes Engel, “Symbol of the soulless west, he enters into China, into the palace of Kublai, the great Khan. Thence forth the play depicts the two extremes of culture... But Marco is to be one conqueror whom they do not absorb. His presence among them is to prove catastrophic. For, during the succeeding fifteen years he brings tragedy to the royal family, turmoil to the nation.”(103)

Marco is American Babbit who appears to be American everyman. In 1924, O'Neill spoke of the United States as the most reactionary country in the world. Certainly it was with this judgment in mind that he designed Marco's programme as Mayor of Yang-Chau. To the appalled Kublai Khan, Marco boasts of the unprecedented amount of taxes he has sweated out of the local
citizens. Just as Marco's plan for taxation is aimed at making the Tlcirricher, so his whole economic philosophy is single mindedly directed towards the same end. When he returns to Venice, he tells blithely of how millions of contented slaves labour unremittingly in the silk industry. Morco's economic programme gives the citizens of Yang-Chau no political liberty. If Marco's rule of Yang-Chau was meant as a parody of the businessman's rule of the United States, then clearly O'Neill considered America no stronghold of political liberty.(104)

O'Neill saw the tragic destiny of imperialism in his time. That the war is the inevitable outcome of the greed of modern capitalism is hinted at by the playwright. Kublai Khan suggested a war, “There is a group of islands whose silk industry is beginning to threaten the supremacy of our own. (He asks.) Lead your gallant million there and see to it your war leaves me in peace.”(105) (Act three scene 1) General Bayon takes up the cause of Chinese empire. “His majesty's benevolence and patience have been exhausted by the continued outrages against our silk nationals perpetrated by unscrupulous Japanese trade pirates. We fight in the cause of moral justice.” (106)

O'Neill's view on the origin of war is that modern state for its commercial purposes manufacturer's war which is the tragic destiny of our age. "Marco Millions then confirms the rejection of capitalism 10 The Hairy Ape giving a fuller expression of its material evils than the earlier play presented. However, Marco Millions like the Hairy Ape is chiefly concerned with the spiritual evils of the modern state. O'Neill's reading of Marx is evident in his analysis of the material evils of the capitalist state, but it was his reading of Nietzsche that determined his most consistent criticism of the state-its spiritual sterility.... Marco Polo, for instance whose one
pursuit in life is the acquisition of money is particularly satirized by O'Neill for his spiritual importance.” (107)

In the same year O'Neill completed the great God Brown. The play presents a similar picture of American businessman in the character of Billy Brown. Brown is inwardly empty and resourceless. Like Marco, Sam Evans, husband of Nina in Strange Interlude, a successful businessman, is without inner resources. Marco seeks wealth and power over others. When he gains wealth, he is weaker and poorer. O'Neill's characters who seek wealth and power eventually become poorer. Perhaps this interpretation of financial, worldly success was behind O'Neill's declaration that United States is the greatest failure. As he explained, we are the greatest example of ‘for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.’ (108)

As to the origin of Marco, the idea was in O'Neill's mind for years. O'Neill's foreword to Marco is worth looking at, “This play," he writes, “is an attempt to render poetic justice to one long famous as a traveller, unjustly world-renowned as a liar, but sadly unrecognized by posterity in his true eminence as a man and citizen —Marco Polo of Venice. The failure to appraise Polo at a fair valuation is his own fault. He dictated the book of his travels but left the traveller out. He was no author.....This has moved me to an indignant crusade in order to white wash the good soul of that maligned Venetian.”(109)

Marco with his father and uncle bow before the throne of the Great Kublai, the old man with white hair. The emperor previously heard of the Polos and he looks at the choice spirit of the age with astonishment. He asks, “But where are the hundred wisemen of the west who were
to dispute with my wise men of the sacred teachings of Lao-Tssu and Confucious and the
Buddha and Christ?”(110)

Marco replies —

“He sent me in their place. He said I’d be worth a million wise men to you.”(111) Kublai
understands the bankruptcy of the Pope and says, “I am afraid your holy Pope is a most unholy
cynic. Could he believe this youth possesses that thing called soul which the west dreams lives
after death — and might reveal it to me?

(Suddenly to Marco) Have you an immortal soul?”(112) Kublai understands the deformity of
Christian civilization. Marco is permitted to develop according to his own desires and
inclinations. This appears to be an error of judgment from which the great Khan would suffer.

After some time, Kublai understands the real implications of western materialism as embodied
in Marco but it is too late. Evil is done. Kublai has after all recognized Marco for what he is—an
evil thing, something deformed. To get entertainment from such a creature is to reveal a
fundamental defect in his own character. But for the sake of the plot, Marco remains in China
for fifteen years. Kublai—a wise man, a stern and efficient ruler—sits quietly by while the
Venetian merchant destroys everything with which he comes in contact. The great Khan
tolerates Marco’s presence in China purposively. To “facilitate O’Neill’s bitter indictment of our
Christian civilization, Kublai functions as an example of that perfection of nature which obtains
among pagans, as detached commentator upon the behavior of the western barbarian, as
eventual victim of the tragic fate which he himself invited.”(113)
During his fifteen year's stay in China, Marco shows no sign of his soul. He shows rather the signs of his acquisitive instinct. He was appointed the Mayor of the city of Yang Chau. He tries to impose his culture upon the people and made the life of the people unbearable. The reforms which he did introduce were highly obnoxious such as removal of taxes upon excess profits, upon luxuries; the levying of taxes upon necessities, making laws against interference with culture, sending to jail anyone who was unhappy. He prohibited all free expressions of opinion as treasonous. Marco announces his supreme contributions to the culture of the East: paper money and cannon. One may conquer the world with these two, safely. Brains are no longer needed. Marco tells the Great Khan about his invention. “You conquer the world with this — (He pats the paper money—rhetorically) You become the bringer of peace an earth and good will to men, and it does not cost you a yen hardly.”(114)

Now he has made his fortune, Marco begs Khan's permission to go home. But the great Khan is still unconverted in the Pope's faith. Kublai reminds him, “you have not yet proved you have an immortal soul, (115) Marco is puzzled. He has no soul. Only the princess Kukachin discovers in him a soul. This exotic young man from the west casts a spell in the mind of young princess. She falsely discovers in him a soul where it is not. Engel points out, “At precisely this point O'Neill's play shifts its emphasis from moral satire to romantic tragedy. It is ironically tragic that Kukachin, the Khan's granddaughter should fall in love with perhaps the most disagreeable character in all of O'Neill's plays.” (116) She is deceived by romantic love and is convinced that Marco has a soul. He is a heroic figure; love may be born in him still by looking at Kukachin's eyes. She asks the favor of the Khan that Marco be allowed to attend her voyage to Persia. Marco attends his job, When Kukachin's ship is attacked by the pirates, he saves the princess.
He tends her night and day as the fever wastes her. All this he does out of his sense of duty not out of love. Princess strives pitifully to arouse love in Marco but it is in vain. She implores him to see into her eyes and find what is there. Marco finds nothing in the eyes of the princess. Call of the millions has blunted all other calls in his nature. “Delivering Kukachin to the Khan of Persia, Marco sails on for Venice. In the following scene Kublai receives a message from the princess announcing that Death Woes her. She is to die for love of a fool.” (117) The great Khan evokes our sympathy as a tragic hero does. He suffers because of his evil fate in the form of Marco Polo. Greedy hypocrisy of the west spells his tragic destiny. Tragic recognition comes upon him as well as upon Kukachin in the last moment of her life that the Venetian traveller has no soul. Kukachin's dead body is returned to her people. The great Khan is enraged when he learns of Kukachin's fate. He seeks to take revenge. But his wise counselor Chu-Yin consoles him. "Then weep old man. Be humble and weep for your child. The old should cherish sorrow.” (118) Death is the final reality. Against Death everything is powerless. “He sobs like a simple old mail, bending and kissing his granddaughter on the forehead — with heart breaking playfulness.” (119)

Tragedy of great Khan perhaps signifies the collapse of an order well integrated in itself. The oriental order of the cosmos is exposed to the disintegrating forces of western civilization which undermines all things beautiful and good in pursuit of profit. O'Neill perhaps tries to highlight the tragic dissolution and collapse of old society. Through Marco, he pictures a world which is tragic because it is without an intelligent social organization. It is stiffing of soul. Czech critic Frank Teatauer observes, “O'Neill's development is a typical example of the deterioration of a great artist's talent during the imperialistic epoch of capitalistic society, and secondly; in
spite of the difficult condition of creating in this period of Monopolistic capitalism, when material success was continuously accompanied by ever deepening doubts and crises in the playwright's soul, O'Neill created several dramas that for all their ideological obscurity are an impressive protest—though only uncontrolled and instinctive one—against the society in which he lived.”(120)

O'Neill's despair for the tragic loss of Marco's soul perhaps reflects his own predicament in a capitalistic structure of society. O'Neill could not have gone beyond his ant capitalistic attitude and could not have arrived at perspective of a socialistic future. Tragedy of Marco therefore expresses O'Neill's despair and concern for humanity and the tragic plight of the artist in an era of conflict between man and capital. Tragedy is a natural result of life. One may distinguish in _Marco Millions_ the contours of bourgeois society with its acquisitive mentality which poisons the protagonist's consciousness and make him thirst for possessions and thus deprives him of the possibility of having genuinely human relations.

**LAZARUS LAUGHED**

_Lazarus Laughed_ is not a conventional tragedy. O'Neill does not intend it to be one. But the play has been ideal in conception and execution. It is not be described as a realistic drama but rather, a myth or morality play'. The title of the play is chosen by O'Neill from the Bible. It appears to be an antipode to the Biblical text. _Lazarus Laughed_ is an anti-thesis to _Jesus Wept_. The action of the play begins at Bethany, just after Lazarus' resurrection. He has risen from the tomb and starts preaching the joyous gospel of the resurrected Christ in contrast to the tragic story of crucified Christ. On his return from the grave, Lazarus sees the immortality of man as

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transcending mortality. He says yes to every aspect of life and laughs impersonally even at
death. O’Neill introduces chorus in the play which echoes Lazarus’ laughter. Lazarus makes
converts and opposes those who fear life in fearing death. He reaches Rome where the mighty
Tiberious rules. Lazarus attempts to convert emperor Tiberious and his heir Caligula. Fortified
by his faith, Lazarus fears nothing. Tiberious is gripped with mortal fear because he sees in the
gospel of Lazarus, the end of his rule. Rule of the mighty depends upon people’s fear. Caligula
scoffs at Lazarus, he ridicules life itself. Tiberious tries to resist Lazarus by killing his followers.
Lazarus’s followers die laughing. They symbolically mock at the mighty emperor who himself is
the victim of fear. But as Barret H. Clark observes, “The materialistic philosophy of the Romans
cannot resist the ecstatic Lazarus, and even though Tiberious orders him killed, the prophet of
the eternal life is triumphant.

At the end, Caligula the scoffer, the degenerate heir of Tiberious, is almost won over to the new
faith, and as the curtain falls he cries out, Fool, Madman, Forgive me, Lazarus. (121)

The play occupies a unique position in O’Neillian. It is concerned with the exposition of a
philosophy of eternal recurrence. O’Neill introduces split personality and a contrast between
the typical and individual. The inner characters, Lazarus, Mirium, Caligula, and Tiberius Pompeia
wear half masks on the upper part of their faces. Lazarus is unmasked. Again these masks are
not “observes Raleigh, meant to depersonalize but to characterize and individualize in an
extraordinarily telling and graphic manner” (122) Lazarus, it seems, is a complete human being
without mask. He is responsible for his choice and fit character for tragedy. The outer
characters are all masked types. Thus O’Neill brings upon the theme of the play a contradiction
between type & individual characters. *Lazarus Laughed* is the tragedy of those who fear death and thus fear life. It is a play dealing with crowds of people. These crowds wear masks and they have group feeling. Thus there are Jews, Greeks and Roman mobs and they wear Jewish mask, Roman mask and Greek mask. It cannot be staged except in the mind’s j theatre. Barret H. Clark observes, “O’Neill calls his work a play for an imaginative theatre, but he might more appropriately have j said an imaginative theatre, there is so much in *Lazarus Laughed* that can only be blunted and vulgarized by taking it in to the playhouse, that he ought to be content to leave it, as Hardy left *The Dynasts*, for production in the theatre of the mind”. (123) The play seems to be a continuation of The Great God Brown. Bogard observes, “With *The Great God Brown* however, O'Neill's art turned decisively away from what it had been in the past, away from man, toward God and toward the statement of a fully formed theology.” (124) Present writer thinks that Lazarus is perhaps in line with Nietzschean Superman, participating in a Dionysian celebration of life. Judeo Christian Gods of the Roman and other groups only express their resentment of Lazarus.

Carl. P. Roily Son Jr. in *Eugene O'Neill - The Drama of self transcendence* reads in the play a polarity between modern man and archaic man. “In the play (Lazarus Laughed) modern man personified by the Romans, is bound by a linear, historical conception of movement from life to death whereas, archaic man, represented by Lazarus and his followers, denies that life and death are separate categories of experience and affirms that both are aspects of one whole cycle”.(125)
Lazarus comes out not to speak of his personal experience. He becomes the cynosure of the gathering who listens to him expressing the collective and elemental expression of mankind. Lazarus resembles Eliades' description of archaic man who participates in the reality of eternal growth that transcends the historical conception of human life as having an irretrievable beginning and an inevitable end. Therefore, the birth of Lazarus does not appear to be a historical event. It is a repetition of cosmic rhythm and renewal.

Lazarus' urge to repeat himself perhaps sums up O'Neill's fixation on repetition. O'Neill rejects the historicism of the Jews in Lazarus who argue whether Lazarus is the Messiah or not, who will come as savior to set things right. The dramatist approves of the Greeks who accept Lazarus as an archetypal figure and exemplary model in their own mythology; the son of man and a God. (126)

In this play O'Neill shows his discipleship to Nietzsche according to whom “man is the highest embodiment of all of life: Nietzsche thinks that through tragedy Greeks sought an affirmative answer to the cruelty of existence.” (127) Nietzsche proposed that man must re-create a justification of life as an aesthetic phenomenon. Greeks sought to plumb the depth of their nature by Dionysian celebration. They created Appolian mask to unite with nature. In the image of Satyr they made the Appolian mask Dionysian celebration arose from a “longing for the primitive and natural, a longing for the reunification with dionysian.” (128) It was through the participants in a Dionysian celebration, with some of the participants representing a satyr chorus that first primitive tragedy was enacted. Thus in the estimation of Nietzsche all the
heroes of Greek tragedy with the exception of Euripides' heroes were the Appolian aspect of mask.

O'Neill \textit{Lazarus Laughed} seems to be a Dionysian tragedy. He sees a new antidote to nihilism to which a Christian is subjected. It is the rebirth for Greek phenomenon, which O'Neill thinks, will comfort modern man in his struggle for existence. He writes of a "theatre that could dare to boast without committing farcical sacrilege—that it is a legitimate descendent of the first theatre that sprang—by virtue of man's imaginative interpretation of life, out of his worship of Dionysus." (129) O'Neill calls his theatre \textit{imaginative theatre}. Lazarus is pitted against the forces of life-denying Christianity. He is a worshipper of pagan God, Dionysus. His affirmation of life is beyond the understanding of Christians. He has fought the battle with himself and has acquired mastery over the fear of death. As the play progresses, he grows younger and younger. He looks like a man of forty in Act one and like a teenager in Act four. But his wife, who is a fearing Christian, looks older and older as the play moves on. Lazarus appears to be the savior of man but he is not Christ but Dionysus. He moves from Judia to ancient Greece and finally to Rome. In the first Act, he looks like a Greek. "His face recalls that of a status of a Divinity of Ancient Greece... in its detached serenity." (130) In the second Act, "His countenance now might well be that of the positive masculine Dionysus, closest to the soil of the Grecian Gods, a son of man, born of a mortal."(131) Edwin A. Engel observes that Lazarus unlike Christ is human born. "Son of woman, not of God, the reborn Lazarus, moves through the life cycle of the typical savior, converting many as he preaches his gospel, only to be put to death at last by unbelievers." (132) In the same breath Engel continues, "Divine though he be, Lazarus shares certain characteristics of O'Neill's mortal heroes—Robert Mayo, Juan, Michael Cope, Dion
Anthony- who, in turn, displayed a kinship with O'Neill himself. Thus Lazarus is an impractical dreamer, inept in the world of affairs” (132) Mortal Lazarus is visionary. He is a dreamer of reality which lies beyond this life. He expounds his philosophy, theme of which is the nonexistence of death. This saying of Yea to life makes the central theme of the play. He will necessarily be a victim of tyrannical Tiberious. He is a martyr; his physical death at the hands of petty high sounding mortals means the glorification of eternal life process. Physical action is replaced by the introduction of chorus, mask and laughter. These masks have collective appeal. “O'Neill requires masks”, Bogard says, "representing seven personality types, following a simplified Jungioan scheme for each of the traditional seven ages of Man.”(133) Lazarus is unmasked. He has nothing to hide. He is above fear and so he laughs unconcerned. This idealization of Lazarus makes him unqualified for the role of a tragic hero. Carpenter observes, “But the weakness of Lazarus Laughed is that this absolutely perfect hero fails to move us. His sorrows and suffering, leave us cold because, if he does not feel pain and fear, neither do we feel these for him, only the natural reactions of other men toward him truly moves us.” (134) Engel is of the view that Lazarus is a hero without a flaw. “In short, Lazarus is a hero without a tragic flaw, one whom fate cannot intimidate, Dramatic action in Lazarus Laughed is unrelieved by revealing the hostility to Lazarus of the unbelievers among the bigoted Jews, the fanatical Christians, the decadent Romans.” (135)

Inspite of his lack of dynamism, Lazarus retains individuality. He enters into Athens in a chariot in Act two, scene one” His countenance now might well be that of the positive masculine Dionysus... Not the coarse, drunken, Dionysus, nor the effeminate God, but Dionysus in his middle period, more comprehensive in his symbolism, the soul of the recurring seasons, of living
and dying as processes in eternal growth.” (136) This masculine Lazarus is an individual character. Even masked chorus retains its individuality. Raleigh observes that the masks put on by the people of the enormous chorus individualize them in a particularly dramatic fashion. Lazarus is fortified by his belief that earthly life is the only reality. His belief is a commentary on the holy Bible. Roman Catholicism glorifies poverty and fear. There is no affirmation of life but affliction of the flesh is extolled. Such kind of pessimism is not congenial to the daunting spirit of the Americans who are the worshippers of Rajas, spirit of mirth and enjoyment. Barret H. Clark observes, “Lazarus laughed is a hymn to life, a cry of triumph shouted, in the faces of those Christians who look upon existence as a vale of tears, the petty egotists who expect an everlasting happiness in heaven because they lack the courage to be content on earth.” (137)

Lazarus preaches the doctrine of eternal recurrence. It is nothing but Dionysian affirmation of life. It is an exhortation. Lazarus says, “Man remains! For man death is not! Man, son of God's laughter, is”. (138) Mircea Eliade observes that O'Neill's conception of eternal recurrence is more primitive than Nietzsche's. It is analogous in some respects to the myths of cyclical birth and renewal—year myths, for instance—by means of which archaic man tried to escape from the horrors of becoming and to maintain or establish a meaningful relationship with being. Myths of this kind, variously embedded in Indian and Greek systems of thought, were interpreted by Greek speculation in such a way, as to land the permanence of being to the evanescence of becoming. Therefore, the conception of the character of Lazarus is non-Christian. Pity, a Christian virtue has no place in the creed of Lazarus. Lazarus represses his natural pity when his father and mother and two sisters are slain in the religious riot. His laugh is a triumphant call to non-believers. “Believe! What if you are a man and men are despicable? Men are also unimportant! Men
pass! like rain into the sea! The sea remains! Man remains!” (139). The philosophical implication of eternal recurrence is demonstrated by bringing thousands of Lazarus' followers to their biological death. Raleigh says about Lazarus' physical death. “At the climax of the play, as Lazarus is being burned alive—i.e. man, the victim of his own cruelty, inevitably goes to his painful death—Lazarus laughs, i.e. the spirit of man rises above bodily pain and corporal limitations.” (140) Lazarus achieves tragic exaltation by remaining true to his ideal. By denying the values of material world, he transmutes defeat into victory. He stands in stature over men who are caught in universal fear. Lazarus is unlike other O'Neillian heroes who are haunted by Freudian and biological past. He is able to get himself rid of universal fear and hence, he acquires stature. It seems that O'Neill's Lazarus is an oriental mystic. O'Neill's fundamental belief in emotion places him in sharp conflict with the dominant beliefs of the modern western world.

To the oriental mind, western emphasis on extreme rationalism and practical action has always seemed naive. Since his early years O'Neill had been attracted to the basic tenets of the East. In Sanskrit literature tragedy is not accepted as a way of feeling. There are tragic elements in Sanskrit drama but no tragedy worth the name. Mortality is taken as a phase in the eternal cycle of existence. O'Neill wishes to reaffirm the spiritual values of tragedy for a nation concerned with material things.

O'Neill believed theatre to be nothing short of a temple. His tragedy injects a kind of religious experience. Lazarus teaches self-control. Carpenter writes. “His (O'Neill's) tragic dramas consciously describe man's struggle to become acquainted with his inner emotions and, ideally
to control them. This inner exploration and this spiritual control were the primary purposes of his tragic writing. This was also the age old purpose of mysticism, which had begun on the slopes of the Himalayas.”(141) O'Neill believed that it was possible for human being to achieve and communicate a sense of grandeur. Lazarus experiences the transformation of the emotion of fear into the belief in love and life. He does neither struggle against an external energy nor does he seek victory over a physical antagonist. He struggles in the sphere of psychology and conquers the fear of death. Lazarus does not define his idea of deathlessness in concrete terms. It is beyond the imagination of superstitious Romans. It is true that extreme nature of mysticism in Lazarus Laughed has limited the appeal of the play to the average audience. The introversion and lack of concern for external reality in the play has resulted in a kind of stagnation in the character from which O'Neill's later plays would suffer. Clifford Leech observes, “Neither in O'Neill's nor in any other tragedies do we get the kind of gospel that for O'Neill, is given its fullest expression in Lazarus. There is nothing consoling in a tragic figure's recognition of the Macrocasm: he simply sees it as the rigid frame of his life, the large scale demonstration of that life, while the act of vision gives the human being a fugitive mastery of his tyrannical controller.”(142)

In the end of the play, Lazarus appears a mystic and a visionary. His face is described shining with inner light. His ideal of the passive acceptance of life is illustrated by his refusal to prevent his wife Mirium from eating the poisoned peach. The scene in which the dying lion licks Lazarus hands reminds one of Buddhist grace. Carpenter observes. "Lazarus dramatizes a modern religious idealism that is Christian in origin, Nietzschean in tragic conception, oriental in mythology but, perhaps closest to the spirit of American transcendentalism. And in modern terms, his gospel
develops the mysticism of Emerson's *Brahma*: Dying we laugh with the infinite: We are the giver and the gift.”(143)

**STRANGE INTERLUDE**

In *Strange Interlude*, O'Neill attempts to write a middle class tragedy. The play marks a triumph of his art, his amazing gift for understanding and laying bare the complexities of human mind. The dramatist is pre-occupied with the sub-conscious in this play and hence, he needs a technique that would bring the normally unexpressed feeling to the point of utterance. He uses soliloquy and asides more feely than any dramatist before him. In this play, O'Neill returns to New England upper class setting. Previously, he dramatized the tragic life of New England farmers of 1850 in *Desire Under the Elms*. These farmers were not touched by conventions of civilized society. They were free of scruples, conflicts and repression, characteristic of town folk. In this play neurosis, a legacy of civilized society enters the plot of the play and spells the tragic destiny of the code-bound people.

The play opens with a long soliloquy by Charles Marsdan. Marsdan, an effeminate writer of popular fiction is in the study of his friend Henry Leeds, New England Professor. His interior monologue serves the purpose of exposition of the materials which will go to shape the future course of action.

We know that Nina Leeds, professor's only child has lost her fiancé Gordon two days before the armistice at the end of World War I. Nina's obsessive love for Gordon which she could not consummate will cause her mental trouble. She will be haunted by her sense of guilt and remorse because of her unconsummated love. Nina's father, Leeds is the symbol of rigid force
of Puritanism which forbids the child to give expression to I'd-libido—the mother. The theme of Nina's obsessive love which will act like hubris in classic tragedy, is introduced in the expository monologue. The same exposition is made in the seven out of nine acts. In Act III there is a variation. Nina reads a letter; Act VIII and IX begin with the beginning of Nina's fateful end.

In Act III her husband dies of heart-attack being over-excited at his son's success in the boat race. Act IX takes Nina's last hope, her son Gordon Jr. from her. She is left to rot with the memory of childhood innocence. Prof. Leed's egotistic desire to keep Nina near him sets the play in motion. He persuades her aviator lover not to marry her until he returns from the war. Gordon is killed in the war and Nina is left with a sense of guilt and regret as she could not consummate her love. She rebels against the authority of her puritanical father and leaves for an army Hospital to nurse the wounded soldiers. She attempts to assuage her sense of guilt by sacrificing her body to wounded soldiers. This she did in defiance of her father's dominance. This kind of promiscuity turns out to be a sordid and masochistic attempt at oblivion of her wound and brings only further complication in her life. The ghost of her dead lover haunts her more and more. As Doris Falk observes."Gordon was Nina's one hope of release. He was a symbol of love, of the escape from the prideful mask of the father, a sort of redeeming Trinity representing the ideal husband, lover, and son. After Gordon's death, this trinity is unattainable in one man, but Nina hopes to find it in three men — Sam, her husband, Ned, her lover, by whom she has her son, and that son, Gordon, the third member of the trinity. Each of these represents an opportunity for Nina to love, but the inexorable power of the father-image turns each love into destructive possessiveness and exploitation." (144)
In *Strange Interlude*, O'Neill uses asides and interior monologues to probe and dramatize the inner self by revealing the inner conflicts of characters. Nina challenges the orderly world of her father, professor of Greek with a New England background of ethics. “The play is an expression of rebellion”, observes Winther, “against a world that lives by absolute standards. These standards are clothed in the vesture of nobility, but when critically examined, prove to be the source of pain and suffering. They lead to death not life.” (145)

Two sets of values make a conflict which is the central theme of the play. A group of characters struggle for a successful orientation of their lives in a world of social and moral chaos. They try to achieve a needed adjustment and in the process violate New England tradition of code-bound ethics. It seems that in the character of Nina and her lovers O'Neill takes tradition to task and sets forth new conception of behavior. The ethics which he defends grows out of the modern world of science and hence, in the ultimate analysis, the discovery of science produces a naturalistic ethics.

With all his understanding, Professor Leeds did not know his own daughter and forced a decision upon her which led to the tragic consequence. In obeying the code-bound law, the professor brought misery upon himself and ruined his daughter’s life.

Psychology rather than symbolization becomes the motivating force in Nina's life. Asides and soliloquies are used no longer as related to the older conventions rather, to the stream of consciousness technique of expressionistic plays of Strindberg and James Joyce's Ulysses. Gassner observes, “In *Strange Interlude*, Nina reveals several facts of her character...one for the daughter another for the wife, a third for the mistress, and a fourth for the mother in Nina —
departmentalizes her character more rigidly....obviously too, the different men who know her in one relationship or another are primarily psychological attributes or stimuli to her different responses as daughter of a jealous father, as wife, as mistress and mother. This is, in fact, the main point in the play.”(146)

Nina Leeds who lost in Gordon the only man who could satisfy all her impulses, cannot find completion in any other man; since Charlie, family friend, Sam Evans, her husband and Darrel, her lover gratify her only partially. She needs them all. Only in her son does she recapture the dead lover Gordon, and he, too must leave her for a life of his own with the girl he loves. By then she is middle aged and her quest for completion in love is brought to rest by sheer emotional exhaustion—the strange interlude of a woman's sexual life has reached its final phase and she can be content with pallid friendship of Charlie, the genteel novelist. The inexorable power of the Father-image works out Nina's destiny. Her father is dead but his voice speaks through Marsden, father substitute who asks her to marry Sam Evans in order to have children. He advances the reasoning that, “When children come, love comes, you know.” (147) Nina marries Sam though she does not love him. She makes a fatal choice and she is responsible for her action. Her action in choosing Sam as her partner is not dictated by her unconscious. We shall see in her crucial decision, human potentiality for tragic grandeur.

To quote Folk, “the tragic reversal-peripetia-occurs when Nina discovers that, unknown to Sam, his family has a long history of hereditary insanity, and Nina should not bear his child. But for Sam's sake as well as her own, she feels she must have a child, and she asks Ned Darrel, a young Doctor to be the father.”(148)
The subconscious seems to play the role of myth in our lives. O'Neill's characters are responsible for the choice they make. We cannot say that in her sub-conscious mind Nina knew her fate that would accompany her in selecting Sam as her husband. She is free in the making of her choice. Nina’s action is linked with the central theme of the play and grows out of the initial situation. “Aristotle objected to the use of a deus ex machine because he believed that the action of a tragedy should develop organically out of the initial situation.” (149) Aristotle does not invoke the whims of God but probability or necessity as characterizing the way of linking incidents of the play. Nina and Darrel are led by the laws of probability or necessity in the act of begetting a son leads them towards a tragic destiny.

In a letter written in 1925, O'Neill writes “The one eternal tragedy of man in his glorious, self-destructive struggle to make the Force express him instead of being, as an animal is, an infinitesimal incident in its expression. And my proud conviction is that this is the only subject worth writing about and that it is possible and can be to develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols in the theatre which may, to some degree, bring home to members of a modern audience their ennobling identity with the tragic figures on the stage.” (150) O'Neill's characters attain stature when Nina and Darrel are motivated by something outside themselves. Nina refuses to admit any personal relationship with Darrel. She calls him Doctor rather than Ned. Darrel assumes a cold emotionless professional voice; his face is like a mask of a Doctor. He refers her as Sam's wife. Nina thinks ‘This Doctor is nothing to me but a healthy male. Darrel says, 'Sam's wife should find a healthy father for Sam's child at once.’ (151)
Darrel is to expiate for his meddling in the life of Nina. It is human error which will carry its consequence. Edwin Engel observes, “O'Neill did not intend to make of Strange Interlude a Freudian tract. Careful to avoid commitments in that regard, he made Darrel a neurologist instead of a psychoanalyst.”(152) A scientific detachment appears to override the element of passion which draws Nina and Darrel together to consummate their passion. Before the son is born, Darrel and Nina fall in love. She even plans to desert Sam even though she knows that such an act would kill him. Ned Darrel leaves on a long journey never to return for years. Edwin Engel observes that within the framework of the larger drama, Darrel enacts his personal tragedy, where in the protagonist; a foolish and proud man of science is defeated by an ironical fate which makes love his nemesis. Having deluded himself into thinking that he was engaging in a scientific experiment when he sired Nina's child, it soon becomes abundantly evident that love is not an overwhelming and mysterious power against which neither science nor the human will can prevail. When love comes to them they enjoy their wonderful afternoons of happiness and in their ecstasy they are ready to abandon family and career. Struggling against his love, Darrel fled to Europe from thence he returned pale, then nervous, unhealthy. Like Antony, the triple pillar of the world he has been transformed into a strumpet's fool. Eleven years later, the lovers sit and hear each other groan, for those interludes of passion occur so very rarely now. The life work of Darrel who might have been the world's greatest neurologist is to rust nicely.

After eleven years, passion fades and the revelation produces in Nina pathos of dis-enchantment. “For if custom cannot stale Nina's infinite variety, it is certain that age can wither her. Accordingly she sadly broods over the fact that she is now thirty five.”(153) Her son
Gordon Jr. is born and Nina turns to him for love and affection. She tries to dominate the life of her son. As a young man, he is engaged with a girl and wishes to marry her. Nina becomes jealous of her son's sweet heart and tries to prevent the marriage. Darrel warns her “You've got to give up owning people, meddling in their lives as if you were God and had created them”. (154) At the end of the play Gordon flies off and Nina looks up at the sky. Her son, her last refuge leaves her. It seems that her having a son was meaningless. The son could not give her happiness. Sons are like fathers. Like Ella in All God's Chillun, Nina reverts to childhood. She finds no comforting belief. “Our Lives”, she concludes, “are merely strange dark interludes in the electrical display of God, the father” (155). Disbelief in God, the father is the primary source of her anguish. She wanted to believe in any God but neither science nor animism nor the gospels of Christianity could give her any satisfying faith. It is the agony resulting from her loss of faith in a world emptied of all meaning which Nina shares with other O'Neillian heroes. “The mistake began”, she says, "When God was created in a male image, of course, women would see Him that way, but man should have been gentleman enough, remembering their mothers, to make God a woman". (156) She drifts into the dreamy state of the child, a state of wish fulfillment. Uncle Marshden serves as her Father-substitute. In desolation, she goes to Marshden and exclaims, “Oh, God, Charlie, I want to believe in something. I want to believe so I can feel, I want to feel that he is dead- my father”. (157) In the last Act, her frustration is all the more. Sitting by the side of Marshden she says, “Will you let me rot away in peace? (158) She comes to term with the Father-God who was created in male image. The play ends with Nina’s resignation. Engel observes, “In so doing she shall be wedded to her father, to death.” (158)
Nina depends on her men to see herself and her total situation. Clifford Leech maintains that Nina Leeds and Edmund Derrel and Charles Marsden achieve, from time to time, their glimpses, but that is much more than nothing: it validates their claim to be tragic. These characters may be seen both as individuals and as constituting a group. What is important is that O'Neill is not here concerned with the solitary tragic figure. He sees that, in a modern tragedy at least, it is by virtue of relationships to one another that man becomes most fully aware and self-aware, most apprehensive of a cosmic pattern. Both in Strange Interlude and Mourning Becomes Electra, it is the inter-play of the group, the perception which each member of the group achieves through his consciousness in the first instance of the group itself that gives both the sense of generality and the sense of grandeur. Nina depends on her man as Lavina depends on her family, for the power to see herself and the total situation. Nina's quest for happiness eludes her as it eludes Darrel. There is disillusionment and exhaustion. She will endure her fate in the company of old Marsden who is beyond any desire. Marsden has become wiser like Ned Darrel. “They are in love with evening; he (Marsden) and Nina will be married in the hour before sunset when the earth dreams in after thoughts.”(159) Nina's character has attracted attention of Barret H.Clark, O'Neill's biographer. He comments. “She is a close relation of Cybel in The Great God Brown; she is mother, wife, mistress, adulteress, materialist, and idealist. Into her are woven strands from the lives of many men; of Gordon; of the patient mother-ridden Charle Marsden; of Sam, her husband; of Edmund Darrel, her lover; and later of her son Gordon. For this woman no one man in enough. This epic creature endowed with an inordinate thirst for life, takes on the proportions of a superwoman.”(160) Nina remains the central character, the unifying principle in the context of the play. Other
characters revolve round her and find meaning in relation to her. Like the fog, in the early sea plays, she is the destiny of her people. Bogard observes, “Nina’s speech about her four men, Darrel, Sam, Marsden and her unborn child forming one complete, whole male desire suggests that the men in Strange Interlude are really partial aspects of a whole male personality and that O'Neill has divided that being, as he later split a single personality into two. She is patterned after the Strindbergian destroyer but O'Neill casts over her a veil of sympathy which removes the sharpness and the sting.” (161) She is the source of life to her men. At the same time, she has no life beyond her men. She appears to be the symbol of earth mother and is subjected to sufferings and tribulations flesh is heir to. Marsden, the romantic bachelor calls her Car Nina. She is the Anna Karanina to romantic Marsden who spends his sex-life among the phantoms. Her own description of her relationship at the end of Act VI in revealing. “My three men—I feel their desires converge in me to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb.” (162) She makes the fatal choice when she invites Darrel to become the father of her son. She herself is responsible for the Nemesis which overtakes her. In the end she asks for no forgiveness. She will rot in peace to complete the pattern of her existence.

The characters of Strange Interlude are the victims of circumstances over which they have no control. They move in a world of dark forces which govern their destinies. They are helpless and impotent before the workings of these inscrutable forces. But this does not mean that O'Neill's characters are pathetic figures and not heroic. They attend significance as they struggle against the inevitable. Darrel, Nina and Marsden are all rebels against the forces which threaten to destroy their hope and happiness. It is their defiant struggle against the forces of life that lends dignity to their lives and it is at this point that they become universal.
MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

This play is a retelling of the tragic story of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Orestes and Electra. It is not a Greek play of Fate. O'Neill conceives the doctrine of fate in terms of modern psychoanalysis. He says that, the theatre “Should give us what the church no longer gives us—a meaning. In brief, it should return to the spirit of Greek grandeur. And if we have no Gods, or heroes to portray we have the sub-conscious, the mother of all Gods and Heroes.” (163)

In his detailed working notes and Extracts from a fragmentary work diary, O’Neill outlines his purpose and method in Mourning Becomes Electra, emphasizing repeatedly his equation of inner complexes with destiny. They are “a modern tragic interpretations of classic Fate without benefit of Gods- for it (the play) must before everything, remain a modern psychological play-fate springing out of the family.” (164)

Family fate of New England Mannons is ancestral. This is set in motion before the opening of the play by Abe Mannon, father of Ezra Mannon (Agamemnon). Abe's younger brother David was involved in love with a French-Canadian Governess, Marie Branton resulting in her pregnancy. David married her and Abe drove them out of the house to keep up the prestige of the family. In Lavinia's words, Abe “Put them both out of the house and then after-wards tore it down and built this one because he would not live where his brother had disgraced the family”. (165) Adam Brant is the child of Mary and David. He is the Aegisthus of the play. He cherishes a grudge against the Mannon line. Adam did not forgive his father Dave who left his mother and went out and hanged himself. Dying of sickness and starvation while Adam was away at sea, Marie wrote to Ezra asking for a loan. He never answered her. Adam came too late
and his mother died in his arms. Ezra is as guilty of the murder of Adam's mother as his father. When Adam first met Christine, mother of Lavinia, he hated her for being Ezra's wife. "I thought, by God, I'll take her away from him and that'll be part of my revenge. And out of that hatred my love came". (166) Doris Falk observes, "The House of Mannon, therefore, was built upon out-raged pride and Puritanism, leading inevitably to death for the Mannon line. For them pride is the source of death, and love is the source of life. Existence for the Mannons is a life-in-death from which love, represented by Marie Brantome, has been shut out. "This living death is reflected in the faces of the family, life likes death masks and in their home, a sepulcher, the whited one of the Bible - Pagan temple front a stuck like a mask on Puritan gray ugliness." (Home Coming Act-1) (167)

Father Ezra embodies the pride of the family which makes their fate. Pride and Puritanism form the destiny of Mannon people. Because of his ingrown egotism, Ezra does not at the beginning of the play, know how to love his wife. Desire for her takes the form of brutal lust. A considerable change comes upon the character of this lovely Mannon in the battle-field. He knew the comradeship of people and became aware of the significance of love and life. "Death made me think of life. Before that life had only made me think of death."(168)

Ezra is a changed man when he returns from war to his wife. He longs for love. But it is too late for Ezra. His wife has by this time, thrown her lot with Adam. She does not belong to him anymore. Ezra fails to establish love relationship with his wife. Mannons grow and change but their concern is limited. They are concerned with nothing but themselves. Ezra discovers too late that he must give up his empty pride for love. But the crisis comes at the end of second Act
of *Home Coming*. Christine is in love with Adam, and the paramours decide to poison Ezra. During Ezra's long absence, Christine found a release of her passion and has fallen in love with Adam. She seduces her husband in bed. When Ezra is in the throes of heart-attack, she withholds the medicine and gives him poison. To the outside world, Ezra appears to have died from natural causes but Lavinia discovers her mother's guilt. She is driven by Mannon sense of justice and plans her revenge. She is also dictated by her love for father and her frustrated love for Adam. At her instigation, Orin murders Adam, her mother's love. Christine out of regret and remorse takes her own life. Father's ghost in Lavinia is appeased. As Engel observes, "To develop a tragic expression in terms of transfigured modern values and symbols, O'Neill had first to discover, if not to create, such values and symbols. Having passed beyond traditional good and evil, he had now to establish a reasonably fixed moral position if he was to fulfill his purpose of writing an approximation of Greek tragedy which depended for its effect upon the concept of crime and retribution, upon the equivalent of the Puritan conviction of man born to sin and punishment. To be sure, he had always been acutely conscious of the Force behind — (Fate, God, mystery certainly), but it swept the protagonist to his doom irrespective of moral choice or tragic flaw." (169)

The calamities that haunt the house of Mannons stem from a central primal offence, the crime against Marie Brantome. The sons, who are made in the image of the father, not only suffer for his sin but repeat it. In this way, O'Neill conveyed a sense of Fate, of family guilt.

The play leaves the children guilty of supreme crime, shedding of kindred blood in Adam Brant and Christine. Fear and pity are aroused for Lavinia and Orin and suspense at what the
punishment will lie. Orin is directly guilty of the crime of shedding kindred blood since he himself shot Adam. Suffering is the severest kind of Nemesis which overtakes the Mannons. Orin is full of remorse for his deed because by his action he instigated his mother to kill herself. As the play begins, Orin's character seems quite similar to his father's character, and Lavinia's seems similar to her mother's. During the months they have to adjust and think about the significance of their past and their present state, their characters undergo a complete alteration. The change is so complete that Orin indulges in the characteristic behavior of his mother seeking release for natural instincts in any way available, in an incestuous relationship with his sister. Lavinia changes radically from the libidinous creature she is at the beginning of the play and pointedly rejects the possibility of sexual release with Peter as soon as she realizes finally that she has desired Brant all along. Orin seeks peace from suffering in suicide as did his mother. Lavinia does not try to escape but faces her difficulty and her guilt as the last Mannon that ever lived.

In working out the behavior of Orin, O'Neill does not rely upon Fate, Furies or God. He finds the cause elsewhere. For the supernatural powers, he substitutes puritan conviction of man born of sin and punishment. This is followed up in the development of Abe Mannon by using sexual frustration by his puritan sense of guilt turning love to lust. For the awful sense of fate in the Greek drama, O'Neill substitutes psychological fate. Abe Mannon destroyed his house and built a new one because his brother ran away with Mary Brantome, a servant girl in the house. Love, jealousy, hate and puritan conscience are the factors that led to the tragic end of Mannon family. When Abe Mannon brought Marie into his house as a servant, he started a chain of events that moved with a certainty to the destruction of the Mannon line. O'Neill has given the
family history a powerful motivation by revealing the social complex of New England puritan heritage which nurtures the series of events.

One of the questions O'Neill asked himself when he began searching for a modern manner of treating the ancient Electra story is published in his notes. “Is it possible to get modern psychological approximation of Greek sense of fate into such a play which an intelligent audience of today, possessed by no belief in gods or supernatural retribution could accept and be moved by?” (170)

It is by an adherence to determinism that O'Neill tries to achieve a tragic parallel to the Greek Electra theme. He does not pass the responsibility for the behavior of his characters upon any God. There remains sufficient human reason for the behaviour of his characters. This he has done by accounting for the family's past history, following along the deterministic practice of Ibsen where there is a fine parallel in Rosmersholm. When the play is over, all the characters are accounted for. Every action is explained in relation to social, physical and psychological forces that dominate the lives of fated characters. Contemporary transformation of O'Neill’s characters has enriched them with vitality. “His (O'Neill's) portrayal of the members of the Mannon family finds confirmation in the most recent psychoanalytic concepts on the process of Mourning. Only in his created characters does he approximate exquisite psycho-analytic elaboration of personality of structure.” (171)

Tradition of New England Puritanism is the antagonist which shapes the destiny of Mannons. Repressions of Puritanism are recalled through the presence of towns-people, the images of Mannon ancestors whose portraits hang in the study. Mannons seek release from these
repressions in their longing for the freedom of the Blessed islands. After the murder of Christine, Lavinia assumes the characteristics of her mother, Orin, those of his father. Together they make a journey to the East and stop at South Sea Islands. Lavinia finds a chance to release her pent-up passion in the company of innocent people of the island who know no puritan concept of sin. Orin disapproves his sister's adventure with a puritanic view. Mannons have narcissistic inability to love any but another Mannon. Orin eventually falls in love with his sister. The moment Lavinia returns to Mannon house, she becomes stiff and hard in her movement. Orin replaces his father and seeks to consummate his love for Lavinia, his sister and mother. She is repelled by Orin as Christine was by Ezra. Lavinia wishes for the death of Orin Mannon and sees that it is fulfilled. Hazel speaks of God's forgiving Lavinia, she replies, and “I'm not asking God or anybody for forgiveness. I forgive myself.” (172) she will pay for the sins of Mannons with her own life. She would return to the living death which is the Mannon fate. She tells Seth the gardener “Don't be afraid.... I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself”. (173) She pivots sharply on her heel and marches woodenly into the house closing the door behind her. Edwin Engel observes,”Lavinia, the unmated, is the last Mannon, and she is determined, to pay out the family curse by retiring into the ancestral home Retribution like justice, is not what it seems. Lavinia says, I know they (the Mannons) will see to it I live for a long time! It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born! Puritans that they are, the willful, aberrant Mannons deny themselves the consummation for which they yearn: reunion with God the mother, embodiment of death-birth-peace. Life is the curse which Lavinia is resolved to pay out; living is its expiation, death, its redemption”. (174) Lavinia begins paying out the long years of self punishment out of her free will. Ghosts and Mourning Becomes Electra have
certain aspects in common. Mrs. Alving of *Ghosts* sees the character of her husband being replaced in her son. In Mourning, the character of Ezra and Christine are repeated in Orin and Lavinia. But in the final analysis Lavinia plays the role of her father, while Orin plays the role of his mother. “The ending of the trilogy observes Clifford Leech is perhaps the most impressive ending in modern drama.” (175) Lavinia goes into the house, and there identifies herself with Mannon dead. Unlike Aeschylus, O’Neill does not celebrate the establishment of an Athenian court which restores the broken order and a higher notion of justice to society. He sees rather a cycle of destruction as it takes place in *Hamlet* which is not complete until the last Mannon; the clearest eyed of them all does justice on herself. “And Lavinia asks for no forgiveness, she sees that would be irrelevant, meaningless: she completes the pattern of her life, and of the life of the Mannons by cutting herself off from the world while continuing to endure her own consciousness. The tragic figure may, at the end of a tragedy, live or die: whichever of these is appointed for him, he knows nothing of expiation, he merely sees. In her ruthlessness and dominance Lavinia has some resemblance to Nina of *Strange Interlude*, but she is a character far more fully tragic than her predecessor. she has to be alone, and as ruthless with herself as she has been with others.” (176)

O’Neill’s play does not end in death or destruction. Aeschylus had solved his problem of Nemesis with the aid of divine wisdom. O’Neill solves his problems in a different manner. Individuals in his play participate in the action willfully and the individual character is altered by the action as such. The characters cannot reintegrate with the familial order. Divine order or social frameworks are over-ridden by the people in this play. Only order is left that is the domain of individual character. Character appears to be the destiny. It seems that O’Neill is closely echoing
Shakespeare whose characters seem to make their own destinies. There is no extraterrestrial solution to the problems of life. Life creates its own solution. Present writer fails to agree with Francis Fergusson who says that no solution is possible to the dilemma O'Neill casts in his action. “However no modern drama embodies values comparable to those of Greek tragedy, for the reason that there is no such publicly established value to appeal to.” (177) Eric Bentley criticizes O'Neill's ambition to write a classic tragedy approximating modern values and symbols. “Then there is his desire to re-create ancient tragedy. Though no one is more conscious than he that America is not an Athens, the Greek dream—the desire to be an Aeschylus — has been his nightmare.... Only in *Mourning Becomes Electra* are the characters over life size. Unhappily this is not because of the size of their bones but as it were, by inflation with gas, cultural and psychological”. (178) Present writer thinks that in this play O'Neill appears to change his stress from metaphysical problems to ethical ones. Lavinia is the chief offender against the order of the family. In *Strange Interlude*, there is emphasis on sexual behaviour of Nina but no stress is there upon her ethical dilemma. Playwright does not attach any blame to Nina for her promiscuity or adultery. *Mourning Becomes Electra* is different and embodies ethical concern. Lavinia discovers the just basis for action inherent in her moral nature. She relinquishes her potential spouse Peter and accepts her destiny with grace. She will atone for the sins of Mannon line and thus inflicts on her self-punishment. Nemesis visited on her is the most painful of all. Barret Clark uses the concept of Fate when he speaks of Nemesis in the following line. “Modern audiences”, says O'Neill, “have no general religious basis, no common fund of tradition to which they may refer the greatest problems with which we are all concerned. The closest equivalent is our yet infant science of psychology, fate... is what happens to human beings because of what they are, not
what some God tells them to be, and it is the business of the tragic dramatist to show how human destiny resides in the individual, the family, the race”. (179)

The trilogy questions the ethics of sick aristocratic society. The puritan God of repression is incapable of proper function. The new God like Dynamo’s electric generator fails to hold on. Conventional towns people and the society of ordinary citizens like Peter and Hazel are conformist and ignorant of how to bring out the desirable change in society. A sterile vacuum exists. O'Neill's tragedy is built around this sense of gloom and chaos. Jordan Y. Miller observes, “The puritan God of wrath was incapable of proper function or of alteration. A new God, also one of destruction, as in Dynamo's electric generator, seemed the only one left. But it, too, failed. What was left? A living with the past ... Outside was ignorant towns people, Peters and Hazels, conventional, conforming, unchanging. Their social leaders were destroyed. Who would replace them was yet unknown. A sterile vacuum existed”. (180)

Shakespearean tragedies are built around a conflict resulting from the dissolution of feudal order and the rise of the acquisitive middle class. O'Neill's tragedy depicts the decay of New England aristocracy, the older Mannons were hard bitten merchants, acquisitive and possessive, and this tenacity also appears in their progeny's libido. The play gives out remarkably deeply rooted account of criminal passion. Therein also it differs from mere melodrama even as Hamlet departs from that classification despite many violent deaths. The playwright in this play is a critic of the life — denying puritanism of New England which he must have found hostile both as a catholic and as an artist. O'Neill touches upon a major theme through his exhibition of the consequence of Mannon fixation on repression. Once again the tragedy is with O'Neill, a natural result of life itself, in the treatment of which one may see
clearly the outlines of bourgeois society with its acquisitive mentality, which poisons the protagonists, consciousness and thus deprives them of the possibility of having genuinely human relations. This interpretation of life as the source of tragedy is what brings O'Neill's tragedy close to the classical Greek tragedy. (181)

*Mourning Becomes Electra* has a greater resemblance to the form of universal tragedy. At the same time, there is a substantial difference in the delineation of the protagonists and the background figures. In order to project the complex egos of the protagonists, the playwright attempts to create complex effects by a combination of several techniques like the use of masks, the stream of consciousness, etc.
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