Chapter VI
CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters, it was seen that the dominant theme in the works of O'Neill is his concern for humanity's present and future social and spiritual well-being and that he unceasingly explores the eternally tragic predicament of man struggling for some understanding and some justification of himself in a universe always mysterious and often seemingly inimical. He has tried persistently if not quite consistently towards the creation or recreation of tragedy in the classical sense—towards a concern, less with the relation of man to man than with that of man to God. O'Neill owes his significance less to any absolute intellectual originality than to the forcefulness with which he has explored in dramatic terms "the sickness of today." O'Neill's theory of man as a social being is that he is both free and determined. On the one hand, he envisages man as the master of his own fate; on the other hand man is delineated as the plaything of various outside forces beyond his control, both naturalistic and biological. It leads up to the idea that conflict is within and without, that it is both man's own making and imposed on him, and reaches the conclusion that the catharsis it effects is not only of pity and fear as in classical tragedy, but also of the purge of the base emotions in man, in order to rehabilitate him in a spiritual order.

In all his plays, O'Neill has attempted to state in currently valid terms his conception of man's position in the universe and his relation to the external forces of Nature and to find the ways of resolving the problems of
existence as far as possible or to transcend the insoluble issues of existence troubling humanity. He intended his plays to be a means whereby disturbingly unresolved paradoxes like the discrepancy between the actual and the ideal are sought to be clarified. Irony emanates from these irreconcilable opposites. Man is unable to answer the conundrums of the universe and this inability finds expression in an ironic posture which gives shape and life to his dramas. He always emphasized the ontological aspects in the themes of his plays.

O'Neill's plays have tremendous human significance inasmuch as they deal with the most fundamental problem of human survival in an indifferent if not an altogether inhospitable or antagonistic universe. With a sharp dramatic insight O'Neill saw how man-made institutions had added to the miseries of an already troubled humanity. Man's existential groan had acquired an added piquancy by virtue of his socio-economic exploitation. The playwright also could come to realize the truth about the imperfections of human nature. He felt that no amount of social reform could ameliorate the human condition unless something could be done to improve human nature itself. He saw so much of selfishness, greed, envy and brutality in the world that he had to conclude that man's greatest need today was a spiritual regeneration. On analysing the socio-economic aspects in his plays O'Neill is found to be a supporter of anarchism who advocates the abolition of all institutions and of private property, which might enable man to outgrow spiritually his greed and lust for wealth.

O'Neill's probing into the reality of the human situation led him to a dissection of man's metaphysical and ontological status which created an
impression for a while that the playwright had become a mystic. At a time when the entire world is reeling under the terrible impact of anomie, corruption and crisis of values and everything seems to be falling to pieces, O'Neill's plays would provide a valuable insight into the nature of the present malaise and its possible solution. Nobody can lose sight of the fact that O'Neill's broodings on life's mysteriousness form a meaningful configuration with his views on man's social and material existence.

O'Neill's basic concern as a playwright had been with the need to find the meaning of human existence in spite of man's scepticism, his feeling of alienation, and his struggle against various negative forces and disvalues. In his plays, he tried to discover the causes that erected barriers between man and his self, between man and human society and between man and the universe. Man encountered "nothingness" at every step and a malignant shadow of emptiness hovered over him as he set out to discover the meaning of life. The hostile aspect of the universe made him cringe in terror and he sought shelter in human comradeship. He found that one of the basic causes of human tragedy was the communication gap in human relationships. Thus, the main insurmountable problem for the artist was to seek a universal language of communication which could make people understand each other, thereby reducing the tensions caused by their estrangement from each other.

In the apparent meaninglessness and absurdity of life, O'Neill's protagonists strive hard to seek their identity with other fellowmen. In this eternal drama of man's endeavour to belong, O'Neill's personal life also became a major character; many of his plays were born out of his psychic and spiritual
compulsions which made it necessary for him to write in order to counteract the threat posed by the annihilating forces of self, society and cosmos.

Another finding of the present study is that O'Neill's art transcends the possibility of being categorized into any systematic framework of traditional drama. His sense of dedication to his art is evident from his refusal to compromise with anything that was untrue to the real experience of life, whether it was a scriptural God, or a box-office formula, or a road to easy material success. He condemned all those forces and institutions that impoverished man in his spirit and stifled his capacity for creative enjoyment. He reconciled himself to the absurdity of life, but only after wresting a meaning from it. Like an arch-rebel he challenged everything that smelt stale or rotten whether in life or in literature.

His plays reveal the agony of man as perceived by O'Neill's sensibility. In other words, O'Neill bears the anguish of a tortured soul and a lacerated heart and transmutes it in terms of art and in this process of artistic transmutation his artist-self suffers a double agony: one is that perceived by himself as a living being and the other is the artistic apprehension of this agony by the artist in him, which remains in anguish until it is able to purge itself of the agony by metamorphosing it into a work of art.

The change in the complexion of Western Society had created a confusion of values during O'Neill's lifetime and his changing dramatic experiments mirrored that confusion. The theme of man's alienation in a hostile universe made more poignant by the lack of understanding with his fellowmen, needed a poetic evocation of man's loneliness, which was so beautifully provided by the background of the sea, as we found in his early
one-act-plays. To his great dismay, he found that there could be no communication which was so badly needed to establish the ties of harmonious human relationships. His plays are powerful, poetic fragments of one vast pulsating drama of human existence. As Robert F. Whitman has aptly said: "He was always exploring, always hoping to find a medium of communication that would satisfy his needs both as a dramatist and as a man."\(^1\) The present dissertation has been intended to involve the knowledge of phenomena revealed in O'Neill's works as explained by and resolved into, causes and reasons, powers and laws of the physical world. This implies a synthesis of learning and a quest for truth through logical reasoning rather than factual observations.

It is characteristic that O'Neill himself, when referring to his concept of fate never talked about it in terms of a rational determinist but rather in terms of a mystic; he would use expressions like "inscrutable forces behind life,"\(^2\) "the force behind," "mystery" etc., and when specifying his meaning he would group together old and new ideas and talk about "fate, God, our biological past creating our present."\(^3\) This indicates that O'Neill's concept of fate did not spring merely, or even primarily, from modern scientific thinking, as Winther holds,\(^4\) but is rather a blend of modern psychological determinism and ancient popular fatalism, Greek or Irish.

The gist of O'Neill's views is found in the postulate that the goal of life is to acquire spiritual nobility. Few men attain this goal, and therefore life on the whole is both sad and repulsive. The tragic hero, by contrast, possesses such spiritual nobility or at least possesses it at the time of his undoing. He is therefore only seemingly defeated; spiritually he is triumphant. His
development is a high example set before us and tragedy, by revealing man's power to change himself for the better, is in a deep sense highly optimistic, exulting rather than depressing. Since precisely those heroes who harbour the highest dreams and therefore have to struggle the hardest to make them come true are the most exulting, we arrive at the paradoxical conclusion that the most "optimistic" tragedies are the ones in which fate seems most inexorable.

We can, indeed, object to an equation of O'Neill's views with those of his characters. But this objection is of little consequence, since we find the author expressing himself in much the same view outside the plays. Thus, in a letter to Agnes Boulton, his wife, probably written in 1928, he voices the helplessness in the human predicament:

I am not blaming you. I have been [to blame] as much as you, perhaps more so. Or rather, neither of us is to blame. It is life which made us what we are... it is perhaps not in the nature of living life itself that fine beautiful things may exist for any great length of time, that human beings are fated to destroy just that in each other which constitutes their mutual happiness. Fits of cosmic Irish melancholia, I guess!

He hesitates between blaming life and blaming his wife and himself.

Thus while O'Neill's fatalism is certainly more conspicuous than his insistence on man's free will, it did not hold absolute sway over him; his ambivalence has been well described by Agnes Boulton his wife: "He was firmly convinced that he could not alter that heavy hand of fate, he must believe that it was possible—even if it were never to be possible. The hopeless
hope—"Life's a tragedy, humrah!" On the one hand, there is the strong sense of man's utter helplessness (fatalism); on the other, the high dream that by giving his utmost man may conquer his fate (free will). Further it also meant that man's wilful negligence does not constitute fate.

All these remarks reveal that O'Neill could experience life itself as hostile to man, as a malign fate thwarting his hopes and desires. The majority of men, he indicated, adjust to life as it is and to live in things of the moment, satisfied with what is little more than a vegetative existence. Too often, however, the grave problems of life are not faced courageously with the highest powers of human reason; rather men occupy their mind exclusively with busy work, temporary expedients which exercise only the lower mental powers. The big questions of the ultimate meanings of life are tabled for consideration at some undefined future date, and the lack of their resolution produces a gnawing repressed uneasiness in the subconscious of modern civilization. The noble spirit, however, can never do this. He must fight it every turn and suffer greatly in the process in the hope that by this struggle a better kind of life, "a future of noble values," may dawn. It has already been examined that O'Neill's search for ultimate reality, however, took him to the formation of eternity and he soon found himself submerged into the deep waters of mysticism. The greed and cupidity of an acquisitive society filled him with disgust and he sought the niche for human values in a mystic symbolism.

O'Neill's affinity to Eastern mysticism informs his dynamic vision of reality, influences the values and attitudes of his protagonists and shapes the symbolism and structure of his entire plays. In addition to his own oriental
research other factors help account for this pervasiveness. Numerous concepts of the Western thinkers he most admired—Emerson, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Jung—either paralleled or drew upon Oriental mystical theories. Moreover, O'Neill had intimate and lengthy relationships with two individuals who were themselves intrigued by Eastern religion and culture. Early in his career, his companion, Terry Carlin, introduced the young writer to Indian Philosophy; years later his third wife, Carlotta Monterey, helped to reacquaint him with Chinese thought. Religious by faith he distrusted rationalism and searched incessantly for a mystical faith. That search inevitably led him to Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism. Their mysticism corresponded to his own, and their relatively non-dogmatic approach to spiritual questions comforted a man who longed to diminish his constant sense of personal guilt. Like many other artists of his time (Pound, Eliot, Hesse, Artaud), O'Neill perceived spiritual stalemate as the legacy of traditional Western culture and sought solace in the serenity of the East.

On analysing O'Neill's plays, we could find that there existed in his mind the tension between two contrasting philosophical traditions. His professed belief in struggle (against self, society and fate) the preoccupation of his dramas with psychological conflicts, his quest for a new faith—all reflect the values of modern European and American culture. As the heir of a dualistic Western tradition that divides self from God and Nature, O'Neill discovered himself bound within an isolated ego, prone to guilt. That isolation tormented him and his mystical "oriental" side endeavoured to heal the breach between subject and object by emphasizing the unity of soul and cosmos in a sphere beyond moral categories. That realm might be reached
through passive self-contemplation, which led to the liberating intuition that
the ego was an illusion. The eastern dimension of O’Neill’s nature attempted
to reconcile such dualities—between male and female, life and death, being
and non being—by viewing them as contraries participating in the same
dynamic process. Thus O’Neill’s drama represents a continuing effort to
present facts, while simultaneously moving beyond them in a quest for
mystical truth.

It has already been explored in the previous chapter that the major
assumptions shared by Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism which made these
systems attractive to O’Neill is their primary belief that an impersonal spiritual
force or state, an ultimate reality beyond all human thought or language is
available to man. It is termed Brahman by Vedantic Hindus, Nirvana by
Buddhists, Tao by the Chinese. All three “ways” have as their goal the
mystical union with this force or state. Man’s rational faculties, however,
cannot achieve this union. However, all these Three “ways” urge an attitude
of non-desire that will liberate one into a blissful state where action is no
longer required. One is enjoined to assume a passive, meditative stance that
allows an intuitive apprehension of the oneness of the universe. That
knowledge—not selfless love, or pursuit of the Good—permits liberation from
the pain and confusion of normal human existence, as well as freedom from
its artificial ethical categories. The plays like The Iceman Cometh and Long
Day’s Journey into Night suggest that man’s hopes and beliefs are a veil of
Māyā that obscures the void at the centre of the reality; both contain a pair of
characters who seek peace in passive transcendence of the desires and
struggles of existence.
But on examining plays like *Lazarus Laughed* here and there we find that the escapist urge of transcendence is wanting in mature O'Neill, who is now resigned to the twin Western burdens of ego and history, and believes that a Christian ethic of humanism, i.e., forgiveness and compassion is man's only hope. However, O'Neill's attempts to view man and nature as one, to move beyond the separate self and to reconcile dualistic oppositions into a unified rhythmic process, all connect him to contemporary Western culture. The sciences, arts and religions of America today ask many of the same questions O'Neill posed in the nineteen-twenties and nineteen-thirties about the "inscrutable forces behind life." Contemporary physics hypothesizes black holes, composed of anti-matter, floating in outer space. The Ecology movement field theory, Kinetic sculpture, Gestalt Psychology and Quantum Physics all assume a unity between perceiving individual and perceived environment that closely resembles the sense of unity sought by oriental mystical religions. And millions of young Americans and Europeans turn to transcendental meditations and other eastern practices to satisfy their spiritual needs.

Finally, before concluding let us analyse how far O'Neill has been successful in finding a satisfying solution in oriental thought to a host of existential problems that confront man perennially and to his own inner torments. O'Neill considered the essential teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism as having numerous similarities that distinguish them from most Western thought: all subordinate reason to intuition, all agree that the ultimate reality is impersonal, yet spiritually connected to man's essence; all aim to liberate man from his conventional view of a separate self, and thereby help
him and organize his profound unity with the universe. Consequently, all emphasize the passive realization through meditation of the blissful presence of an immanent universal form. This ecstatic experience transports the believer to an inner realm where non-being dwells. Hinduism and Buddhism posit that void is the essence of reality; Taoism asserts that non-being and being participate in a unified rhythmic process that characterizes countless other oppositions, like male, female, life and death. Despite their essential agreement, substantial distinctions separate the three systems, the Indian faiths focus on the mitigation of human suffering; Taoism seeks to lengthen life via harmony with the Tao. Differences also exist between orthodox Hinduism and Buddhism. The latter denies reality to even a universal self, proposing a *Nirvana* of absolute annihilation; Hinduism agrees in principle, but not in emphasis. Indeed, the aim of all Indian Philosophy was the removal of suffering which was caused by nescience, and the attainment of the highest happiness, which was produced by knowledge. Indian thought discovers the cause of suffering in our ignorance (*avidyā*) of reality, and in the consequent works and thoughts this perpetuates our misery in this and future existences.

This cosmic nescience—known as *māyā*—corresponds to the ignorance (*avidyā*) for one who mistakes those separate phenomenal forms for ultimate reality. But the enlightened soul recognizes the spiritual unity of all existence and in the “tremendous synthesis of subject and object, the identification of cause and effect.” The mystical realization of this unity liberates one from all desires concerning the phenomenal world, and hence from the suffering produced by desires. In *Lazarus Laughed*, the protagonist proclaims man’s identity with a pantheistic God. We could find many of the key concepts of
the Eastern religions in the symbols and situations of O'Neill's drama. His treatment of the sea in *Anna Christie* for instance, demonstrates interesting parallels to the Pantheistic monism of Vedanta. Vedanta Hinduism, if not exercising a direct and consistent influence on the playwright's vision corresponded closely to O'Neill's own intuitions about man and reality at certain points in his career. Another concept which created unfathomable interest in O'Neill was the Buddhist preaching that liberation through knowledge will lead one to *Nirvana* and make one indifferent to worldly sorrow, assuming as passive an attitude toward existence as possible.

The gospel of Buddha is most tersely summarized in the triple formula of "*Dukkha, Anicca, Anatta*"—"suffering, impermanence, non-egoity." The first truth declares suffering, the essence of individual existence, as witnessed in our birth, ageing, illness and death. The second truth identifies the cause of this suffering: impermanence, "the fundamental and pitiless law of all existence." The world exists in an eternal state of becoming, without beginning or end, and never attains to a state of being. The third truth logically follows: one ends suffering by annihilating all desires, even the desire for life itself. Like its mother religion of Hinduism, Buddhism proposes knowledge as the key to salvation.

Many scholars have noticed the Buddhistic aspect of *Lazarus Laughed*. Doris Alexander, pointing out the Indian origin of Lazarus' egolessness, also termed 'Buddhist'—"his love for animals, his asceticism, compassion, and his detachment from surroundings and contemplative attitude." He enlightens men to the impersonal divinity residing within all. The contemporary quality of Lazarus points up his most significant resemblance to Buddha. O'Neill's
notes to *Lazarus Laughed* underscore the importance of these reveries. In the manuscript note found in O'Neill's room one note copied from Angus's 'Mystery Religions' is a quotation from Philo, a first century, Platonist:

All things are provided (by God, life) that are necessary for man not merely to live but to live nobly: for the latter purpose the contemplation of the heavens induces in the mind a love of desire for knowledge, which gives rise to philosophy by which man though mortal, is rendered immortal.  

Another note states that Plotinus argues that the reverent contemplation of the Universe brings the soul into contact with God of the Cosmos; a third quotes Valerius, "I desired to obtain a divine and adoring contemplation of the heavens and to purify my ways from wickedness, and all defilement." This Gnostic approach to God constituted a major Oriental contribution to western religions during the early Christian era, though it was staunchly resisted by the Christian Fathers who espoused salvation through love whereas in Eastern religions salvation or liberation is attainable through knowledge.

According to Buddhism peace follows recognition of our participation in a transcendent, eternal process; and it preaches liberation from that flux, since transience causes our suffering. Taoism is the spontaneously operating cause of all movement in the phenomenon of the Universe. As in Indian mysticism, this force is impersonal, for old Taoists had no idea of personified God. Taoism repudiates a systematic approach toward life and celebrates the instinctive, its primitivism, which later causes Chuang Tse to invoke a past Golden Age when the human race was in its infancy; and its major value of spontaneity was its freedom from the dictates of the intellect and will. In that
Golden Age of perfect virtue, man and all other creatures were on terms of equality, and free from desire, they were in the state of pure simplicity. In that state of pure simplicity, the nature of the people was what it ought to be. Again, the harmony of all creatures recalls Christianity’s Edenic myth; and knowledge subsequently destroys paradise, as in the Genesis. Christianity however, assumes man’s nature to be sinful: Taoism (like Rousseau) assumes it to be good, and believes that obedience to one’s tranquil and spontaneous nature will bring happiness and harmony. And unlike Christianity, Chuang Tsze’s philosophy distinguishes man’s nature from his ego. According to Taoism the perfect man has no thought of self.

The features shared by Taoism and the Indian systems are those which appear most repeatedly in the drama of O’Neill: the mystical unity of man and spirit in a universe of flux; the passive resignation to destiny; the suspicion that the self and the objective world are illusions. Taoism, however, exerted its own unique—ubiquitous—impact as well, by contributing to O’Neill’s polaristic vision of reality. The playwright probably first discovered this concept in Emerson and Jung but it permeates his thought in the same way it dominates Taoism.

We have found O’Neill vacillating between a Western acceptance of a tragically dualistic universe, and an Eastern suspicion that those dualities are part of a larger monistic rhythm. We have further seen that this is the central issue in Marco Millions; the same tension occurs moreover, in The Fountain. The Great God Brown, Lazarus Laughed, The Iceman Cometh and Long Day’s Journey into Night. O’Neill himself endeavoured to mystically unite opposites in his life and work, suspecting that the rationalistic separation of
self and nature lay behind his inner conflicts. He turned to Oriental religions to find a philosophy that accorded with his suspicion that life was one—that the ultimate reality was an amoral, immanent force which moved, like his beloved sea, in a unified eternal rhythm. The Western man in him, however constantly challenged that intuition. His Catholic upbringing and unhappy childhood plagued him with a guilty conscience that implicitly acknowledged a God of judgement, which every man feels it to be good to believe in, if there is such an omniscient God. Furthermore, the Western intellectual tradition encouraged a philosophical dualism that glorified struggle, not inner peace. Some rivers of Occidental thought nevertheless contained Oriental currents. Christianity, romanticism and American culture—the three traditions that dominated O'Neill's intellectual background—had all felt the impact of Oriental thought. O'Neill turned west long before he turned East; and the battle between mysticism and rationalism in his drama is anticipated in all his major Western sources.

The Western tradition in O'Neill's works can be treated as richer for recognizing its roots in Eastern Philosophy which concentrates on the meaning of life rather than on the meaning of meaning—or of meaninglessness, for in the West, there is a very powerful tendency to deride the concepts of meaning and purpose. In this context it is relevant to note that the Western thought, for all its richness has tended especially in recent years, to lose sight of a dimension to which the Oriental tradition has stubbornly clung. While commendably repudiating superstition and obscurantism as we all know it has tended increasingly to seek comforts and pleasures as the sole aim of life and to throw doubt upon the legitimacy of the quest for meaning in life.
Taking into account, the great political and economic changes at present occurring in the Orient, it is relevant to analyse how far it is possible to have a rapprochement between the two worlds of Eastern and Western thoughts. The fact remains that all the great world faiths have come from the East, above all that of Christianity. Even when, as so often in America, a new religion is founded, the elements and usually the vocabulary of the faith are inevitably Oriental. Every faith has its core of mystery, or it would cease to deserve the name of faith. We have seen that in most of his plays O'Neill was in search of proper substitute for his religious beliefs. If we examine history, we find that such movements or even the ideas behind it, during the past centuries never materialised.

A missionary gospel such as Christianity though beset with pagan adversaries, is threatened most seriously by faiths bearing superficial resemblance to its own. We still know very little about the vague cluster of beliefs, called Gnosticism. At present, almost all we know of Gnosticism is derived from the tracts written by Christian Doctors and Fathers attacking it. Gnosticism is nothing but that universal abstract "religion," which public-spirited men in every generation and also certain disillusioned rationalists, have been seeking as a means to the spiritual union of humanity. Gnosticism is simply the religion of 'Gnosis, i.e., Knowledge. It was suprasensible knowledge—that is to say, a knowledge of pure spirit.

We have found that O'Neill was indebted to both eastern and western traditions for the ideas in his plays. Let us now recapitulate what, in the two great world traditions of East and West, the philosophical quest amounts to. It is an enquiry with the two main branches. First, it is an attempt, through the
unfettered use of reason, to elucidate the meaning of existence or the purpose of his life on earth and to find those factors that determine his destiny and those which help or hamper his happiness. Secondly, it seeks to understand how a satisfactory life should be led. For it is generally assumed that in so far as we find the physical world intelligible, or of a certain nature, so we shall be able to decide how best to live in it.

A question that must have occurred to everyone at one time or another—is whether, given the millions of years mankind is likely to remain on this earth—or indeed on more suitable planets, leaving the earth as a kind of planetary park to which a few will return for sentimental reasons—he will ever reach the truth, either about the universe or about himself. If it means arriving at some final explanation as to why we are here: why one life-span, in the light of astronomical time, is so ludicrously brief and 'meaningless' and why the universe, if finite, came into existence with the prospect of vanishing one day for ever, as if it had never been, the answer is that such explanation, if forthcoming at all, is likely to be postponed for considerable while. Indeed the question posed first by Leibniz: 'Why is there anything at all?' is unanswerable. This suggests that mankind must be content in the meantime with fragmentary knowledge, which is all that he has ever had to go by. Perhaps, the mystics were right. Man is obstructed in the understanding of his destiny—to use the old rhetorical term—by 'a cloud of unknowing' or a 'Veil of Mayä.'

The Western world having afforded to Orient some dubious specimens of its own wisdom, may well profit from deeper acquaintance with this great oriental tradition, thereby calling to mind the source of wisdom from which its
own faith is derived. To many the apparent nihilism of Oriental thought must always seem repulsive, and to whom the invitation to escape from nature and desire to a realm of spirit beyond conception is a fantastic example of human conceit and self-delusion. Every human being must choose from this storehouse that which answers his individual needs and acts according to the conscience objectively conceived. Whoever wishes to understand the underlying assumptions about the meaning and values of life from which successive culture have emerged, should make a survey of the thought of human civilization from the earliest recorded times.

There are few nowadays to whom it is not clear that our most urgent present problem is neither political nor economic, but a crisis of our value-systems. We are aware of living at a time of moral crisis affecting alike our relations with the transcendent, with the human and with the natural world. Those prepared to re-examine the value-systems by which humanity has lived in other times and places may hope to find some lost clue which may even now enable us to re-orient our individual lives even to change our world somewhat for the better. Man is expected to make the universe their home and acquire a kinship with all its creatures out of love and compassion. The society should be reconstructed upon the order of Nature. Our freedom is to be limited to the extent, it depends upon universal laws without curtailing individual freedom for the sake of justice and without sacrificing justice for the sake of freedom.

Thus we have traced in O'Neill's plays the emerging universe of discourse, in which two themes combine in varying measures of intricate alliance, and tension, between faith and irony, equivalence and ambivalence,
ecstasy and anguish, compassion and anger, hope and despair. Both as man and writer, O'Neill moved restlessly through the labyrinth of human experience, fascinated and terrified by its potencies, and tempted and tormented in turn by the beckoning, evanescent horizons that lay beyond unknown, irretrievable, inescapable.

An insufficient power in an inadequate universe, man is doomed to failure in every attempt attaining an autonomous individuality for himself or a healthy reciprocity of simple, natural feeling towards his fellow beings. He is bound for ever to be divided, uprooted and alienated, ever to remain a stranger who can never feel at home anywhere. Yet such is the nature of his being, and such too the alignment of forces around him, that he can neither recover fully his lost self, nor refrain from the inexorable quest for identity. Love, charity, hope and compassion alone can readily fill the human need and restore the sense of connection between man and his world; but pride, greed, guilt, envy and resentment intervene, plunging everything back into the dark night of irrelevancy. And so is man once again at the point where he had started, an eternal wanderer caught in life's endless dilemmas which he can neither comprehend nor resolve. This harmonic vision of the human state and predicament is the single idea, the single theme, and the single image that O'Neill dramatised in play after play. However, his plays uphold love and knowledge as the only urge or emotion that keeps up man's zest for living and disclose that it is the value of love and human comradeship in man's life on earth which helps him to get over the feeling of his being an exile on an inhospitable shore.
NOTES


8 *Lazarus Laughed*, Manuscript notes, File Folder Za, O'Neill 33x, O'Neill Collection, Beinecke, Yale University.

9 Ibid.