O'NEILL'S REALISM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO HIS TREATMENT OF THE NEGRO

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The Negro has been a popular subject in American literature since his entrance into American civilization. But as a subject, the Negro, until recently, has been treated neither seriously nor profoundly by prominent white authors. Such nineteenth century writers as Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Nelson Page, William Gilmore Simms and Irwin Russel, for example, helped to stereotype the Negro as a buffoon, as an irresponsible child, as something on an inferior level of humanity. A passage in which an English officer refers to the Irish may well be taken as true also of the general attitude of the white author toward the Negro:

I swear their nature is beyond my comprehension. A strange people! merry mid their misery—laughing through their tears, like the sun shining through the rain. Yet what simple philosophers they! They tread life's path as if t'were strewn with roses devoid of thorns, and make the most of life with natures of sunshine and song.¹

But when Eugene O'Neill came upon the American literary scene, he demonstrated to the world that the life of the Negro was not "devoid of thorns," that the Negro was just another human being, a bit more elemental, perhaps, because of his denials and introduction to a hostile civilization, but with fundamentally the same emotions as has his white brethren; an emotion for sorrow as well as happiness, possessing the same strivings, yearnings, hopes, illusions and delusions. Just as with all his characters, O'Neill's treatment of the Negro is basically psychological; life's battle is fought on two fronts: There is the obvious struggle with the outward aspects of our world, but there is also the more sinister battle that is inward in its nature, a conflict that is intangible, subtle, fierce, and not infrequently does it

culminate in a disaster much more terrible than any consequence that may follow from the struggle with the outward forces.

In order to show clearly just how the Negro and his behavior patterns are treated in the plays of O'Neill, this study will include a brief survey of the early backgrounds of the American drama with respect to the Negro to determine the elements which motivated and inspired O'Neill to view the Negro realistically; to discuss, summarily, representative precursors of this realism which found powerful expression with the arrival of O'Neill; but more emphatically, to determine what constitutes the realism of O'Neill, and his application of this realism to the Negro.

There have been copious, various, and serious evaluations of the significance of O'Neill as a dramatist; there have been also certain generalizations made concerning his treatment of the Negro:

Because he finds dramatic the lives of simple, unsophisticated folk, Eugene O'Neill has seen a wealth of drama in the Negro race.1

The Moon of the Carribees is a primitivistic description of the brawls and debauchery of West Indian sluts and British sailors. The Dreamy Kid is a tragedy of Harlem life.2

But the writer knows of no specific attempt, previously made, to study O'Neill's treatment of the Negro either extensively or intensively—to show precisely what his treatment of the Negro is. Because this study proposes such, it is significant.

In the course of this study, the writer has utilized both the basic plays of O'Neill not bearing directly on his treatment of the Negro, but which are very important in setting forth his concept of realism, and those plays dealing

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directly with Negro life with the exception of one, "Thirst." An examination has also been made of the works of outstanding critics both pertaining to the historical background of the drama in America and specifically to Eugene O'Neill. Especially has the author relied heavily upon the works of Sterling Brown, Fredrick W. Bond, Sophous K. Winther, and Arthur Hobson Quinn. But no attempt has been made to gain information through O'Neill's personal letters. The scope of this study, therefore, is limited to the study of pertinent plays of O'Neill.

The writer expresses her gratitude to the entire library staff of Atlanta University for its cooperation in the securing of the various tools of information, to the Department of English of this University for the guidance and inspiration which motivated a zeal toward the realization of the ideas set forth here. Especially does the writer express her appreciation to Mr. G. L. Chandler for his generous and invaluable assistance in the shaping of these ideas without which this study would not have been possible.
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CHAPTER I

AMERICAN DRAMA AND THE NEGRO: A BRIEF GLANCE

One art there is, and only one, which can avail itself at will of almost every device of all the other arts. There is only one art which can reach out and borrow the aid of the poet, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, compelling them all to help it toward its own perfection. One art there is which without danger of confusion, without departing from its own object, without loss of force can, at one and the same time, tell a story and give an impression of the visible world and fill our eyes with the beauty of form and charm, our ears with rhythm and with harmony. This one art is the art of the drama, the art which, as Brander Matthews states, most completely portrays the life of man.  

Drama exists when a human being pretends, for artistic reasons that he is something or someone else. Drama is more than imitation; it is an artistic illusion, although it is not a perfect illusion of reality by which we are entirely deceived. Modern dramatic art developed from pagan and christian rituals in which the celebrants began to impersonate the divine beings or forces of nature they were worshipping.  

Today the results of such pagan-istic beginnings is classed simply as "modern drama."

However, the story of the drama, as America knows it today, is not merely a jump from the stage of paganism to its present form. Far from that! It has been quite battered and buffeted in the very struggle for survival. At last


2 Donald C. Stuart, The Development of Modern Dramatic Art (New York, 1933), p. 36. See also Brander Matthews, op. cit., p. 72.

3 Drama and all its fictional associates were looked down upon as indecent, false, and immoral. See Moses Coit Tyler, History of American Literature 1607-1786 (New York, 1909), I, 113.
granted survival, it has gone through several stages of transition. It is, then, that the present study proposes to set forth briefly, the main characteristics of this transitional drama, with due attention to the role of the Negro, climaxing in the artistic treatment he received with the coming of Eugene O'Neill.

In order to understand and appreciate the treatment of the Negro in the plays of O'Neill, we may do well to explore, summarily, these stages of transition. We designate as the period of the "old drama," roughly, the latter part of the eighteenth century to 1914; and as the period of the "new drama," the year 1914 to the present time.

Though American drama today has all the earmarks of a native art, its beginning was imitative. In fact, it is the last of the literary arts in America to proclaim its independence and autochthony. The American playwright even more than the novelist and the poet, seemed, for a long time, reluctant to stand on the merits of his own originality. Pertinent to this point is the following statement of John Mason Brown:

Until recent years, in fact until after the turn of the last century, the playwright was in many ways the last colonial left in the United States.... As a native son he may have had the fullest admiration for Betsey Ross and her exploits in bunting... but when he decided to write a play, he forgot all about his oath of allegiance, turned willy-nilly into a homesick colonial even before his pen had been dipped into the inkstand. He was no longer a native son; but merely a playwright looking longingly, anxiously, fondly toward the old country wondering what was being done at Covent Garden and Drury Lane.1

This imitative, colonial spirit of the American playwright persisted

mainly in the area of subject matter, and secondarily in treatment and in the use of clichés.

Let us look, briefly, into the subject matter employed by representative authors. Thomas Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* has the distinction of being the first play by an American to be produced upon the American stage by a professional company of actors. Though the play deserves all the praise awarded it, it was really an adaptation from foreign sources; it was from a study of Dryden, Nicholas Rowe, Ambrose Phillips, Beaumont and Fletcher, that Godfrey owed much of his inspiration. However, it was to Shakespeare that he was most indebted: The appearance of Godfrey's King in Act IV, Sc. V, which is seen by the Queen, but not by the King, is very suggestive of *Hamlet*, where the ghost is seen only by Hamlet. There is also in the same scene of Godfrey's play, remarkable resemblance to *Macbeth* when Godfrey's Queen cries, "Why dost thou shake thy horrid looks at me?" and to *Richard III*, Act V, Sc. 3, where the ghost of the victims of Richard rise one after the other and bid him despair and die. Godfrey's play, Act V, Sc. 1, where Vardenes offers to save Arsaces if Evanthe will yield herself to him, is very much the same situation as in *Measure for Measure*. The description of Arsaces' rescue of Vardenes by Gotarzes, Act I, Sc. 1, is like that by Cassius in which he tells of his rescue of Caesar from the river Tiber in *Julius Caesar*, Act I, Sc. 2; and the error of Evanthe in taking poison, with

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1. The *Prince of Parthia* is a romantic tragedy, laid in Parthia near the beginning of the Christian era. The tragedy is based upon real human emotions. The passions of love, jealousy, hatred, revenge, the sentiments of loyalty, pity, and terror are fundamental; and the main motives of the play are from these elements. The love of Arsaces and Evanthe is interwoven with the motive of self preservation. See Arthur Hobson Quinn, op. cit., p. 4.

2. Ibid.
the lover's consequent suicide, is suggestive of Romeo and Juliet.\(^1\)

Although Royall Tyler is representative of an early minority who sought to use native material and technique in their plays, he did not publish his play, The Contrasts, until he had read Sheridan's School for Scandal with a studious eye.\(^2\)

Another clever adaptor was William Dunlap. From Le Judgment de Solomon by L. C. Cargniez, came his The Voice of Nature.\(^3\) The School for Soldiers was adapted from Le Deserteur by Lois Seibastien Mercier; and The Father was dependent upon Tristram Shandy by Lawrence Sterns.

Still another early American playwright was John Howard Payne, who wrote mostly on foreign themes, and who lived for many years in London and Paris. He is the chief representative of foreign influence in our playwright, and around him we may group the other playwrights whose impulse led them to the adaptation of foreign themes rather than to native ones.\(^4\) Some of his adaptations are Lovers Vows from Katzebue's Das Kind der Riebe, Paul and Alexis from Le Pelerin Blanc qu les Orphelue du Womou by Pixerecourt. He translated from Louis C. Cargniez and Jean Jourdoun's La Valerise, The Maid and the Magpie.

Later in the nineteenth century development of the American drama, Augustin Daly and Bronson Howard may well be taken as illustrative of the adaptative nature of American playwrights at this time. Among some of the adaptations of Daly's are Under the Gas Light, from The Engineer produced

\(^1\)Ibid. See also Thomas Godfrey, "The Prince of Parthia," Representative American Plays, ed. Arthur H. Quinn (New York, 1922), pp. 7-42.

\(^2\)Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist (Boston, 1925), p. 5.

\(^3\)This was the first example in this country of an adaptation of the French melodrama, a dramatic species which had a continuous influence upon American playwrights for many years.

\(^4\)Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War, p. 163.
at Victoria Theater in London, 1865; Divorce from Trollope's *He Knew He Was Right*. Representative of Howard's adaptative tendency are such plays as The Henrietta from *Vanity Fair*, Wives from Moliere's *L'Ecole des Maris*, and *L'Ecole des Femmes*.\(^1\)

It is to be remembered that both Daly and Howard did produce some original work. But, as we know, they adapted much of it from specific playwrights or from the theatres of London. Whatever the origin, it seems that if London put the stamp of approval on a work, it was good enough for America.

We have now seen that the early American Drama was imitative and colonial in its wide adaptation of subject matter. From such an observation we now turn to the area of treatment, which we find to be purely sentimental. Gagey confirms this:

Whatever performance was finally chosen, the broadway seeker of the amusement, would know there was little choice of his being disturbed unduly by contemporary problems or driven to painful thought. He would count on being moved to laughter or tears with the strongest possible emotional stimulation. If he brought along a maiden aunt or an adolescent daughter, he would have little fear that lines or situations would bring a blush to their tender cheeks or sully their female innocence.\(^2\)

Highly illustrative of Gagey's comment are the plays, *Pollyanna* and *Jerry* by Catherine C. Cushing. *Jerry* concerns a young girl who sets out, unsuccessfully, to marry her aunt's middle-aged fiance. *Pollyanna* was a masterpiece in sentimentality. Pollyanna, an orphan, comes to her maiden aunt's house and brings with her a sick kitten and puppy, Sodom and Gomorrah, which she has picked up enroute. When she enters the house, she finds her aunt and other ladies filling a mission barrel, and she reacts in the following

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(Explosively, as she whirls around and sees the trio lined up....) Ladies' aiders! Oh, how Bee-you-ti-fill!
(Rushes towards them with outstretched hands) Why - the Ladies' Aiders are the only mother I have known since my own sweet mother died. (Grips hands of all as she beams and effervesces!) I'm so glad to know you and I'm going to love you, every aider of you. (Spies the barrel.) And my dear friend, Barrel! Oh, don't you know me, Barrel? I'm Pollyanna, and you've furnished me with all my clothes since I was hardly born! see! (Shows her frock to the barrel), and this lovely hat, and too large shoes. And I thank you dear Barrel, for I love every stitch you've ever given me, whether it fit or not! (Hugs and kisses barrel)
Dear, Dear Barrel! (Kisses barrel, Ladies gasp.)

Another play of this highly emotional type was Jean Webster's Daddy Long-Legs. It is the story also of an orphan girl who is eighteen at the time of the play. She is now caring for younger children, but is unceasingly the object of unjust persecution. She is adopted by a trustee of a college who sends her to college. He became known to her only as Daddy Long-Legs. Meanwhile she falls in love with Mr. Jervis Pendleton not realizing that he and Daddy Long-Legs are one and the same. When she learns this fact, this does not change her mind and she marries him.

Not only were the women dramatists given to this sentimental drama, but the men also. The Cinderella Man by Edward Carpenter is the story of a hero-poet, who in his poverty is trying to write an opera libretto for a great sum of money. Next door to him lives a millionaire whose daughter is in sympathy with him to the extent that she comes over the roof top to bring him food. As the play ends, the poet has won both the sum of money and the millionaire's daughter.

Thus, for a considerable length of time, American drama, as well as
many of the other forms of literature, lived in a dream world, where there was little room or desire for reality. However, conditions and circumstances were soon to make it imperative that the escapist's attitude no longer would dominate American art as a whole.

So far, we have noted the imitative and the sentimental in the "old drama." We turn now to our final general characteristic of the old drama, that is, its use of clichés and stock situation.

It is a common fact that the Negro was mercilessly stereotyped in the old drama. Brawley's comment bears out this point: In plays of Negro life by white authors, he states, patterns have been most persistent. Among some of the categories into which the Negro has been placed are the comedian buffoon, carefree and irresponsible; the contented and submissive servant; and, later, the religious fanatic.

The Negro, however, has been most frequently employed in the old drama as the "comic-buffoon." In such a play as Cora Mowatt's Fashion, the treatment of Zeke is representative:

I tell'ee what missey. I'm st'ordinary glad to find dis a bery 'spectable like situation.... You've got a supernumerary advantage of me—seeing dat I only received my appointment dis morning; what I want to know is your publicated opinion, privately expressed, ob de domestic circle.... Bery lucifer expressed....

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1 Benjamin Brawley, The Negro Genius (New York, 1937), p. 271. See also Sterling Brown, Arthur P. Davis and Ulysees Lee (eds.), op. cit., p. 2. All subsequent reference to this book will be entered under the name of the first editor only.

2 Pertinent to this point is a statement made by George Sklar in the New Theatre Magazine (July, 1935): "The American theatre has given up its minstrel show conception of the Negro. The fiction of that conception has continued from that first burnt cork and down to Amos and Andy today." Quoted by Benjamin Brawley, op. cit., p. 272. See also G. C. Grant, "The Negro in Dramatic Art," Journal of Negro History, XVII (January, 1932), pp. 20-21, and Sterling Brown, op. cit., p. 4.

In the early minstrelsy, any joke was forced into atrocious English however foreign to the Negro's experience:

Interluctor ---- What time is it?
Negro --------- It on'y wants a quarter ob an inch ob ten now.¹

Though the comic-type Negro was a favorite with white authors, the second category of Negro stereotype—the contented dependent submissive servant—was also prevalent. Especially did this attitude persist immediately preceding the Civil War and after. Even Harriet B. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, as dramatized by George L. Aiken, though an able attack on the institution of slavery, tends to give a picture of the submissive type of Negro.

The following speech of Uncle Tom is indicative of such:

If I must be sold why den let me be sold.... Mas'r always found me on the spot. He always will.... Mas'r aint to blame and he'll take care of you and the poor little 'uns.²

Brown believes, also, that this work of Harriet B. Stowe's, aside from exacting the Negro's submissive spirit, was another disservice to the Negro in that it also fostered the error that the mixed blood characters, merely because they were nearer white, were more intelligent and militant and therefore more tragic in their enslavement.³

These were typical treatments of the Negro within the boundaries of what we have classed as the "old drama."

³Sterling Brown, The Negro in Poetry and Drama, p. 109. See also Sterling Brown, "The Negro Race Problem as Reflected in American Literature," The Journal of Negro Education, VIII (July, 1934), p. 278. The same submissive, dependent Negro type was employed in the fictional literature as in Swallow Barn by John P. Kennedy and in William Grayson's The Hireling and the Slave. Surpassing each of these authors in such a portrayal of the Negro were the works of Thomas Nelson Page. See Sterling Brown, The Negro Caravan, p. 3.
Thus far we have concentrated on some of the main features of the old drama and have observed that it was colonial and imitative in complex; that, in departing from reality, it sought merely to entertain with more craft than art, with more cleverness than high fidelity to life situations and that it abounded in the use of cliches. Such was the general nature of the American drama before 1914.

The year 1914, we have designated as the beginning of the "New drama" in America. This year saw the beginning of World War I. This War shook the world out of its long complacency and when its great force was spent, the world of the sentimentalist was no more. In its place astride the ruins was a violently and completely changed world; changed not only politically and economically, nationally and internationally, but in all its basic concepts of life and behavior--sexual, psychological and social.\(^1\) Whereas the old drama had been content to accept life without inquiry, the drama of the post war world was skeptical. Whereas the old drama held the individual solely responsible for his own actions, the new drama looked upon the individual as, largely, the results of complex and uncontrollable causes. Thus the emphasis of the drama was shifted from what men do to what they suffer. It was indeed a scientific attitude that prevailed now. Nothing was assumed; everything was subjected to a microscopic probing, and the results revealed in their stark and sometimes shocking reality.

Thus the new drama is marked by its realistic, naturalistic and expressionistic tendencies. Brown, in referring to the change in the drama, says that theatre goers no longer looked at an actor as he made his points,

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\(^{1}\) Anita Block, op. cit., p. 16. See also Edmond M. Gagey, op. cit., p. 1; and Fredriek W. Bond, op. cit., p. 12.
and said, "How well he does this or that," but that they gasped, now, "How true that is! It once happened to a friend of mine." But it is impossible to confine realism to any given epoch in history; for it cannot be so bound. Though it received new life during, or with the closing of World War I, it is as old as man himself. The Bible, itself, contains episodes presented realistically. Such, for instance, is the sending of Uriah to his death in battle in order that David might have access to his wife, Balsheba. Elements of realism may be found in the works of Dickens, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding and Chaucer. It is certain, then, that the realistic tendency goes beyond the World War; even beyond Homer. It exists whenever man chooses to face facts, to let Truth dictate form and to confront dreams with actuality.²

Hibbard says further in speaking of realism:

Realism is a purpose rather than a design. It is an intent to think, feel, and to write straight of humanity, its background, its ambitions and failure, its problems and its emotions. It recognizes that the configuration of the spirit of man is made up of both heights and depths, both mountains and valleys. When it encounters a morass, it walks through directly, scorning alike to walk around or to throw down pontoons and cross over dry shod. Whatever man confronts, it confronts. Pleasure and pain, joy and regret, success and failure, as these are a part of life, they are equally a part of the purpose of the realist.³

Just as realism cannot be confined to any single era of history, so it cannot be entirely separated from naturalism; for, according to Hibbard, naturalism is realism plus; it is realism walking the second mile.⁴ He says

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³ Ibid., p. 889.
⁴ Ibid., p. 1069. Hibbard states further that naturalism belongs to a definite school of writers who were not satisfied with realism, but that it was not until the late 1870's, roughly, that naturalism assumed importance under Emile Zola and his coterie. Ibid., p. 1069.
that the two differ, however, in the following four ways:

First, the outlook on life of the naturalists is more deterministic, more mechanistic than that of the realists. Second, man, to the naturalists, is the subject of a scientific impersonal scrutiny; he is a case study. Third, the naturalist studies and writes pretty largely that he may bring about social reform. Further, the naturalist approaching life and humankind from his analytical and scientific point of view, manifests tolerant conviction as to the worthwhileness of all things for study.

Thus these two very powerful forces, though differing slightly, were both greatly instrumental in bringing forth a new day for the Negro character in the field of drama.

America once aroused from her long apathy seemed now unwilling to halt her efforts toward getting at the "how" and "why" of things; thus the realistic and naturalistic temper led to a further revolt in the drama. The playwrights of this revolt were called expressionists. They sought for deeper conflicts than those granted by the good old external situations of the well-made plays even as treated by the realists; these writers wanted an introspective view into character; their desire was to treat them subjectively, tap their inner streams of consciousness and, if needed, pierce the depths of their innermost beings, and bring to the foreground their dreams, aspirations and inhibitions. "In short, they sought the eye of the X-ray instead of the camera."

Among those who early sought the eye of the X-ray as well as that of the camera on Negro life were Edward Sheldon and his work The Nigger, and

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1 Theodore Dreiser, a leader of the naturalistic school and labelled a "muck-raker," because of his scientific probing into the affairs of life, is proclaimed a "barbarian" by Sherman. See Stuart P. Sherman, On Contemporary Literature (New York, 1917), pp. 85-101.


Ridgely Torrence and his Granny Maumee Simon The Cyrenian, and The Rider of Dreams. 

The Nigger is recognized as the best production dealing with Negro life during the first decade of the twentieth century. This play very definitely recognizes the dramatic instincts of the Negro. The plot has to do with Governor Phillip Morrow, a young southerner who has been elected to his office as an advocate of white supremacy. Later a cousin of the governor, Noyes, has come into possession of a letter which reveals that Phillip is the grandson of a Negro slave. This evidence is brought forth by Noyes as a threat to expose Phillip's true identity if he signs the prohibition bill.

Here probably for the first time in the history of the American drama is a white playwright neither spurning nor shunning facts or realities, but facing them squarely. Here also is a representation of a Negro who is not shiftless, dependent and comical, but one who is independent, thrifty, intelligent, courageous and loyal to his race. Though Noyes threatens to expose Phillip if he signs the prohibition bill, Phillip cannot be so persuaded; and as the play ends he is beginning a speech in which he will publicly proclaim his kinship to the Negro.

Indeed it was a "new" Negro arising who in denouncing the much cherished girl of his betrothal, uttered in reply to her entreaties to take her with him, these words:

I wish I could, honey, but it looks as if I'd have t' go alone. You see, what my gran' fathah did t' my gran' mothah

1Paul Green in his Abraham's Bosom constantly deals with the Negro in a manner which is definitely away from the stereotyped Negro. Other such writers deserving recognition are David Belasco, Du Bose and Dorothy Heyward, Lew Leslie, George Sklar, and Marc Connelly. Through the efforts of these playwrights, who by their treatment of the Negro as thematic material, the Negro has come before the public in serious drama. See Fredrick W. Bond, op. cit., p. 107.
isn't all, it's what ev'ry white man has done t' ev'ry niggah fo' the las' three hundred yeahs, an' ith time some one had to pay up, even if he wasn't extra keen on been' the paticulah chosen man.\(^1\)

Torrence in The Rider of Dreams has brought to the fore one of the minor glaring realities of southern custom, abuse of Negroes by lawless whites.\(^2\) As the plot unravels one observes a hard working woman striving to make her son a useful citizen by sending him to school, instructing him in the ways of truth and honor. She shares, also, with her husband in the effort to save so that they may soon have the security of a home of their own. But her dreams are thwarted because a scheming and cruel white mob robs her husband through trickery.\(^3\)

Certainly these plays are far removed from the strictly stereotyped Negro as portrayed in the old American drama. In the new drama we are given the impression that the Negro is human after all; that, like a normal person, he has pride, aspirations and racial integrity. Indeed Sheldon and Torrence deserve serious consideration, for they were pioneers in blazing the trail for the unsurpassed realistic treatment that the Negro character, as well as the white, was to know with the arrival of Eugene O'Neill.

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2. Fredrick W. Bond, op. cit., p. 64.
CHAPTER II

O'Neill's Interest in Realism

In the previous chapter, we have given very brief attention to the development of the drama in America from the latter part of the eighteenth century to the present time, with special emphasis on the treatment of the Negro in this developing drama. We observed that Negro life and character at last began to be interpreted in the American drama with such realistic artists as Sheldon and Torrence; and that with the arrival of Eugene O'Neill, genius and artistic seriousness combined to portray Negro life and character with philosophic depth and stark realism.

Nevertheless, before going directly into O'Neill's treatment of the Negro, it is pertinent and important that we establish certain concrete facts regarding O'Neill's realistic tendencies in general. With these facts as a foundation, we may then more easily follow his treatment of the Negro in his plays.

Eugene O'Neill deserves the place that has been awarded him in American dramatic history. "In O'Neill," say Carl and Mark Van Doren, "the American drama has unearthed its first indubitable genius of great scope and has remained unrivaled in fertility, in power, in variety."

Commenting to this effect and elaborating upon the vitality and utter realism in O'Neill's plays, Richard D. Skinner states:

The plays of Eugene O'Neill have never seemed to be solely of the theatre. They have, as it were, followed one out into the noisy street and into the greater privacy, even, of one's inner thoughts and feelings, and not for a few hours or days, but with a certain tireless insistency. They have become a part of the real world of make-believe.

1Carl and Mark Van Doren, American and British Literature Since 1890 (New York, 1925), p. 102.
They simply refuse to stay locked within the walls of the theatre. Nor in their bursting of traditional bounds, do they confine themselves to one segment or another of realistic affairs.... Neither Shaw nor Ibsen\(^1\) had the poet's gift of reaching to the emotional and moral inwardness of life without any relation to specific events, or times, or people.\(^2\)

Not only does the foregoing passage shed light on O'Neill's realism, but it definitely suggests his universality, his "gift of reaching to the ...inwardness of life." Like Shakespeare, he seems both timely and timeless. In order to be thus, an author must certainly be accurate and cosmopolitan in his interpretation of life. Real problems and real situations, good or bad, serious or comic, attract his attention and consideration. Writing to this point with respect to O'Neill, Walter Eaton says:

Sensing that he is in a world encompassed by the conflicts of good and evil, mixed inhibitions, and the problems of man's place in the universe, O'Neill desires to take life as his general subject. He is interested in writing about life because it is filled with evil and many types of frustrations.\(^3\)

Indeed O'Neill writes true to life. Why does he deserve the title "America's greatest dramatist"? Malcom Cowley gives the answer. He says:

"Not only has O'Neill tried to encompass more of life than most American writers of his time, but almost alone among them, he has persistently tried to solve it."\(^4\)

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\(^1\)Bernard Shaw and Henrick Ibsen are two of the greatest names in modern drama. Shaw wrote moving plays that are brilliant studies of modern life and conditions, and Ibsen wrote plays that prompted clinical quests into actual heredity or made one speculate about false pride, and the social order. See Richard D. Skinner, \textit{Eugene O'Neill: A Poet's Quest} (New York, 1935), p. 1.


It is possible for one to accept the fact that O'Neill encompassed more of life than have other American dramatists. Only casual perusal of the facts in his checkered life and careful study of his plays will tend to convince one of this fact: that O'Neill writes as a ubiquitous reporter and as an ardent participator. Thus his plays seem in the truest sense a vitalized, actual experience. This, then, is in a general manner, O'Neill's realism. Specifically, however, his realism springs from two interests: his interest in impressionism, which is basically a psychological interest; and, secondarily, his philosophical interest.

We turn now to O'Neill's interest in realism as manifested in his use of expressionism. O'Neill, even as the other expressionists, does not rely on one "cut and dried" event, but on a series of events which determine character or register growth or retrogression, crucial moments of crises rather than half hours of preparation. He does not particularize his character; rather he chooses a man, a woman, any man, any woman, every man, every woman and sets them against the background of their times.¹

As the concern of the expressionistic group was more often the inner than the outer life of the mind and spirit, the adherents availed themselves of the discoveries and the language of the newer psychologists, and, particularly, the psychoanalysts and psychiatrists who had appeared since the turn of the century.² O'Neill, then, found much to condemn in the professed realistic technicalities of playmaking. Such minor details as the regulation of acts

¹ John Mason Brown, The Modern Theatre in Revolt, p. 58.
² Just as Darwin and the budding scientific spirit had anticipated in the world of thought, a tendency which was to enter the playhouse some twenty years later under the name of Naturalism, so Freud and Jung were the trailbreakers of the expressionistic playwrights. Ibid.
were emphasized almost to the exclusion of emphasizing the theme. The plays were too mechanically perfect to portray life realistically. The characters of these plays seem only aware of man's spoken feelings, and completely unaware of that which was not voiced. And so the plays in their entirety produced an artificial feeling rather than a natural one.  

But in the works of O'Neill, a true representative, of the expressionistic school, there is great emphasis focused not only on the outer life of the individual but on his typical inner experiences. To accomplish this, he sometimes employs the use of masks, the aside, and soliloquy. Some of the best illustrations of these devices are found in *Strange Interlude* and *The Great God Brown*: "for having cast ordinary tenets of realism to the wind," says Brown, "he sought these once despised devices as the simplest means of reaching the inner workings of his characters."  

Indeed, in O'Neill's hand, expressionism became symbolism. This symbolism he achieves through the use of the mask, double personalities, the soliloquy or the aside, and the use of abstractions. Through the use of chaotic, abstract devices he is able to portray the inner turmoil of his characters. 

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1 The expressionists in their search for freedom bear a close resemblance to the Elizabethan models. Shakespeare and his contemporaries had suited the length of the act to its dramatic necessity. They did not let the unities stand in their way in setting forth a realistic portrayal of life. However, the Americans did not follow the Elizabethans wholly, but gave their ideas a new twist. For where the Elizabethans had developed a technique hospitable to their vital sprawling yarns, the American expressionists looked for one which would give them psychological freedom of a similar kind. *Ibid*, pp. 59-60.


3 The technique of expressionism abandons all pretension of literal representation in favor of symbolism which is frequently presented through allegorical representation. See Joseph W. Krutch, *The American Drama Since 1918* (New York, 1939), p. 240.

4 Malcolm Cowley, *op. cit.*, p. 128. Quinn accounts for O'Neill's reliance upon symbolism in the following manner: It is O'Neill's Celtic ancestry which led him to symbolism. The race in its painting, poetry, religion, thinks in symbols, that
of these various forms of symbolism, O'Neill becomes the true psychologist; for he delves into the inmost conflicts of the individual.

In the play, *The Great God Brown*, all the leading characters wear masks as a means of hiding from the world their real selves, and of indicating changes of personality. Dion wears the mask of Pan as a protection against the world; but he has the soul of an ascetic - Dionysius and Saint Anthony, as it were. \(^1\) We have Dion's own explanation as to why he wears a mask:

One day when I was four years old...a boy sneaked up behind me when I was drawing a picture in the sand; he couldn't draw and he hit me on the head with a stick and kicked out my picture and laughed when I cried! It wasn't what he'd done that made me cry, but him. I had loved and trusted him and suddenly the good God was disproved in person and the evil and injustice of man was born! Everyone called me cry baby, so I became silent for life and designed a man of the Bad Boy Pan in which to live and rebel against that other boy's God, and protect myself from his cruelty. \(^2\) (Act II, and Scene III)

Here we find a very good illustration of O'Neill, the psychologist; for here is portrayed in terms of symbolism, the mask, the desire of a frustrated individual to escape the buffets of the real world, its meanness and its jealousies. \(^3\) We have here also the frustrations or suppressions which make for the dual nature of Dion; for his better nature is in conflict with his mysticism has to be tied down to reality by some concrete expression. 


\(^1\) According to Jung this play deals with the realm of the subconscious. Jung maintains that the unconscious has a face which it presents to the world. This face Jung refers to as a mask. He says further that all unusual or extravagant expression of the mask will cause an opposite expression in the unconscious. Thus characters become confused and the false may be taken for the true or the reverse. Like Freud, however, O'Neill sees the conscious. See Carl Jung, *The Psychology of the Unconscious* (London, 1922), pp. 613-614.

\(^2\) Eugene O'Neill, "The Great God Brown," *Nine Plays* (New York, 1932), p. 307. All subsequent references to O'Neill's plays, unless otherwise stated, are made to this edition, and are entered without the name of the author. In reference to quotes, pagination will be omitted; only act and scene will be indicated.

\(^3\) Richard D. Skinner, *op. cit.*, p. 173. See also Sophous K. Winther,
fiendish nature. Further diagnosis of this play reveals what may be called
an inferiority complex on the part of first his mother and then his wife.
His speech implies such. When Brown tells Dion that Margaret loves him, he
replies:

    She protects me! She is warmly around me! Her arms are
softly around me. She is my skin! She is my armor! Now I am
born, I, the I!, one and indivisible. (Prologue)

Perhaps after all, the suffering of Dion comes from his hiding behind
the mask instead of facing Pan, from the compensation of self-pity rather
than from the real suffering of maturity.¹

This play is only one illustration of O'Neill's expressionistic tech¬
nique and of his preoccupation with the theme of man's arduous search for in¬
ner harmony in his battle against duplicity and conflicting drives. O'Neill,
himself, speaks on the subject of the mask as follows:

    The first solution of the modern dramatist's problem is to
show, with the greatest possible dramatic clarity and economy
of means he can express, those profound hidden conflicts of the
mind which the probing of psychology continues to disclose to
us... these masks of "free will," with the masks that govern
them and constitute their facts.²

Just as O'Neill used the mask in "The Great God Brown" to show the
difference between the inner self and the other self, so in Strange Inter¬
lude, the expression of the subconscious reaches its climax in the use of a
speech device, "the aside." In this play each character uses two types of

¹Eugene O'Neill, The Great God Brown (New York, 1934), p. 67. Loggins' views of Dion is that "he
is a symbol of the ideal defending itself against the desire to satisfy the
world's standards and receive the world's reward. The other half of the
struggle, and a greater half, is represented by the unmasked Dion...." See

²Eugene O'Neill quoted by Oscar Cargill, Intellectual America (New York,
1924), p. 697.
speech: one in which he covers his ego in an attempt to adjust himself to
the outside world, and the other in which his speech is a revelation of his
ego—that ego which deceives must be kept hidden because of society which
imposes the "curbs of civilization."\(^1\)

That O'Neill succeeds in using the aside to reverse the inhibited inner self is seen in the words of George Jean Nathan, who in commenting on Strange Interlude, writes:

Here O'Neill is showing not only what his characters say and do, but also what their real thoughts are. When they are speaking and acting their manners are hardly indicative of their real selves. To see their true selves, we are given the parenthetical speech (the aside) to discover what is behind this possession of doubt and hypocrisy.\(^2\)

Strange Interlude is the story of a frustrated woman, Nina Leeds, in all her primitive aspects, tender, reckless, protective and absorbing, possessive and creative and proudly untamed.\(^3\) It is her insatiable desire or possessiveness that makes calamity of the lives of four men: her father, professor Leeds; Marsden, a novelist; Darrell, a doctor, and Sam Evans, her husband.

However, there are other frustrated individuals in this play to whom we may well give some attention before resuming our study of Nina.

Nine's father has prohibited her marriage to Grodon for purely selfish

\(^1\) See John Stuart Mill, On Social Freedom (New York, 1941), pp. 7-9.

\(^2\) George Jean Nathan, "O'Neill's Five Plays," The American Mercury II (August, 1926), 500. Stuart heartily confirms Nathan's conclusion, as he feels also that O'Neill has taken four people when life really began for them to show effectively how they lived for years, both inwardly and outwardly. Donald C. Stuart, op. cit., p. 648.

\(^3\) Richard D. Skinner, op. cit., p. 192.
reasons, an abnormal paternal attachment. 1 When brought to confess his motives for prohibiting Nina's marriage, he offers the following explanation:

...it is also true that I was jealous of Gordon. I was alone and I wanted to keep your love. I hated him as one hates a thief one may not accuse or punish. I did my best to prevent your marriage. I was glad, glad when he died. (Part I, Act I)

This conflict within the individual may be seen also in Marsden. Here again O'Neill has made use of the aside as he shows us Marsden torn between his love for Nina and his fear of facing the realities of life. He is another Freudian bound to the arms of his mother, taking out in words those things he is afraid to make an actuality. 2 This is evidenced in his soliloquy concerning Nina:

...but why have I never fallen in love with...could I...that way...used to dance her on my knee...set her on my...knee...but sometimes the scent of her hair and skin...like a dreamy drug...dreamy! there's the rub!...all dreams with me!...my sex life among the phantoms! (Part I, Act I)

Upon yet another occasion his thoughts run thus:

Why...oh this digging in gets nowhere...to the devil with sex!

As we return to Nina, the heroine of the play, we are aware that her insatiable desire is a defensive one. After Gordon's accidental death, she feels very guilty because she did not yield to Gordon's desire to be married. Since she did not, she feels that she should be punished. Thus she goes away

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1 Here we see the Freudian influence in the works of O'Neill. The paternal attachment that the father has for the daughter is fundamental. To Freud, love is more inclusive than love between sexes; it embraces self-love, love for parents, children. Here the father has transferred his libido from his dead wife to his daughter. See Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, trans. James Strachey (New York, 1912), pp. 38-38.

2 See also Joseph W. Krutch, op. cit., p. 102.

2 Oscar Cargill, op. cit., p. 206.
to a hospital for maimed soldiers; and gives her body freely to them. Later, as Nina returns home, in order to cover up or atone for the void left by Gordon, she seeks to possess all four of the men in her life; and with the birth of her son, she continues this possessiveness. Through the hidden thoughts of Nina, one becomes aware of the fact that she synthesizes the three men into her one, Gordon. She says to them: "Sit down all of you! Make yourselves at home with me!" Then later the aside is used to show Nina's unexpressed thoughts on the matter:

My three men! I feel their desires converge in me!...to form one complete beautiful male desire which I absorb...and am whole...they dissolve in me, their life is my life.... I am pregnant with the three!...husband!...lover!...father!...and the fourth man!...little man!...little Gordon...he is mine too...that makes it perfect. (Act VI)

This play is indeed an interlude of scrupulous self-examination. No other play of O'Neill's is so consciously, even ferociously, self-analytical. His very use of the aside to emphasize these inner conflicts is also symbolic of the author's intentions to pull apart and dissect every phrase, every superficial attitude, every spontaneous reaction, and to discover the truth beneath it.¹

We move now into The Hairy Ape, which is another illustration of O'Neill's use of expressionistic symbolism. In the play, there is the struggle of man with himself and with nature and society. O'Neill says of this play:

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 he used to have as an animal and has not yet acquired in a spiritual way. Thus not being able to find it on earth nor in heaven, he's in the middle, trying to make peace, taking the worst punches from bot'of 'em. This idea was expressed in Yank's speech. Yank can't go forward, and so he tries to go back. This is what his shaking hands with the gorilla meant.

¹Richard D. Skinner, op. cit., p. 192.
But he can't go back to belonging either. The gorilla kills him.¹

The play in its entirety is symbolic. However, a specific instance of such may be seen in the following-up of Yank as he struggles against nature and society. After Yank has been called a filthy beast, by Mildred Douglas, he sees himself for the first time as the Hairy Ape, the lowest form of life aspiring to something higher to which he can never belong. His pride in being at the bottom, in being "the works" of the thing of steel has been shattered. When the boat reaches the dock, Yank begins his quest for revenge. He goes to Fifth Avenue, in front of a church, hoping to find the object of his love and hate. But the people he sees do not see him. They are masked mechanical creatures. When he calls them names, they do not hear. When he falls against them in his rage, it is he who recoils, instead of them. They merely answer with artificial courtesy and say, "I beg your pardon." Yank is arrested and thrown into jail. To Yank, these gaudy marionettes that parade Fifth Avenue with horror akin to that of a Frankenstein in their cool unconcerned manner are representative of the hostile upper class of society.²

O'Neill employs symbolism in many of his plays too unmerous for a detailed analysis. However, let us look briefly at some of the typical symbols or symbolic actions used in representative plays. Only a brief examination of All God's Chilluns Got Wings reveals his employment of symbolism: the grotesque expression of the Congo mask that asserts a diabolical dominance over the home life of Jim Harris and Ella downey, his white wife; the great hills which are

²John Mason Brown, Upstage, p. 66.
the embodiment of all the unrealized dreams of Robert Mayo in *Beyond the Horizon*; the gold that leads Captain Bartlett to a maddening obsession and illusion in both *Where the Cross is Made* and *Gold*; the oil that is the expression of Captain Kenney's pride and that keeps him from coming home without it, even though his failure to do so meant his wife's insanity; the door that opens, inwardly instead of outwardly, on the couples, Michael and Eleanor Cape, in *Welded*; the fountain of youth that beckons Ponce De Leon onwards in *The Fountain*; the prostitute in *Marco Millions*, and the silvery haunting laughter of Lazarus that rings out in mockery of death in *Lazarus Laughed*.

These are merely samples of the wide use that O'Neill makes of symbolism in his quest not only to portray his characters in the light of the forces of which they are an essential part, but also to make more emphatic the outward facts of their lives in terms of spiritual significance.

It is interesting to observe that just as O'Neill uses symbolism to portray realistically the lives of his characters, so has he, himself, chosen symbolic titles for his plays. In addition to this symbolism, O'Neill uses irony; but this irony only serves to emphasize his serious analytical nature; for his irony is not scornful, but grows out of a deep sympathy with man's suffering. He believes that man is poverty ridden in the midst of plenty. Poverty applies to the things of mind as well as to those of the body. He believes much of man's slavery is self-imposed. See Richard D. Skinner, *op. cit.*., p. 9; also Walter O. Eaton, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
Electra may be seen in some notes taken in preparation of the play:

Title - Mourning Becomes Electra - that is, in old sense of word, it befits, it becomes Electra to mourn, it is her fate, also in the usual sense (made ironical here), mourning (black) is becoming to her, it is the only color that becomes her destiny (note no. 7).^1

From all that has been said so far, O'Neill's expressionism is evident in not a few of his plays. It is further evident that with him expressionism is both a technique and a belief, a way of presenting life faithfully and completely.2 Indeed, O'Neill feels that to seek to withdraw from outer realities is to deny one's present finite nature, to become a spiritual glutton. On the other hand, to look for only outer realities is to become overmaterialistic. In either way there is destruction; there must be a balancing of the two. So it is that O'Neill had, in terms of expressionism, set forth, very effectively, man's conflict with these forces in his quest for both inner and outer conflicts. It is true, then, that O'Neill's realism is not of the surface, but it pierces the depths of human action and experiences.

We have said that O'Neill's realism springs from two chief interests: first, his interest in expressionism which we have just discussed and, second, his interest in philosophy which we will now set forth.

From his probings, or in conjunction with his probings, O'Neill must have had some concern for a working philosophy. Though he is, admittedly, the dramatist of the individual soul as critics contend, his plays reach a philosophical emphasis which became social in implication.

The background in which his characters are placed are a part of the social structure. He studies not only the individual in conflict with himself, but

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^1 Sophous K. Winther, op. cit., p. 273.

^2 Montrose J. Moses, op. cit., p. 433.
the individual in conflict with society or convention. This we mentioned when we discussed The Hairy Ape. But, as we shall note, these conflicts are more often than not, in the terminology of Mill, caused by the "curbs of civilization." According to Millet and Bentley's views on this matter,

O'Neill has shown that man lives a life made tragic by the fact that character has been subordinated to subconscious mechanism, complexes and compulsion which give human faith the significance of animals trapped by forces over which they have no control.¹

So it is that out of O'Neill's belief in individualism evolves a direct thrust at society for, first, its suppression of natural instincts, and, second, for its class strife. We will first explore the plays of O'Neill depicting the suppression of natural instinct.

In the play, Desire Under the Elms, O'Neill has very well expressed the following statement of his: "I don't love life because its pretty. Prettiness is only clothes deep. I am a truer lover than that; I love it naked. There is beauty to me even in its ugliness."² Indeed, Desire Under the Elms is a play in its nakedness. In it, O'Neill has shown a group of peasants, with a tenacious possession for land, for power, for religion, for beauty and sexual gratification. The story is this: Ephriam Cabot, a New England farmer and a strict Puritan, has based his life on the principle that "God is hard." He has just married his third wife, Abbie, who is about half the age of Ephriam. Ephriam has a son, Eben, left him by a previous wife; he is thirty-two. From the moment Abbie enters the house, Eben hates her; for he thinks she has come into ownership of the farm which he believes is rightfully his. Abbie tells her husband that she can bear him a child, for she intends to keep

² Quoted in Barret H. Clark, op. cit., p. 87.
the farm in her possession. Ephriam promises to make the farm over to the new heir. Abbie then seduces Eben, the son; and during the process they fall in love. A son, who Ephriam believes is his own child, is born to Abbie. Finally Eben, out of a guilty conscience deeply rooted in Puritanism, tells his father the truth. The father in turn tells Eben that Abbie only pretended she loved him so that she might conceive and bear a child who would possess the farm. Eben then prepares to leave home; so in order to prove her love for Eben, Abbie strangles the child.

The last scene finds the lovers once more united and in each other's arms. The officers of law take Abbie and Eben away, but they are happy and exultant in their complete absorption of one another.

Here O'Neill shows us very plainly that a stern Puritanical code proved to be the basis of the disaster that followed. Winther, in speaking of O'Neill's attitude toward Puritanism, says:

The Puritan ideal represents to O'Neill a barrier on the road to the good life. Puritanism, as it emphasizes the value of self-abnegation, is distasteful to him. Puritanism, in so far as it stands for a doctrine of suppression, he condemns as a distinct force for evil. He abjures a "thou shalt not" philosophy, because it is a positive evil that endangers the only good that is possible in life.

Moreover, O'Neill's technique and form have been an interpretation of the conflict which arises out of the circumstances of the world in which we live.¹

Flexner in speaking of O'Neill says:

Life is not explicable in scientific terms alone. O'Neill must go beyond them and search for an ultimate meaning which will justify human suffering as well as explain it. This is his chief preoccupation as a playwright.²

¹Sophous K. Winther, op. cit., p. 186.
Seeing, then, that O'Neill is preoccupied with the problem of why man suffers and that in every instance he shows that man is continually in conflict with conventions, we can readily understand why O'Neill's philosophy is referred to as one of individualism, of freedom, of happiness. It is as though he has framed it thus: Suppression of individual freedom results in disaster. Thus there is no habitable place in O'Neill's philosophy for conventions or curbs of civilization. For that reason he believes that our actions often belie the nature of our inner selves, as he so skillfully depicted in The Great God Brown and Strange Interlude. Consequently, man often attempts to appear as society would have him appear. This inhibits those things which would ordinarily bring happiness. Because of this, man is constantly at war with his inner self, as well as with outer forces. As a result, life becomes more and more complex through the imposed compulsion to conform to environmental codes.

It would seem, then, that in O'Neill's renouncing the Puritanical code, he is glorifying the actions of Abbie and Eben. Concerning this matter, it seems that Clark speaks for O'Neill with reference to the characters in question. He says:

Of "sin" they have no consciousness; Victims of Puritanical repressions of unrepressed possession, and of the mighty current of life, they have fashioned their romance apart from the ugliness and sordidness of every day life; though they have lived among those whose religion is hateful, they have broken through into the light of day. There among the rocks and the hard soil, they have yearned for beauty and found it.¹

Our next play, Mourning Becomes Electra,² tells the incestuous story of

¹Barret H. Clark, op. cit., p. 90.
²This play leans heavily toward the Greek idea of tragedy; it shows the influence of Aeschylus and Sophocles, and is closely allied to Oedipus in
the Mannon household. Lavinia, the Electra of the story, has a father attachment, while Orin, the son, has a mother attachment. The mother, Christine, is jealous of the daughter and her father. There is also a fanatical attachment of the brother, Orin, for the sister, Lavinia. While the husband and father, General Mannon, is away in the army, the mother and daughter fall in love with the same man, also a Mannon. In an argument the mother accuses the daughter in these words:

I know you Vinnie! I've watched you ever since you were little, trying to do exactly what you're doing now! You've tried to become the wife of your father and the mother of Orin! You've always schemed to take my place. (Act II)

Such a strange life was sure to bring disaster. Ezra returns and is murdered by his wife; and Orin, though he feels a sort of loathing for his mother, is secretly relieved at his father's death; for he can now have his mother to himself. Finally Lavinia fills Orin's mind with jealousy of his mother and another man; therefore he kills the man. Christine upon hearing this news shoots herself fatally. The brother and sister now turn to each other for love. A year passes; Lavinia meets Peter Niles, whom she wants to marry; but Orin kills him out of jealousy. Finally Orin out of a desire to be again with his mother, kills himself. Lavinia, being the last of the Mannons, goes into the house, nails all the blinds and doors up and refuses to come out. When prompted, by the housekeeper, to account for her actions she says:

I'll live alone with the devil, and keep their secrets, and let them hound me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die. (Act IV)

Here we have an aristocratic family, which, from its beginning, was doomed to destruction. It is a family smitten with the Oedipus complex as well as the Electra complex. Following the Freudian theme, the presence of these complexes results in a series of repressions and psychoses. Indeed here is a family that sins against its own nature. Love, a passion, is suppressed; there is no freedom for the expression of man's natural sexual instinct. Thus the desire turns inwards, swells, and violently explodes from compression and suppression.

Once again O'Neill has shown the disastorous effects of the "curbs of civilization." The mother's destructive attachment to the son led him to suppress any natural expression of himself with others, and the same is true of the father-daughter relationship. This is, of course, only one explanation. But we are left wondering also, as shocking as it may seem, if here O'Neill does not glorify incest as he seems to do in Desire Under the Elms. There is, however, no exulting of character over their acts as in Desire. Instead there is only doom for everyone concerned. Nevertheless, it would seem that the O'Neill, who has said of life: "I love it naked. There is beauty to me in its ugliness," and again:

1 Otis C. Taylor, "The Latest Play," Outlook, CLIX (November 11, 1931) 343.
2 The transference of libinal interest to the parent produces what is called the Oedipus complex in which the son loves his mother and envies his father, or the reverse, the Electra complex in which the daughter loves the father and is jealous of the mother. Oscar Cargill, op. cit., pp. 608-09.
3 Ibid.
5 Quoted in Barret H. Clark, op. cit., pp. 86-87.
But happiness is a word. What does it mean?
Exaltation; an intensified feeling of the significant
worth of man's being and becoming! Well, if it means
that, and not a mere smirking contentment with one's
lot, I know there is more of it in one real tragedy
than in all the happy ending plays ever written. Its
mere present-day judgment to think of tragedy as un-
happy! The Greeks and the Elizabethans knew better.
They felt the tremendous lift to it. Through it
they found release from the petty considerations of
every day existence....

would naturally understand, appreciate, sympathize and even laud, perhaps,
the courage of these characters. Certainly in *Mourning Becomes Electra*,
life is stripped of its last garment. It stands before us naked. It would
seem, then, that Lavinia accepts her doom willingly, even triumphantly, as
she orders Seth to "nail up the windows and doors!" Indeed, we are inclined
to agree that this play has been one long question in the words of O'Neill,
himself: "Was the struggle worthwhile?" and O'Neill adds, "for there is joy
in the struggle."

Still another forceful expression of the philosophy of O'Neill is the
character, Cybel, in *The Great God Brown*. She is a true representative of
the earthy life, the life that is close to raw nature. She has accepted life
as a value within itself. She has said that the value of life lies in the
act of living, and not in the act of denying that which gives meaning to ex-
istence: It is she, out of the other so-called "great" characters in this
play, whose life is peaceful and happy. In O'Neill's own words:

She is an incarnation of Cybel, the Earth Mother,
doomed to segregation as a parish in a world of unnatural
laws, but patronized by her segregators who are thus, them-

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XXX (November, 1931), 941.
selves, the first victims of their laws.¹

Similarly, *Strange Interlude* presents life and character so thoroughly chained to inhibition, so eaten through with corruptions and deceit, that the one innocent victim, Sam Evans, could not possibly escape some of the fate of the others.

Nevertheless, it is in the play *Lazarus Laughed* that we find O'Neill's answer to his query emphasized in such a revealing manner that there is no mistaking his final answer; for in the play O'Neill affirms the life of freedom in every sense of the word. He condemns the modern mechanized industrialized civilization because it stifles all that springs from freedom and in doing that it destroys all that is fundamental to the good life; this, it seems, is the essence of Lazarus' speech:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Out with you! Out into the woods upon the hills!} \\
\text{Cities are prisons wherein man locks himself from life.} \\
\text{Out with you under the sky! Are the stars too pure for your passion?} \\
\text{Is the warm earth smelling of night too desirous of love for your pale introspective lusts? Out!} \\
\text{Let laughter be your clean lust and sanity! So far man has only learned to snicker meanly at his neighbor! Let a laughing away of self be your new right to live forever!} \\
\text{(Act II - Scene I)}
\end{align*}
\]

It is here that Lazarus evidences a will to be free and happy. All that makes life an unnecessary tragedy of hate, jealousy, fear, Puritanical bigotry, sexual depravity are swept aside. All this representing our so-called civilization is condemned. Winther very effectively describes the significance of this play. He says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The arraignment of our civilization for its weakness,} \\
\text{cowardice and tragic failure is a theme in the play as it} \\
\text{is in almost every play that O'Neill has written....for a} \\
\text{civilization that offers as the final culmination of its}
\end{align*}
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ideals such a spectacle as the recent World War is rotten to the core. To the nostrils of the poet and all sensitive men it stinks with the filth of the charnel house. Not only do the people torture themselves to the point of destruction during the periods of their wars, but during peace-times—those rare intervals, those strange interludes—they systematically deny themselves the pleasure and freedom that might be possible for them. Like the Orthodox Priest in “Lazarus Laughed,” they cry out against joy and laughter saying with him: “It is a foul sin in the sight of Jehovah.” He lives upon the torture and the conviction of sin, and knows only too well that if you take from man the fear of sin you take from him the fear of death. When the open sky, the stars, the sunshine and the song of the birds are man’s shrine, and not the white sepulchre, then he will no longer be a slave to the religion of death. He will then be free from morality as Nietzsche defines it: “Morality is the idiosyncracy of decadents, actuated by a desire to avenge themselves successfully upon life.” The morality of self-renunciation, which is essentially the morality of degeneration, will exist no more.1

Indeed, O’Neill’s philosophy of individualism is very emphatically expressed in the foregoing summary. Man, it seems, misses completely the joy of living by the constant and fearful thoughts of death; at every turn he is walled-in by a bundle of “don’ts”; and in conforming to patterns against his will, he becomes merely a puppet at the mercy of conventions; life in its fullest meaning becomes a falsity; it is for such that Lazarus reproaches man as he says:

You laugh, but your laughter is guilty! It laughs a hyena laughter, spotted howling its hungry fear of life. ...you wish to forget! Remembrance would imply the high duty to live as a son of God—generously! With love!—With pride!—With laughter! This is too glorious a victory for you; too terrible a loneliness! Easier to forget, to become only a man, the son of woman, to hide from life against her breast, to whimper your fear to her resigned heart, and be comforted by her resignation: To live by denying life. (Act I—Scene II)

And so we see that O’Neill points out that man with his unnatural laws

1Ibid., pp. 198-200.
has thrown aside the real life. Out of his refusal to embrace the full rich life, he has "mixed a witch's potion for himself; and having once drunk the fatal brew, he is no longer true to the mother who bore him; but instead he has become a monster with a divided allegiance."\(^1\) If man is ever to find happiness, he must listen to the strong fresh voice of Zarathustra.\(^2\) "Remain true to the earth, my brethren, with the power of your virtue! Let your bestowing love and your knowledge be devoted to the meaning of the earth."\(^3\)

O'Neill, like Nietzsche, finds the true life in the scrap that the moralist throws away. According to Clark, "he cautions man against the pale shadows of asceticism and holds that man must go back to the earth for meaning, a human meaning."\(^4\)

Undeniably, O'Neill persistently proclaims the sanctity of man in his natural state; he sees man's natural expression as something to be proudly exhibited rather than guiltily suppressed. For man is expressing what is natural with him is expressing also the Godly in him. Out of such a belief must have come O'Neill's deep concern for the elemental passions found in all human nature; these passions or drives he truthfully portrays and proudly exhibits. Indeed, he glorifies the primitive man which may very well be referred to as the "Doctrine of Primitivism." Lovejoy and Boas very ably define this doctrine. They say:

Primitivism is a name for two distinct tendencies in human thought, which appear to have had separate origins

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 91.
\(^2\)In Zarathustra all opposites are resolved into a new unity. "The loftiest and the basest powers of human nature...stream from one source with an eternal certainty." Ibid., p. 95.
\(^3\)Ibid.
\(^4\)Ibid., pp. 91-92.
but early began to fuse and interpenetrate. These were Chronological primitivism and Cultural Primitivism. Chronological primitivism looks to the future; it seeks to remove what has been lost; and it is upon a single brief and remote bygone episode in history that it fixes the imagination. Cultural Primitivism is the discontent of the civilized with civilization. Man is good by nature. But for his lapse from his primeval simplicity and innocence, some propensity latent in his own constitution must have been responsible. The Chronological Primitivist has always been confronted with the question why man lapsed from his original and better state. What desires or passions were the inner cause of his undoing. 1

Although there is a slight difference between the two, Chronological Primitivism and Cultural Primitivism, common to both is the conviction that the time is out of joint; that all the discord in civilization is the result of an abnormal complexity and sophistication in the life of man in his civilized state. The over-sophistication led to a suppression of emotions. Man's nature has thus been corrupted by his own hands. Thus in this way of looking at life, primitive people are held up as a model for social living. 2

Based upon this way of thinking is the message of Eugene O'Neill, who sees the man closest to nature as most truly representative of life in its reality. It is no wonder, then, that the Negro became an important subject with him, 3 as we shall see in the following chapter.

We come now to the final criticism that O'Neill makes of our complex social order. Just as he criticizes it for its curbing our natural desires,

3In glorifying the primitive, O'Neill, of course, did not steer a solitary course. Rudyard Kipling frequently contrasted the white man and the native, often to the advantage of the latter; in 1909 Gertrude Stein, a sponsor of the African art movement in France, suggested in "Melanctha" that instinctive love is best and most satisfying. Hugh M. Gloster, op. cit., p. 107.
so does he criticize it for its class strife. *Fog*, a one act play, is sym-
bolic of the state of mind of the business man who is adrift in a boat, with
a poet, a woman and a dead child. When the business man expresses his con-
cern over the dead child, the poet replies by giving a lecture on social in-
justice which surrounds the lives of the poor. He says:

What choice had that poor child? Naturally sickly and
weak from under feeding, transplanted to the stinking room of
a tenement or the filthy hovel of a mining village, what
glorious opportunities did life hold out that death should
not be regarded as a blessing for him? I mean if he possessed
the ordinary amount of ability and intelligence, considering
him as the average child of ignorant Polish immigrants. Surely
his prospects of ever becoming anything but a beast of burden
were not bright, were they?¹

The conversation continues and the business man, conscious that he is
the object of this implication, answers that he is not responsible. But the
poet assures him that he, like all the other self-satisfied successful mem-
bers of society, is responsible for the welfare of his less fortunate fellow-
man.

In *The Hairy Ape*, O'Neill presents a problem that has broader implica-
tions than the immediate success or failure of Yank. Yank becomes aware of
the fact that he does not "belong." He finds out that while he has been do-
ing his work, the world has been revolutionized by machinery; a revolution
in which he has no place. He finds that a new world which has no regard for
human rights and aspirations has left him stranded. The one thing around
which Yank had centered his whole life was that he "belonged," that the world
needed him; and when he awoke to find that he was no longer needed, he became
explosively frustrated. When Yank is about to be arrested for loitering on
the street, the discourse between Yank and the policeman is significant:

¹ Eugene O'Neill, "Fog," *Thirst and Other Plays* (Boston, 1914), p. 111-
113.
Yank — Sure! Look me up! Put me in a cage! Dat's de on'y answer yuh know. G'won, look me up!

Policeman - What you been doin?

Yank — Enough to gimme life for! I was born see? Sure dat's de charge. Write it in de blotter. I was born, get me! Say where do I go from here?

Policeman - Go to hell! (Act I—Scene VII)

This problem of belonging is not Yank's problem alone; it is a problem which challenges the proletariat. Yank is crying out against a civilization which has exploited both man's body and spirit. The Hairy Ape, because of its challenging psychological and philosophical implications, cannot be classed with the type of drama of which Fog is representative; for it does not point a way out. It points out the sickness of the machine age. But it goes even deeper: the whole concept of life, of man's relation to the world, of his place in it, is involved. Yank was not so much concerned with the equal distribution of wealth; all he wanted was to feel "needed."

From such findings as the foregoing, it is evident that O'Neill is concerned with man in relation to his environment. In his earlier plays, such as Fog, he definitely and rather consciously, it seems, pointed directly to a solution; but in later plays, though concerned still with the individual and the social forces, he emphasizes the psychological aspect of our modern social order, as in The Hairy Ape, in which he points out the disease or "sickness of today." He does not merely stress the exploitation of workers, but emphasizes the fact that in our modern civilization man is deprived of the sense of harmony and mental well-being that comes from doing something which is fundamental to the well-being of society.

We may safely observe now, that O'Neill's philosophy of freedom of the individual has naturally carried over into a concern over man's welfare and harmony in the social order. Man must be given freedom to achieve, not suppression because of class strife, as shown in Fog. Moreover, man's mind and
soul must be satisfied also, as illustrated in *The Hairy Ape*, if there is to be harmony. Consequently O'Neill does not ignore the inner nature of man even in his social criticism; he persists in probing instead of contenting himself with only the exterior.

It is evident, then, that O'Neill's realism resolves itself into a philosophy of individualism which leads him to a bold assertion that conventions in curbing the natural instincts in the human being are doing man a great injustice; for them he cannot be true to his own convictions; unlike Lazarus in *Lazarus Laughed*, man is afraid to live life fully and joyously. O'Neill is a firm believer in the inherent good in man; whatever is natural, should find expression.

Truly O'Neill's realism is comprehensive and cosmopolitan; for it has its basis in psychology, and psychology is not confined to any particular class or race; it is the study of the "human being." However, because in his psychological probings, O'Neill finds man so torn between what he desires to do and what conventions say he must do, though to his detriment, he has turned to an exaltation of the primitive or elemental passions in man; for he sees that that man is happiest, in the end, who expresses himself naturally.

Now that we have glanced at what essentially constitutes O'Neill's realism, we may very well consider his application of realism to the Negro.
CHAPTER III

O'NEILL'S REALISM AS APPLIED TO THE NEGRO

We may readily see now that O'Neill's glorification of the primitive, the elemental was to be expected. As a doctrine, primitivism had a vogue in Europe as far back as Rousseau.¹ Later in the second half of the eighteenth century the Doctrine of Benevolence² flourished. There was, as never before, a great output of sentimental literature voicing brotherly feeling toward the less fortunate. This doctrine played an important part in the launching of various humanitarian movements, and was especially prominent in anti-slavery propaganda. This glorification of man in his natural state was to find expression in England in the works of William Godwin and Thomas Paine.³ However, it was not until after World War I, that America began seriously to turn an appreciative eye toward the Negro and his African culture.⁴

Eugene O'Neill became a true exponent of such a spirit in America; and though there are many dealing with the Negro in some aspect of fiction, he was the first to treat the Negro fundamentally as he treated his other

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² Civilized man should manifest the same compassion for his fellow man as did the primitive man.
⁴ "After World War I, Harlem—the most densely settled Negro community in the world and the melting pot of dark folk from Africa, the West Indies, Central and South America and the hinterlands of the U. S. A.—became a national vogue." Hugh M. Gloster, op. cit., p. 112.
characters, that is, from a psychological viewpoint. However, since O'Neill saw man possessing the thinnest veneer of civilization as representative of a model society, he could, perhaps, employ the Negro to a greater advantage because the black man was young in American culture. The Negro, therefore, more nearly expressed the elemental drives in human nature. Thus by obtaining the most realistic picture of what these drives are, how they are motivated, and the thwarted spiritless shadow of a person left when these primeval instincts are suppressed, O'Neill is again mirroring back to society, as a whole, its hypocrisy in persistently clinging to a mere shell of life, conventions.

So it is that O'Neill employs the Negro in his drama. Ernest Boyd says of O'Neill:

"It has always seemed to me that Eugene O'Neill's strength lies in his capacity for feeling and projecting onto the stage simple elemental passions."\(^1\)

This being true, O'Neill would naturally turn to the Negro, whose emotions he depicted faithfully; for he was well equipped with such information, since he had filled his mental notebook with all sorts of rough pictures of unconventional humanity.\(^2\) Moses gives a very effective description of the people O'Neill chose to depict:

Unmasked, bared to the soul, raw life surging in emotion, roaring with hate, instinct with sex, calm with the exhaustion of spent blasphemy, living to the full a life of energy, lusting, loving, hating, wasting away with desire, the people whom O'Neill chose to depict were primeval. There was no

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\(^2\) O'Neill had been an ordinary seaman in the forecastle; he had been an able seaman on an American liner. He had traveled to South Africa and had come back on a cattle barge. He had spent months in a Tuberculosis Sanitorium. Montrose J. Moses, *op. cit.*, p. 427.
sophistication about them. Life is a force bursting all bounds in the O'Neill drama.¹

We now begin our explanation of O'Neill's plays of Negro life in search of inner conflicts or passions. In turning to O'Neill's first experiment with Negro life and character, The Dreamy Kid, we see that it is a psychological study of the passions of fear and superstition. The situation is this: Mammy Saunders is dying. Her grandson, the Dreamy Kid, though in hiding for the charge of having murdered a white man, has secretly returned to see how his grandmother is. He has fought a battle within himself as to what his duty was, as over against the risk he would be taking, if he came back to visit his grandmother. However, he finally decides more from a superstitious fear that mammy would leave a curse on him if he failed to come to see her. Dreamy speaks to Ceely Ann, his sister, as he enters:

Sssshh! Can dat bull Ceely! I wasn't pinnin' to beat it up here, git me? De boys was all persuading me not ter take de chance. It's takin' my life in my hands, dat's what. But when I heerd it was ole mammy croakin' and axin' me ter see me, I says ter myse'f: 'Dreamy, you gotter make good wid old mammy no matter what come—or you don' never get a bit of luck in yo' no mo'.²

Later, near the end of the play when Irene, his girl friend, tells him that the policemen are on their way up to arrest him, he tries to tear himself away from mammy; but she keeps him at her bedside. The following conversation gives an insight into the battle which ensued in Dreamy's mind as he was faced with an intense conflict whether to throw all caution to the wind and escape, and thereby become a hypocrite to what he firmly believed in, or whether or not he should admit these superstitious fears, a vital part of

himself, and say again as O'Neill would say "this is worth the struggle, for it is the thing that I believe in:"

Irene - Come on Dreamy (Mammy groans)
Dreamy- What's de matter Mammy?
Irene - Dreamy: Fo' Gawd's sake!
Mammy - Lord have mercy! Gimme Yo' hen' chile.
  Yo' aint gwine leave me now, Dreamy?
  Yo' aint, is yo'? Yo' ole Mammy will boddler yo'
  long. Yo' know w'at yo' promise me, Dreamy!
  Yo' promise yo' sacred word yo' stay wid me till
de en'. (with an air of somber prophesy—slowly)
  If yo' leave me now yo' aint gwine git no bit er
  luck s' long's yo' live, I tells yo' dat.
Dreamy- Don' yo' say dat, mammy!
Irene - Come on, Dreamy!
Dreamy- (Slowly) I can't (in awed tone) Don' you hear de
  curse she puts on me if I does?
Mammy - Don' go chile!
Dreamy- I want leave dis room, I swar ter you!
  (To Irene) De game's up gal!
Irene - You gwine stay?
Dreamy- I gotter, gal. I aint gwine agin her dyin' curse.
  No, suh!

Certainly this play is a vivid portrayal of the superstitious fears
which man newly removed from a primitive environment would naturally possess.
Dreamy, though faced with a murder and the shocking reality that the police
would catch him, stood firmly by his convictions. These convictions inevi-
tably led to his death; but for the Dreamy Kid, death in this way was de-
sirable; for he died clinging to what he believed in most.

Perhaps it should be made clear here that O'Neill in his depicting pri-
mitive passions does not necessarily condone such passions: he is simply
saying in a symbolical manner that society, like the primitive man, must
stand by what it believes in and dispossess itself of hypocrisy.

With this in mind we may proceed with the next play for consideration,

1Ibid., pp. 248-49.
The Emperor Jones, which is also a study of racial subconscious fears.¹

The story is as follows: Brutus Jones, an American Negro, has made himself ruler over a group of natives in the West Indies. He is an escaped convict and has ruled as Emperor for two years. He has made quite a sum of money by which, from exploiting the ignorant "bush-niggers," he plans to leave the island before the natives discover his treachery. However this discovery comes unexpectedly; for, as the play opens, the natives have gone to the hills to get up enough courage to attack the Emperor. As Jones learns of this, he plans to leave at once. He yet has little fear because he has made the natives believe that only a bullet of silver can kill him; and he does not believe them to be in possession of silver, or capable of devising such a bullet. As the Emperor makes for the dense woods, he has six bullets in his gun; five lead ones for the natives, and the sixth and last of silver, "to cheat 'em out o' gettin me." Then as Jones finds himself in the midst of the great jungle, he is cheerful enough at first as he says: "Cheer up, nigger, de worst is yet to come." Later as he has sat down to rest and the beating of the "tom toms" keeps up a steady rhythm, we note anxiety creeping into his speech:

Wonder dey wouldn't git sick o' beatin' dat drum.
Sound louder seem like.... Sho, dey's miles an miles behind. What you gittin' fidgety about? (But he sits down and begins to lace up his shoes in great haste, all

¹Elizabeth L. Green, op. cit., p. 30. In conjunction with this idea is that expressed by Taylor. He says:

By no means least among O'Neill's qualities is a tireless curiosity about man's inner nature, a ceaseless probing of the human soul comparable to that of Hawthorne. But O'Neill's spiritual curiosity, instead of being shaped by a heritage of Puritanism, is conditioned by modern psychology and especially by the Freudian revelation of the irrational self. To tap their inner streams of consciousness, or even the subconscious of his characters, has been one of O'Neill's constant aims.

Such a play is The Emperor Jones. W. F. Taylor, op. cit., p. 411.
the time muttering reassuringly) You know what? Yo' belly is empty, dat's what's de matter wid you. Come time to eat! wid nothin but wind on yo' stomach, o' course you feels jiggedy. (Act I—Scene II)

Jones then proceeds to find the food that he has hidden in the jungle for this occasion; but not being able to find it, he becomes so excited that he lights a match, for which he rebukes himself and promises to be more careful. But just at this time, he imagines that he sees black shapeless figures creeping toward him, which are only his fears. Jones does not hesitate, but fires at them. Having again given expression to his fears, he comforts himself with the idea that they were only little animals that he saw, and he plunges again into the forest. Later Jones rebukes himself for whistling. The next imaginary fear is "Jeff," whom he has killed with a razor. He speaks to Jeff many times and when Jeff does not answer, he grabs the revolver and says: "Nigger I has killed you once. Has I got to kill you again? You take it den." (Scene III)1 Again Jones fires. After again calming himself, he goes further into the forest. He now begins to be aware that no matter how fast and long he runs the sound of the drum is as close as ever. Again he sits to rest and again his imagination takes him back to the convict gang. He is being driven unmercifully by the white guard whom Jones has killed. Now Jones, imagining that this same guard is before him, fires his revolver for the third time.

Jones becomes desperate; he prays feverishly to God for help. He no longer pretends that he is unafraid. Then suddenly he is, in his imagination, being sold for a slave. Again he protests and fires his gun. By now the tom toms have become louder. He has only one bullet left and that is the silver

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1Reference to quotes, when not more than three lines, will not be blocked and will be specified as to place immediately following the quote.
bullet. He is now so exhausted that he has to stop to rest; he falls to the ground in utter exhaustion. He then imagines that he sees two rows of slaves waiting and swaying to the rhythm of tom toms. "But," says Block, "the Negro race has experienced terrors even more primitive than these," such as Jones now confronts in the person of the Congo witch doctor who wishes him to sacrifice himself to the crocodiles in the river. And, for the sixth time, Jones fires his revolver—this time it is the silver bullet—at an imaginary crocodile.

This play is an epic history of the civilization of the Negro. O'Neill shows us an intelligent Negro who learned from the whites the skill of daring and bluff. He has from them acquired the surface characteristics or veneer of the civilized man which he believed to give him ascendency over the tribe of blacks. But finally, even that steel courage which the Emperor possesses, begins to falter. So dramatically and forcefully is this terror dramatized throughout the play that the reader, despite the injustice Jones has done to the tribe of natives, begins to pity him.

It is indeed interesting to note how Jones scorns the ignorant "Niggers" with their fears and superstitions, which he, himself, would have us believe are no part of him. He knows all the answers because he has been exposed to the white man's civilization. He speaks to Smithers thus:

You heah what I tells you, Smithers. Dere's little stealin' like I does. For de little stealin' dey gets you in jail soon or late. For de big stealin' dey makes you Emperor and puts you in de Hall o' fame when you croaks.

1 Anita Block, op. cit., p. 142.
2 Barret H. Clark, op. cit., p. 57.
3 Bond is in accord with this idea. See Fredrick W. Bond, op. cit., p. 70.
(Reminiscently) If dey's one thing I learns in ten years on de Pullman ca's listenin' to de white quality talk, it's dat same part. And when I gits a chance to use it I winds up Emperor in two years. (Scene I)

How sure of himself Jones seems in boasting of his civilization! Yet, it is this same Jones, who, before learning that the natives are preparing to come for him, says to Smithers: "No taint dat, I know you'se scared to steal from me. On'y I aint lowin' nary body to touch dis baby. She's my rabbit's foot." (Scene I) Later in the forest, he says:

Hants; you fool nigger, dey aint no such thing! Don't de Baptist parson tell you dat many time? Is you oivialized, or is you like dese ign'rent black niggers heah? (Scene IV)

But Jones does not succeed in convincing his audience nor himself that he is not afraid of such things; for in the course of the drama, he is completely overcome by the fear of superstition. It is such a part of him that no matter how much he resists, it continues to manifest itself, until finally, as the end approaches, the mighty Emperor is oblivious to everything except his kinship with these primeval emotions. His whole being becomes uncontrollably allergic to the low wailing of these people; his voice mingles in perfect unison, and the earth again proclaims him her true son.

Although Jones is the central figure in this dramatization of the passion of fear and superstition in conflict with ambition, the fears and superstitions of the natives in general add greatly to the presentation. They fear Jones as they fear God. They believe that only a silver bullet can kill him. Once, by some coincidence, Jones, when shot at by one of the natives, was not killed; for some reason the gun failed to go off; and Jones from that time onward, pretended that only a silver bullet could get him. In the following conversation between Smithers and Jones may be seen something of the reaction of the natives toward Jones:
Jones -- When dat murderin' nigger ole Lem tries to kill me, takes aim ten feet away and his gun misses fire and I shoots him dead, what you heah me say?

Smithers - You said ye'd got a charm so' no lead bullet 'd kill yer. You was so strong only a silver bullet 'd kill yer, you told em.... You know they wasn't 'ardly liable to get no silver bullets.

Jones -- (laughing) And dere all dem fool bush niggers was knelin' down bumpin' deir head on de ground like I was a miracle out o' de Bible. Oh Lawd from dat time on I has dem all eatin' out of my hand. I cracks de whip and dey jumps through. (Scene I)

Indeed, then, The Emperor Jones is a great story of fear and superstition. Does O'Neill condone fear and superstition as such? Hardly; but he would, and does, glorify man for expressing himself "naturally." There is a certain pride one finds in being true to himself, that all the tragical consequences cannot erase. Recall the Dreamy Kid as he says almost peacefully to Irene: "De game's up, I tole you. I 'spect it better be. Yes suh. Dey'd get me in de long run anyway, and wid her curse de luck 'd be agin me."

(ACT I) Dreamy believed in the superstition of a curse so that is what he clung to. And in the end Dreamy is resigned to, if not happy over, his fate when he has remained at the bedside of Mammy, revolver in hand, saying to himself as he awaits his captors, "Dey don't git de Dreamy not while he's live! Lawd Jesus, no suh!" (ACT I)

Although the Emperor Jones seems beaten in the end, if we recall O'Neill's philosophy as expressed in Lazarus Laughed to the effect that "there is no death; there is only life. Death is dead," then we know that Jones has lived his life in the two years that he has been Emperor; for life does not exist in span, but in intensity. And who could truthfully feel that Jones regrets his previous actions or what the future holds as he says to Smithers when forced to flee:

Does you think I'd slink out de back door like a common nigger? I'se Emperor yit, aint I? De Emperor Jones leaves
de way he come, and dat black trash don’t dare stop him—
not yit, lest ways. (He stops for a moment in the doorway
listening to the far-off but insistent beat of the tom toms)
Listen to dat roll call will you? Must be mighty big drum
carry dat fan. (Then with a laugh) Well, if dey aint no whole
brass band to see me off I sho’ got de drum part of it. So
long white man. (Scene I)

Then just before Jones departs these are his words to Smithers:

You kin bet yo’ whole roll on one thing, white man. Dis
baby play out his string to de end and when he quits, he quits
wid a bang de way he aught. Silver bullet aint none too good
for him when he go, dat’s a fac! (Scene I)

We recall also Smithers’ epitaph of Jones: "Es a better man than the
lot o’ you put together." Later as he stands over the dead body of Jones,
who has been killed with a silver bullet, Smithers says: "Where’s yer 'igh
an’ mighty airs now, yer bloomin majesty? (Then with a grin) Silver bul-
lets. Gawd blimey, but yer died in the eighth o’ style any ’ow. (Scene VIII)

We are inclined to feel, along with Smithers, that somehow this ending
was acceptable to the Emperor Jones. Curiously enough, despite his reckless
views of life, Jones demands a certain admiration; he never feared to take
his chance and live as he desired. He was at least true to himself and his
beliefs.

Yet another powerful dramatization of passions of fear and superstition
is the play All God’s Chilluns Got Wings.1 Although the play has sociologi-
cal significance, Clark believes that the author is not basically moved by
the sociological problem of the American Negro any more than Shakespeare was
concerned over the quarrel between the Capulets and the Montagues; for it

1O’Neill pays quite a tribute to the Negro in drama as he says of Paul
Robeson:

In gratitude to Paul Robeson, in whose interpretation of
Brutus Jones I have found the most complete satisfaction an
author can get, that of seeing his creation born into flesh
and blood, and in whose creation of Jim Harris, in my All God’s
is essentially a drama of love and passion. All God's Chilluns dramatizes the pathetic mania of a white girl who, after her marriage to a Negro boy, is tortured by a violated race pride and a subconscious fear of the Negro race. Not only does Ella fear the superstitions of the Negro, but still more intensely does she fear that the Negro, in this instance, Jim Harris, her husband, will someday become her superior. On the other hand, we have the fears of Jim which arise, for the most part, from the fact that he is black, and thus cannot compete with the whites. Bond poses a question as to why O'Neill permitted this unusual attraction between Jim and Ella:

With dextrous dramatization, he goes about the task of compelling the reader and play goer to wonder how and why did such a fine fellow as Jim got tied up with such a terribly wicked woman, who was the rejected harlot of a pugilist. Unlike Othello's charming and ever appreciative Desdemona, this licentious creature was a thorn in the side of Jim. His ambition to become a lawyer failed to materialize because of his spouse's indifference and lack of wifely interest.

Certainly these are thoughts for consideration; but we are inclined to agree with Lewisohn, who says that O'Neill starts with a credible fact: "Why," he asks, "mate a first rate Negro with a third rate white woman? Because these are the facts. Only this type of woman would marry a Negro in America today. Only this Negro, on the other hand, would have both the mentality and the devotion. Ella has been cast out by the white man that she

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1 Fredrick W. Bond, op. cit., p. 74.
2 Barrett H. Clark, op. cit., p. 48. See also Ludwig Lewisohn, "All God's Chilluns Got Wings," The Nation, XCVI (June 9, 1924), 664; and Montrose J. Moses, op. cit., p. 420.
3 Walter F. Taylor, op. cit., p. 413.
4 Fredrick W. Bond, op. cit., p. 72.
loves, and Jim is always there to offer her comfort. So she turns to him in her loneliness.\(^1\) Jim, on the other hand, does not see the Ella who has snubbed him since they were kids, nor does he see the Ella degraded and low-cast as she is in reality; he sees only the innocent little "painty face" of his childhood days. Thus they become husband and wife.

Let us turn now directly to the fears that harrass Ella. We have said that Ella's great fear is that of losing her superiority over her Negro husband. The conversation, after Ella and Jim have returned from abroad, among Ella, Jim, and Hattie, Jim's sister, is illustrative of Ella's fears:

Ella - (greeting Hattie) I remember. But you've changed so much.

Hattie - Yes, I've grown older, naturally. I've worked so hard. First I went away to college.... Then I took up post-graduate work when suddenly I decided I'd accomplish more good if I gave up learning and took up teaching....

Ella - I didn't know you had been to school so long. Where are you teaching? In a colored school, I suppose.

Hattie - Yes, a private school endowed by some wealthy members of our race.

Ella - (Suddenly, even eagerly!) Then you must have taken lots of examinations and managed to pass them didn't you?

Hattie - I always passed them with honors.

Ella - Yes, we both graduated from the same high school didn't we? That was dead easy for me. Why I hardly even looked at a book. But Jim says it was awfully hard for him. He failed one year remember? (She turns and smiles at Jim, a tolerant, superior smile but one full of genuine love.)

Jim - Yes, it was hard for me Honey.

Ella - And the law school examinations Jim hardly ever could pass at all. Could you? (She laughs lovingly) (Act I--Scene I)

Thus we note that Ella's fear is a fear that breeds on the poison of man's artificial and hypocritical civilization. Later in the play when Ella is left alone with the portrait of Jim's father, she says with a sneer:

\(^1\)Ludwig Lewisohn, op. cit., p. 664.
It's his Old man—all dolled up like a circus horse!
Well, they can't help it; it's in the blood, I suppose.
They're ignorant, that's all there is to it. (Act I--Scene I)

As long as Ella can feel superior, she is satisfied and she has no fears.

When Jim fails for the last time, his examination to be a lawyer, Ella is very happy. He is once more her old Jim. She later admits to Jim that she carried the knife about with her to torture him so he would be unable to sleep. She knew this would result in his inability to concentrate as he would be completely fatigued. She remains happy over his failure to pass the examination to the end of the play.

Though Ella is not a Negro character, she affords a challenging study in contrast to her husband Jim, a Negro. Ella's fear was merely one of losing her superiority. But in Jim we see none of the revengeful spirit that is in Ella. His greatest fear it seems is losing Ella. There is nothing selfish about his feeling toward her. The following statement is his reaction when Hattie advises him to leave Ella:

Do this—and that happens. Only it don't. Life isn't simple like that—not in this case.... I can't leave her. She can't leave me, and there's a million little reasons combining to make one big reason why we can't. For her sake—if it'd do her good—I'd go—I'd leave. I'd do anything—because I love her. I'd kill myself even—jump out of this window this second... (Act I--Scene II)

Even after Jim hears Ella call him "nigger," he is still in love with her. After he knows that it is she who has defeated his dreams and aspirations, he continues in his fierce love for her; and as the play is ending, and Ella pleads with him not to leave her, he answers: "Never honey." To Ella's request that he become her playmate as in their youth, he answers: (exalted) "Honey, Honey, I'll play right up to the gates of Heaven with you." (Act I--Scene III)
In the character of Jim we have, seemingly, a tragic and pathetic figure whose great love brought only suffering and disaster. However when we study Jim more closely, we know that this suffering was only a superficial thing with Jim. We see that to Jim, as to O'Neill, "the only real bit of happiness is in tragedy." Jim's happiness was bitter-sweet, perhaps; but despite conventions he dared to act in a natural manner, and marry and cherish the girl he loved. This fight was not without heart break; but through it all, he had Ella, evidently what he desired most.

We turn now to a brief glance at The Moon of the Carribees, a portrayal of the bold lustful natures of the Negresses of a West Indian Island. These Negresses are accustomed to come aboard the ship of the white sailors. They bring liquor, and boldly sell themselves to the sailors. Here O'Neill depicts such prostitution as a natural act; these females are not kept behind closed doors appearing one thing to the world when in reality they are just the opposite.

Although Smitty is white, O'Neill shows also that he is a victim of elemental passions even though his veneer of civilization is more closely woven, perhaps, than that of the Negroes. It is as though O'Neill is saying to Smitty, "You are not so far removed from this natural state as your sophistry would lead one to believe." The chorus sings and Smitty tries to remain neutral in his emotions, but this becomes more and more impossible. The low mournful singing of the natives begins to create within him such an emotional disturbance that he says: "I wish they'd stop that song." Then when asked by the Donkeyman if he has ever heard the song before, Smitty replies: "No: never in my life. It's just something about the rotten thing which makes me think of, well, oh, the devil!"
Fear, superstition, lust, these are the elemental drives of which the Negro is a symbol. If ever, the curtains were suddenly and unexpectedly thrown open universally, doubtlessly these same primeval passions, thinks O'Neill, would be found hidden beneath the coating of sophistry that the white man has called civilization.

Just as the Negro is a victim of elemental drives, so it is that hypocrisy, which O'Neill has so effectively symbolized, creates for the Negro an outer conflict, the conflict which arises as he seeks to find his rightful place in the civilization dominated over by his white brother. Man has suffered a loss of the benevolent feeling of the more fortunate brother toward his less fortunate brother.

As we have said over and over again, those who persist in calling O'Neill a sociologist or a philosopher primarily probably miss the true significance of the work of the great dramatist; for O'Neill is primarily the dramatist of the individual soul with its conflicts. But to say that his works have no social implications is also far from the truth. John Mason Brown summarizes our feelings very effectively as he says of O'Neill:

The undoing of many of his people is so certain that the interest shifts as it does not in true tragedy—from the men and women who are tested and broken to the destructive agents that test and break them. Because, instead of tearing the heart by the picture that he paints of the martyr's anguish in the arena, he permits the attention to fasten itself with grim fascination upon the prowess of the lion that is bound to devour him.

We have in such a play as The Emperor Jones a shift from the internal conflict to the outward forces which are the cause of the inner conflicts. This outward force, the injustice of society, has caused fears in the mind of

1 Sophous K. Winther, op. cit., p. 316.
2 John Mason Brown, Up Stage, p. 69. See also Montrose J. Moses, op. cit., p. 427.
the Emperor. O'Neill, here, recreates the tragic history of a race by exhibiting the race—memories of one of its individuals made sentient through terror.\(^1\) We recall the imaginary ghosts that confronted Jones in his flight. He has actually been brutally beaten by a guard; he has been enslaved and he has killed as a result. He has copied the worst faults of the supposedly civilized men under whom he has lived in terror and subserviency; and now that he has escaped, he uses the same trickery that he has learned from the white man—to enslave others. And remembering how unjust were the laws which held him so long in bondage, he says (laughing at his contempt for his own laws) to Smithers, "Aint I de Emperor? De laws don't go for him." (Scene I)

With such a portrayal of the motives for Jones' actions, one is more inclined to sympathize with him; for he is the victim of a gross injustice.

In *The Dreamy Kid* also we have a study of the outer force of injustice as we are shown a Negro who takes the law into his own hands, and kills a man because he knows there is no justice for him. Dreamy has committed murder. There is no denying that fact. But the following conversation between Dreamy and his sister reveals to us that it was only a matter of self-defense on the part of Dreamy:

Ceely - I heard somep'n - bout - what you done Dreamy?
Dreamy - I croaked a guy, dat's what! A white man.
Ceely - What you mean - croaked?
Dreamy - I shot him dead, dat's what! (As Ceely shrinks away from him in horror) Aw say, don' gimme none o' dem looks o' yarn. Twarn't my doin' no how. He was de one lookin' for trouble. I wasn't seeking for no mess wid him dat I could help. But he told folks he was gwine ter git me for a fao', and dat fo'ced my hand. I had ter git him to protect my own life.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Anita Block, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

By a subtle stroke O'Neill expresses how the Negro is sometimes compelled to take the law into his own hands as a means of protection.¹

As we turn once again to All God's Chilluns, we see that here, also, O'Neill switches from the premises of the inner to shed light on motivation. In fact this play has been labelled by critics as a play of miscegenation.² It is this only secondarily. However the fact remains that it goes to the heart of one of America's most violent taboos, miscegenation. It is a serious portrayal of the conflict caused in the Negro's mind, by the way in which he has, through so many generations, been forced to accept an inferior place to that of the white man. Jim Harris, because of the feeling of inferiority, has not been able to pass his examinations. This conversation between Ella and Jim is indicative of such:

Jim - Nothing. I can't explain -- just -- but it hurts like fire. It brands me and my pride. I swear I know more'n any member of my class. I ought to, I study harder. I work like the devil. It's all in my head--all fine and correct to a "t." Then when I'm called on--I stand up--all the white faces looking at me--and I can feel their eyes--I hear my own voice sounding funny, trembling--all of a sudden it's all gone in my head--there's nothing remembered and I hear myself stuttering and give up--sit down--They don't laugh, hardly ever. They're kind, they're good people (in a frenzy) But I feel branded.

Ella - Poor Jim.

Jim - (going on painfully) And it's the same thing in the written exams. For weeks I study all night, I can't sleep, anyway. I learn it all, I see it. I understand it. Then they give me the paper in the exam room. I look it over I know each answer perfectly. I take up my pen. On all sides are white men starting to write. They're so sure--even the ones that I know know nothing. But I know it all--but I can't remember any more--it fades--it goes--it's gone. There's a blank in my head--

¹ Fredrick W. Bond, op. cit., p. 69.
stupidity— I sit like a fool fighting to remember a little bit here, a little bit there—not enough for anything—when I know it all. (Act I, Scene III)

Although Jim admits that the white students hardly ever laugh, he knows that they are feeling their superiority. He is a victim of racial consciousness forced upon him by subserviency to the whites.

O'Neill shows also that there is conflict even within a race; there is this same problem of "superiority" and "inferiority." This special abasement, or inferiority, which the author is trying to express in this story emerges forcefully when Jim, discouraged by Ella's indifference, receives some previous advice from Joe, one of his Negro friends. Joe does not at all relish the idea of Jim's aspiring to a position in life farther up the social ladder than he, himself, is. As Joe and Jim talk, this fact is borne out:

Joe - (stands for a while glaring at Jim, his fierce little eyes piercing out of his black face. Then he spits on his hands aggressively and strides up to the oblivious Jim. He stands in front of him gradually working himself into a fury at the other's seeming indifference to his words) Listen to me, Nigger: I got a heap to whisper in yo' ear. Who is you anyhow? Who does you think you is? Don't yo' old man and mine work on de docks, togidder bfore' yo' old man gits his own truckin' business? Yo' ol' man swallers his nickels, my old man buys him beer wid dem and swallers dat—dat! the on'y diff'rences.... Don't you'n me drag up togidder?

Jim - (dully) I'm your friend, Joe.

Joe - No, you isn't! I sint no fren o' yourn! I don't even know what you is! What's all dis schoolin' you doin'? What's all dis dressin' up and graduatin' an' sayin' you gwine to study to be a lawyer? What's all dis fakin' an' pretendin' an' swellin' out grand an' talkin' soft and polite? What's all dis denyin' you's a nigger—an' wid you aimin' to buy white wid yo' ol' man's dough like Mickey says? What is you? (In a rage at the other's silence) You don't talk? Den I take it out on yo' hide (Grabs Jim by the throat with one hand and draws the other fist back) Tell me before I wreckin' you' face in! Is you a nigger, or isn't you? (Shaking him) Is you a nigger, Nigger? Nigger, is you a nigger?

Jim - (Looking into his eyes quietly) Yes, I'm a nigger. We're
both niggers (Joe's anger vanishes; he offers him a cigarette. Jim takes it. Joe scratches a match and lights both their cigarettes.)

Joe - (after a puff, with full satisfaction) Man, why didn't you 'splain dat in de first place? (Act I—Scene II)

Here again we are aware of O'Neill's ability as a realist; he sees both sides of a question and faithfully represents them.

In our final reference to All God's Chilluns, we cannot fail to see the misery heaped upon Ella and Jim because of conventions; they were ostracized by both white and colored races; and although this particular case is that of Ella and Jim, it has a universal ring.

From All God's Chilluns Got Wings, we move into O'Neill's latest play, The Ice Man Cometh, which is the story of human illusions. It portrays a group of people who have sunk to the bottom in life, but who live on pipe dreams in their drunken, but not wholly unhappy, existence.¹

Joe, the Negro in the play, has a dream of returning to his gambling joint "someday," as do all the others have a "someday" dream. A mere glance into the play might lead one to believe that Joe believes himself just another human being with no race consciousness whatever, but upon closer observation, one sees that there is in Joe's mind a great race consciousness.

His speech indicates as much:

Yes suh, white folks always said I was white. In de days when I was flush, Joe Matt's de only colored man dey, allow in de white gamblin' house. You're alright Joe, you're white dey says. (Act II)

However, certain developments prove that Joe is not so sure of his place among the whites as he pretends, and also that, despite the talk to the contrary by his white comrades, they have not accepted him completely as one of

¹Edmund M. Gagey, op. cit., p. 65. See also Eugene O'Neill, "The Ice Man Cometh," The Best Plays of 1947-48, ed. Burns Mantle (Boston, 1920), p. 7. Subsequent references to The Ice Man Cometh will be made to this edition.
them.

As they are sitting about the table in the saloon, the setting of the play, in their usual drunken manner, Lewis, a former captain in the army, in a drunken stupor, suddenly looks over at Joe and says: "Good God! Have I been drinking at the same table with a bloody Kaffir?" Joe does not know that Kaffir means "Nigger" until it is explained to him. Afterwards, however, Lewis apologizes and Joe says:

No, Captain, I know it's a mistake; you're regular, if you're a Limey. (Then his face hardening.) But I don't stand for "Nigger" from nobody. Never did. In de old days people calls me "nigger" wakes up in de hospital. (Act II)

Later when Joe tries to stop a brawl between Chuck and Rocky—both white—we find the author subtly saying that despite pretension on the part of the white man to the effect that he recognizes the Negro as his equal, the facts decry the opposite: As soon as Joe intercedes, Chuck says: "Keep outa our business, you black bastard." (Then Rocky also turns on Joe as if their own quarrel was forgotten and they had become natural allies against an alien) (Act II)

And so Joe was shaken from his illusion to find out that he has never been accepted as an equal by his white comrades.

Thus in *The Emperor Jones*, *The Dreamy Kid*, *All God's Chilluns Got Wings* and *The Ibo Man Cometh*, O'Neill has dramatized simply and effectively, and with objectivity some of the outer forces that are at the root of the inner conflicts endured by the Negro, who, to O'Neill, is a human being worthy of serious treatment and subject to the same natural forces that condition the thought, action, and patterns of all people.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the decade immediately following World War I, American white writers, for the first time, viewed the Negro as a serious character for literary interpretation. From this time on, the Negro has rapidly gained status for serious artistic treatment. This place of prominence accorded the Negro was partly due to the forces of realism. There was, now, a willingness on the part of the American people, as there had never been before, to give the Negro the thorough and serious study that he deserved. Before this awakening, the Negro, because of his lowly social position and because of a decadent romanticism in art seemed doomed to serve as a comic relief. However, as the days of slavery receded deeper into the past, there was the steadily increasing and ever-alarming problem of giving the Negro due recognition in American life; and as he became more and more an integral part of this life and literature, there were dramatists who were displeased with the black face role that was customarily given the Negro, together with the imitative and sophomoric performances in the American theatre. Thus they sought to paint a truthful and profound picture of life and character and to experiment with new techniques and fresh themes. Beginning at first in an experimental manner, they soon realized that the Negro as histrionic material was endowed with intrinsic merit. Out of this roster of dramatists, emerged Eugene O'Neill, who, because of his true, provocative and sincere portrayal of character, white or black, is known the world over as America's greatest dramatist.

There is no mistaking O'Neill's contribution in bringing new life into the theatre of the first post-war world, infusing it with freshness and vitality, greater sincerity and insight, which is not at all mere imagination,
but a type of realism previously unknown in the field of drama. The fact
that today any aspect of life is rarely prohibited from view on the stages
of our theatres, and that conversation and dialogue flow naturally, is due,
in large measure, to men like O'Neill. After reading such plays as Mourn-
ing Becomes Electra, Desire Under the Elms, The Emperor Jones, All God's
Chilluns Got Wings, we realize that when O'Neill said:

I want to get down in words what people think and feel
without relying upon the simple method of using suggestive
silence; I want to find a way to make them say it in the
rhythm of this country,¹

indeed he was serious; for through various techniques of expressionism he
successfully accomplishes this fact. He is a dramatist of inhibitions, de-
picting the struggle of the outer self with the inner self. He sees man's
outward actions as not always truly representative of his inner self. Be-
cause of such, man is constantly rebelling against himself in a struggle to
avoid these inner tyrannies, and thus live unmolested. Man's outer conflict,
O'Neill sees as caused or aggravated by society which is frequently out of
harmony with his inner desires. Therefore, man, in his attempt to appear as
society would have him appear, parades only those things which will gain for
him social approval. Further, it is traditions or customs which persuade
the man of higher social status to fail to think in terms of the equality of
all men. A shining example of such is seen in the character, Ella Downey,
in All God's Chilluns, who was so bound by traditions or belief in the su-
periority of her race that she could never be completely at peace with her
Negro husband, Jim, although she admits that, fundamentally, Jim is the "whit-
est" person she knows.

¹John Anderson, "Eugene O'Neill," Theatre Arts Monthly, XXV (November,
1931), p. 139.
Indeed, O'Neill represents the affirmative life, the life that is of the earth and apart from man's imposed and erroneous ideas of social or moral values. Out of this belief has evolved his philosophy of individualism; for he believes in a natural expression of one's self despite conventions. And though faced with such accusations as the following by Ervine, who says:

Mr. O'Neill will not admire the efforts that man has made to climb out of the mud, but stands gloomily by exclaiming, "you're dirty!" and not content with thus reviling the creature who toilsomely emerges from the slime, runs at him and tries to push him back into it....\(^1\)

O'Neill has gone forward in expounding through his characters (and especially his Negro characters), the idea that the basis of man's inner conflicts is elemental. Unlike most of the other modern writers of Negro life, O'Neill does not treat the Negro fundamentally as a proletariat; nor frequently is there evident and emphatic the problem of miscegenation; he is the first non-racial writer to minimize these features and to put more emphasis on Negro life in its psychological reality. For, to O'Neill, reality in the treatment of any character means a psychological probing, as well as an accurate and faithful reporting and interpreting of the conditions and circumstances that envelop the individual.

In the Negro, O'Neill sees basically the same conflicts, inner and outer, as in his other characters. However, the Negro becomes for O'Neill the "glorified primitive" (not the noble savage, though); for he sees the man who is closest to the natural, as the truest representation of the whole and full life. In the life and history of the Negro, O'Neill found more of the naturalness and simplicity which appeals to his ideas; for the Negro, being more

\[^1\] Ervine on O'Neill," *Living Age*, CCCXLII (May, 1932), 276.
recently exposed to artificial civilization, has acquired less deeply its sophistication or corruptions; therefore, he becomes, for O'Neill, the symbolist, a symbol of the primitive desires that lurk in the breasts of every human and persists in clamoring for natural expression. A very good example of such is found in The Emperor Jones, wherein Jones is really any man (white or black) caught in a great conflict between the teachings of civilization and his desire to give vent to the fears and superstitions that are a natural part of him; wherein there is an insane lust for power, the same power Jones has known to be manifest in the "civilized" world. Thus O'Neill makes emphatic, through the Negro, his previous contention that man is a bundle of conflicts between what is native in expression and what is artificial. Though shocking, perhaps, to most of us, O'Neill persists in proclaiming the sanctity of man's inherent urges "whatever" they may be; for he sees such as the only end to genuine happiness and peace of mind.

Finally, then, it would seem that O'Neill wages war against conventions, or the institutions which have tended to civilize man to his disadvantage; for with his Negro characters, as with his characters in general, he concludes that those characters lead a more satisfying life when they remain "true to the earth." However, O'Neill does not sermonize; actually, he does not even point a definite way out; he only affirms that life endlessly continues and is somehow good, that always one can say, as did Ponce de Leon in The Fountain:1 "always spring comes again bearing life; always forever again. Spring again, life again!"

Life is a cycle in O'Neill's philosophy; it always is, and always will be; so the concern of the person should be only one of getting the greatest

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1 The Great God Brown... and Other Plays (New York, 1926), pp. 184-185.
joy and satisfaction out of life; for, according to Walter Pater, also, "we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more—our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time."\(^1\) How long one lives does not matter; but how joyously and fully one lives, while he lives, makes a great difference. Man must always say "yes" to life, no matter how swiftly it speeds by; for man inhabits a naturalistic universe, and he should find his happiness not in appeasing his rich heritage, but by making himself as completely in harmony with it as possible. Man, the stars, and the dust are natural creations; as such, they are an inseparable part of each other. When one is torn from the other, there is only incompleteness; the rich life must embrace the whole. In other words, with O'Neill, life must be confirmed even at the expense of individual defeat.

All of the foregoing, O'Neill affirms emphatically in his artistic treatment of the Negro, who today, instead of entering the stage as a buffoon or as a subservient menial, is found full in the center spot as a serious character, as a full-fledged human being equal with others at least in the susceptibility to forces, drives, and desires.

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