THE FATHERS IN THE PLAYS OF
EUGENE O'NEILL

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for the Degree Master of Arts

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I. INTRODUCTION

The world remembers the plays of the greatest American dramatist, Eugene O'Neill, for many elements—their dramatic intensity, their bold technical devices, their marvelous variety. O'Neill will always be known, in addition, for his success in creating some of the most striking characters in the history of the American theater. Some of his women, for example, are masterpieces: Anna Christie, Abbie in Desire under the Elms, Nita in Strange Interlude, Christine and Lavinia Mannon in Mourning Becomes Electra. Some of his colossal male protagonists—especially Yank in The Hairy Ape and Brutus Jones in The Emperor Jones—have carved out a permanent niche in our literature also.

I believe, nevertheless, that O'Neill's greatest achievements in the field of characterization lie in his creations of the fathers\(^1\) in his plays. Fathers, acting as much, are important characters in a dozen of O'Neill's full-length plays. Of the thirteen fathers in these plays\(^2\) each one is striking and powerful in his own way.

In this paper I am going to limit my detailed analysis to three of the fathers in O'Neill's plays, though I will
make occasional references to the others for the sake of comparisons and contrasts. I trust that this method will avoid the tedium of making this work a kind of statistical survey of the plays, and yet will provide a wide enough base for making some generalizations about the "father type" in O'Neill. The three fathers I have chosen are:

1) Chris Christopherson — *Anna Christie* (1920)
2) Ephraim Cabot — *Desire under the Elms* (1924)
3) James Tyrone — *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941)

There are many reasons for choosing these three. First of all, they are probably the most famous and durable of all O'Neill's fathers. Secondly, they occur in three different periods of O'Neill's career. Chris, first conceived in 1919, is of the early period, Cabot, a 1924 creation, is in a middle period, and Tyrone (1941) is in many ways the last of the fathers. Thirdly, although I don't claim that these fathers represent three different types of fathers in O'Neill, they are quite different from each other and do highlight different characteristics. Thus, one can study the father-daughter relationship in Chris; the father-son relationship in Cabot; and the husband-wife and father-family relationships in Tyrone.

In this study each father represents two qualities that
are not merely traits of the fathers themselves, but
general themes for which O'Neill uses his fathers as
proper vehicles. Thus Chris is not only deluded and
accursed as a character, he is the vehicle for the themes
of delusion and the curse which are part of the O'Neill
dramatic message. The reader should not think that be-
cause loneliness, for example, is treated only in the
discussion of Cabot that only Cabot is lonely. All the
six themes treated here—delusion, the curse, loneliness,
the father as god-figure, materialism, tradition—apply
in varying degrees to all three fathers discussed in this
paper—in fact to all of O'Neill's fathers.

The treatment of Chris, Cabot, and Tyrone should,
at least tentatively, point out two concepts: First, that
O'Neill's fathers are masterful character creations that
have a very crucial function in his plays; and that in
spite of their individuality, O'Neill's fathers have
enough in common to be thought of in terms of an O'Neill
"father type."
II. CHRIS CHRISTOPHERSON—ANNA CHRISTIE

1. The family relationship that O'Neill explores most often is the relationship of father to daughter. This kind of interplay is an important feature in eight of the twelve plays that contain outstanding fathers. A consideration of the relationship, therefore, should produce some interesting results.

In Anna Christie Chris Christopherson is emphatically the father of a daughter. Everything he does is done with some reference to Anna and shows a totality of commitment to her. Anna and Chris evidence love for each other in the opening scenes of the play. On Anna's part, however, it is a love tempered by certain reservations. She loves Chris, but, having been ill-used by many men during her sordid past, she is suspicious of all males, thinks that they are out to get what they can from her and leave her flat. Besides, she cannot quite forget the thoughtless way Chris deserted her and her mother and left her to live on a farm in Minnesota. Moreover, like all O'Neill's fathers, Chris has his faults. In spite of his attractive quaintness, he is basically stupid and narrow-minded.6
II. CHRIS CHRISTOPHERSON—ANNA CHRISTIE

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His position as captain of a coal barge holds little charm for Anna at first. In other words, Anna must forgive Chris for being a man, for deserting her, and for his own personality limitations before she can love him. She does forgive all these, however, and she does love him.  

Chris, on the other hand, doesn't have anything to overcome before he can give his love completely to Anna. Though she is now twenty-years-old, she is still his little girl. He is blind, or blinds himself, to the gaudy finery and make-up that indicate her former profession. He quickly overlooks her bursts of temper and her lack of linguistic refinement. For him, Anna can do no wrong. And, indeed, except for the calculating Nin in Strange Interlude and the avenging Levinia in Mourning Becomes Electra, the O'Neill daughters are all rather innocent types. Even Anna Christie, though a prostitute, is a rather romanticized one. The impression O'Neill tries to create with all the background about the cruel Miascents cousins and the thoughtless screaming infants of the hospital is that Anna is not really a bad girl, but a girl with a problem.  
The innocent daughter is usually the passive receiver of the suffering created by the father. Kiser
Carson, for example, in *The Straw*, has an aggravated tubercular condition because her father, Bill Carson, was too parsimonious to hire someone to help around the house while Eileen was sick. She is very nearly deprived of the help of a sanatorium because of her miserliness. Nevertheless, she accepts all without complaint. Anna, of course, has more spirit than Eileen, but basically her father's selfishness has caused her difficulty.

The love which Chris has for Anna prompts him to do all that he can to care for her and to make her happy. Unfortunately, there is an element of personal interest involved in all the solitude. He is proud to have his daughter back, and he enjoys playing the role of father. He enjoys it so much that he wants to run Anna's life for her. When Matt Burke, a stoker, wants to marry Anna, Chris violently opposes him because Chris has planned to see Anna married to some "landfaller." His excuse is to protect Anna from "dat ole devil sea." Actually, he wants to fit Anna into his preconceived notion of a happy family life. If Anna will settle down on some farm, Chris will have done his job as a father, he thinks. Matt is a threat to Chris' success as a father, therefore, and his opposition to Matt takes on the character of a protection of his own ambition rather than that of a fatherly concern for his daughter.
Self-interest disguised as parental concern and protection is common in O'Neill. Professor Henry Leeds in *Strange Interlude*, for example, actually succeeds in preventing his daughter from marrying the man she loved. When questioned about why he did it later on, Leeds answers sadly but quite honestly, "Let us say then that I persuaded myself it was for your sake."[8] Chris persuades himself in much the same way, and Anna despises him for it.

The real clash between father and daughter comes towards the end of this play. In *Anna Christie* the father is hurt most by the conflict. When Anna, intensely indignant, tells of her past life of prostitution, Chris' whole world tumbles down. The revelation crushes him—at least for a time. But the wound is not fatal to the bond. None of the O'Neill daughters remain permanently estranged from their fathers, in fact. It seems impossible that they should, for O'Neill's women are never sufficiently intellectually sophisticated to base their enmity on first principles. The enmity is thus not caused by irreparable injuries and never results in real hatred. When Chris comes back to his little girl after his two-day binge, she forgives all.
The fathers of daughters in O'Neill's plays turn out to be somewhat soft and sentimental in comparison with the fathers of sons. O'Neill couldn't seem to conceive of a man so lacking in tenderness that he would not be, at least in the end, a kind and indulgent father toward his own daughter.

Indeed, we can say that by and large in the plays of O'Neill the father-daughter relationship, though it is tumultuous at times, is not unbearable for either party. Ultimately, in fact, the daughter sympathizes with the father and helps him to overcome his difficulties. He, in turn, shows some appreciation for her kindnesses.

2. If Chris is a good subject in the study of the father of a daughter in O'Neill, surely he is even more suitable as a representative of one of O'Neill's favorite types—the man with a delusion. The pipe-dreams and a man's dependence on it is a theme that comes up very often in the plays. Many of the fathers have pipe-dreams that keep them going on in life. For example, in the play Gold, written before Anna Christie, Captain Iraiah Bartlett has bound up his existence so tightly with the idea that he is going to have a chest of gold by which he and his family may live in opulence, that he dies when he
forces himself to confess that the gold is nothing but cheap brass junk. Bartlett couldn't exist without the hope that the gold would be in with the next tide.

Chris, another sea-captain figure, has a similar delusion. Although his pipe-dream doesn't cause insanity or death, it is just as necessary to his personality. First of all, Chris deludes himself about his own character. He has a false self-image. He sees himself as a victim of the sea. As such he was not, in the past, fit to be a regular father—to live with and care for his wife and daughter. It was only out of consideration for them, in other words, that he allowed them to live in Minnesota. He would have brought them nothing but bad luck. But his pipe-dream is even more elaborate. According to his view—all has gone well. Anna has grown up to be a good, strong, healthy, and very pretty girl. Now she will settle down, live on a farm and have lots of children—his grandchildren. It is absolutely vital to Chris that he look at his past and at his daughter's future in this way. Anything that would serve to awaken Chris from his pipe-dream he must ignore. For example, everyone else in Johnny-the-Priest's saloon knows Anna for what she is immediately upon her appearance. Chris chooses to force into the recesses of
his mind any conclusion that might be drawn from her attire. When it becomes obvious that she loves the sea and would never consent to marry a farmer, Chris refuses to give up in his efforts to deprecate the life of the sailor.

Finally, after she tells him of her past, he neither sympathizes with her nor is angry with her for her conduct. He merely laments the fact that he had to find out about it. "If dat Irish feller don't never come, you don't never tal me dem tanges, Ay don't never know, and everytang's all right." He says, in effect, that he would rather live the lie, undisturbed, than know the truth and be disturbed. Here we can see the awful, corrosive power of the pipe-dream. It rots away all moral power and deprives the dreamer of the capacity for facing reality. Chris' attitude seems contemptible; yet, as O'Neill revealed often in his plays (most effectively in The Iceman Cometh), it is very human and very common.

Even the shock of facing reality for a moment doesn't make Chris relinquish his precious illusion. First he drinks, then he signs up on a steamer bound for South Africa, once again deluding himself by claiming that this second desertion is for Anne's own good. While he is away he can form new dream worlds about Anne and soothe
his troubled soul with them. It is useless to ask Chris to forswear his illusions, because they are part of him. When Con Melody in *A Touch of the Foot* gives up his illusion he loses his pride, his dignity, his nobility and becomes a despicable shell of a man. Let men keep their illusions, says O'Neill, for they must. Indeed, the loss of one pipe-dream often leads to the acquisition of another that is even more destructive. If Chris, for example, were to give up his pipe-dream of attributing all misfortunes to the action of the sea, he would have to charge all the evil that has befallen his family to his own neglect. Such a burden of guilt would surely crush the old sailor. Moreover, blaming himself would be just as illusory as blaming the sea, for, as we shall see, O'Neill believed that man's ability to chart his own destiny and that of others was quite severely limited.

J. Chris Christopherson likewise doubts his capacity to chart his destiny, for he believes that he is under the malevolent influence of the sea. Sailors are tradition-ally superstitious, and so when Chris talks about "dat ole devil sea" as having caused all his troubles, as having cursed him, we might take his words merely as a bit of salt thrown into the characterization by O'Neill. Yet
the curse receives so much emphasis in the play that we
must reject this idea as unsatisfactory. On the other
hand, we cannot attach too much importance to the influence
of the sea because Chris is obviously using it as a kind
of scapegoat for his sins of neglect. Just how seriously
are we to take the idea of the curse in *Anna Christie,*
then? I submit that the "curse" is not the curse of God
nor is it the curse of some material element like the sea.
The "curse" for O'Neill was life itself. After Anna
forgives Chris for opposing her marriage to Matt Burke
she says: "There ain't nothing to forgive, anyway. It
ain't your fault, and it ain't mine, and it ain't his
neither. We're all poor nuts, and things happen, and we
just get mixed up in wrong, that's all."10 There is no
suggestion whatever in those words of any supernatural
agency that is to blame for everything. O'Neill would
argue that men aren't to blame, either, since they do
what they do because their lives just happen to work out
that way. The set of circumstances in which they find
themselves makes them act thus. In the final analysis,
there is no one to blame—not even God.

A passage from *Long Day's Journey Into Night* sounds
exactly the same note. More than twenty years after O'Neill
had Anna say the words cited above he had Mary Tyrone state: "None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it, and once they're done they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever." O'Neill was familiar with the German philosopher Schopenhauer who believed that the best form of tragedy takes place when the misfortune is due to the mere position of the characters in regard to each other, without any one being entirely in the wrong. O'Neill certainly believed that environment and especially the influence of other members of one's family determined to some extent a person's behavior. The individual, however, has some self-determination. O'Neill's anger at American materialism, for example, is difficult to explain if we see him as a mechanistic determinist. As a matter of fact, he despised the idea of a mechanistic world and had little sympathy with (and little knowledge of) the views of pure experimental science. He did believe, however, that man lived in a purposeless universe. With no absolute values to guide him, man was in a moral dilemma. He really had no way of choosing the right action. Thus he was carried away along the current
and drawn inevitably to his fate. Just exactly what the nature of the "current" was according to O'Neill would be very difficult to determine, for, in spite of all his philosophical and theological and mystical gropings, O'Neill was not a philosopher, theologian or mystic. He was a playwright, constantly searching for the truth about life and never able to articulate it in a really coherent way to himself or to his audience. Perhaps the most satisfactory way of grasping the concept of the force that is driving the lives of Chris, Anna, and Matt is to think of it as an eternal, unguided process of becoming in which nothing dies, but all is constantly changing. This force, because it is not directed, is not reliably benevolent. In Anna Christie, at least, it is not.

In fact, though Anna Christie seems to be a sentimental romantic comedy about a bad girl reformed through the true love of a good man, O'Neill tried to make it a tragedy. Indeed, he thought he had done so by ending the play with the gloomy forebodings articulated by Matt and Chris. In other words, in O'Neill's mind it was clear that the "curse" would have its effect in the near future. The so-called happy ending was a kind of "cosmos" between the introductory clause—the play—and the life of inevitable
misery that is to follow. An early unsuccessful version of *Anna Christie*, which O'Neill called *Chris*, had the story centered around the father and his prophetic pronouncements about "eat ole devil sea." In making the play the daughter's play, O'Neill had no intention of playing down the theme of the curse. The public accepted the "Hollywood" ending with delight, however, and refused to take seriously what was to O'Neill the message of the play, namely, the futility of Anna's hope for a new and better life. The way in which audiences perpetually misinterpret the ending of the play has made *Anna Christie* one of O'Neill's most popular plays. The dramatist himself would have thought of it as unfortunate, however. Later in his career O'Neill was to write:

The playwright today must dig at the roots of the sickness of today as he feels it—the death of the old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfying new One for the surviving primitive religious instinct to find a meaning for life in and to comfort its fears of death with. It seems to me that anyone trying to do big work nowadays must have this big subject behind all the little subjects of his plays or novels, or he is simply scribbling around on the surface of things and has no more real status than a parlor entertainer.12

For O'Neill, allowing a "Hollywood" ending would be putting himself in the class of a "parlor entertainer."
Thus, he was very distressed when most audiences missed the doom and despair of *Ann Christie*. Nevertheless, there is no escaping the feeling that the sentimentalism of this play and the softness of the father in it are somewhat ill-suited to O'Neill's tragic message. The playwright didn't make the same mistakes in the next play that we shall consider, for he was never farther from sentimentality than he is in *Desire under the Elms*. 
III. EPHRAIM CABOT--DESIRE UNDER THE ELMS

1. There is a violence in O'Neill's presentations of the father-son relationship that immediately makes them more dramatically spectacular than his presentations of the bond between fathers and daughters. O'Neill couldn't conceive of a father and son who were not at each other's throats. The kind of violence and hatred to which I refer is surely most striking in Desire under the Elms.

O'Neill's fathers can never come to an understanding with their sons because there is no common ground for understanding. The father has drawn his own little world with him through the years of his life and at the present must continue to live in it. Cabot, for example, lives in a universe that is a farm on which one must labor tirelessly and uncomplainingly to please the owner--God--a personage very similar to Cabot himself. Cabot's sons are like him in some ways. Their main interest is in the farm, too, but it has not become the world to them. They must go and discover other worlds before they will be ready to content themselves with Cabot's view. The main difference between Cabot and his sons, though, is his
heroic endurance of the demands of a harsh providence in contrast with their failure to endure. The sons cannot accept his philosophy of life, his religion. Reconciliation is very unlikely under these circumstances. When Andrew tells James Mayo in Beyond the Horizon that he hates the farm and has always hated it, Mayo breaks with him completely. Why? Andrew has struck at the root. The farm is Mayo's life. Jamie and Tyrone in Long Day's Journey into Night are bitter towards each other because Jamie despises precisely the things that Tyrone holds most dear—his ability as an actor, his ancestry, his religion, his "thrift." The point is, then, that O'Neill's fathers have a much more difficult task to face in their association with sons than they can ever have in association with daughters, for the daughters quarrel with the personal faults of their fathers—their vices—and not with them as existents, and with their philosophy of existence.

The sons are not the pure, innocent victims that the daughters are, either. Often they give just as much as they take. After all, even though Cabot is a very hard man, Eben did some rather reprehensible acts in stealing Cabot's money and committing incest with Cabot's third wife. In the father-daughter relationship usually the
father is clearly at fault. It is never possible to
place the guilt on either the father or the son alone.

Of course, one could argue that the father, being
responsible for his son’s upbringing, has only himself to
blame if the son is a blackguard. Some of the son’s evil
inclinations, however, are beyond the control of the
father. Eben, for example, is basically jealous of his
father, and always sees himself in competition with him.
This is true not only regarding the struggle Eben has
with Cabot for the possession of the farm, but even in
regard to sexual prowess. O’Neill in this play draws a
pretty convincing sketch of a man with an Oedipus complex.
Eben sleeps with Minnie, the town harlot, and brags, “She
may've been his’n [Cabot’s] ... but she’s mine now.”

His half-brother Simeon suggests that Eben will want
Cabot’s new wife, too: “Rebbe ye’ll try t’ make her
your’n, too?” Although Eben tells himself that his
motive is vengeance for his mother, his consummation with
Abbie can easily be seen as symbolizing a long desired
union, in Cabot’s place, with his own mother.

Cabot and Eben come into conflict most dramatically
on the evening of the christening party. The murderous
struggle which takes place then, with the father as the
victor, is repeated, never quite so intensely, in many O'Neill plays. O'Neill's fathers are violent. They often threaten their children. In the end, like Cabot, they are not defeated. Cabot's physical and moral strength, then, are not unique among qualities possessed by O'Neill's fathers. The great majority of them are powerful in body, and almost all of them have iron wills.

In *Desire under the Elms* the pathetic aspect of Eben's revolt against Cabot is that Eben is "the spittin' image" of Cabot. His youth, that is, promises an old age like Cabot's. True, he is weaker than the old man, but time and experience would have made him another Ephraim. This kind of irony--the son who is most like his father fighting him the hardest--is not uncommon in O'Neill. After all, it is Andrew who is most like his father in *Beyond the Horizon*, and it is Andrew who leaves. Jamie, who is most like Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, hates him the most. Perhaps the sons feel that by fighting their fathers they achieve a victory over themselves.

At any rate, there is never a reconciliation between Cabot and Eben. Such an outcome would mean a loss of autonomy, a loss of selfhood, to both, and it is precisely
this selfhood that they most desire to preserve.

2. Preservation of selfhood, unfortunately, comes at a high price, the price of loneliness and isolation. This loneliness of the father comes out very strongly in Cabot. In many ways, though he is part of an intimate group, the family, the father is isolated. First of all, he can't really communicate with his family. In Cabot's case his wives haven't understood him, and his sons hate him. His talk is just so much raving to them. When Cabot pours out to Abbie the whole story of his life, she isn't even paying attention to him. He then goes out to sleep with the cows, and it is on this same night that his wife and son betray him.

Cabot is not loved or wanted within the family circle. His wife and sons covet his farm and wish that he would die so that they could take it over. The townspeople hate him, too. They are jealous of his prosperity. Cabot, who hasn’t a friend in the world, is, of all O'Neill characters, the most universally hated, though many of the other fathers are widely disliked, for example, Bartlett in Gold, Mannon in Mourning Becomes Electra, and Melody in A Touch of the Poet.
Naturally, there are reasons for the hatred. Cabot is not a lovable character. In fact, O'Neill leaves absolutely no trace of sentiment in Cabot. He is so rigid and unsympathetic, so lacking in tenderness or even in humanity that he is actually forbidding. It is not only his harshness that makes him terrible, however; rather it is his complete selfishness combined with a stubborn determination to attain any object of his desire. Showing no affection whatever for his sons Peter and Simon, he curses them as they run off. They have been nothing but farm hands to him. When Eben and Abbie go off to be hanged, it's good riddance to them, also. The only object of his affection is the farm—especially the cows. His love for his land is almost conjugal, and yet even the farm he loves because it is part of himself. Thus, Cabot's escape from his family, which the O'Neill fathers always need in varying degrees, takes the form of a closer union with his land. Many of the fathers escape through drinking. When Cabot drinks he does it for the joy of it. After drinking he goes out into the night to union with his land. By the end of the play Cabot has achieved complete independence from his family and absolute possession of the farm—the substitution is complete. The farm is his wife and children both to him now.
3. Cabot's isolation from his family and from society gives him an air of singularity, of mystery. In fact, it is easy to see Epremes Cabot as an Old Testament figure in Des肋 under th肋 Elam. Cabot's Biblical way of speaking is an indication of his affinity with the patriarchs. Cabot's curse on his sons is a typical example: "Lord God of Hosts, smite the undutiful sons with Thy very curse."16 His desire for vengeance on Simeon and Peter, his violent wrath against Eben, his passionate prayer for a child are reminiscent of many characters in Holy Scripture. The farm is a kind of Land of Canaan for Cabot. He swears he would take it into eternity with him if he could.

And yet we must see Cabot ultimately as more than a patriarch or prophet type, for he is actually a god-figure. God to Cabot is "hard an' lonesome." We have already discussed Cabot's lonesomeness; his hardness is every bit as evident. He says many times himself that he is hard. His sons hate him for his hardness. Likewise, he is stronger than those of the younger generation, and his claim that he can do the work of ten younger men has some validity. Seemingly indestructible, he brags that he outlived many of those who scoffed at his youthful ambitions concerning the farm. He plans to live to be a hundred-years-old and
to dance at his birthday party. He is strong and tough and hard, just as his god is.

Cabot's god is a god of wrath and vengeance, a god of rigid laws and sanctions. Cabot himself is rigid. He has made his family work continuously on the farm. Indeed, Cabot worked Eben's mother to death. He wants no respite for himself and gives none to others. As far as sanctions are concerned, Cabot is the first to approve of them. He says "vindicatively" to Eben and Abbie, "Ye'd ought to be both hung on the same limb and left thar t' swing in the breeze an' rot a warnin' t' old fools like me t' b'ar their loneliness alone—an' fur young fools like ye t' hobble their lust."17 There is no hint of pity, of humanity, of mercy in Cabot—nor in his god. Both are "Books of Judgment." Indeed, Cabot's god is a projection of himself, a fact that Eben recognizes early in the play. When Cabot cures Siscon and Peter, Eben says "violently,""Yew 'n' yer God! Allus cuisin' folks—allus muggin' 'em!"18 Cabot's god is not God, but a creation of the old man's mind.

Yet, the very peculiar aspect of the situation is that Eben himself is forced to picture God as a kind of Cabot. Freud held that a man obtains his idea of the deity from his own father. O'Neill would have agreed, I think, on this point. Thus all of O'Neill's fathers are
god-like at least in the sense that their role as authority figures colors the idea that their children have of God. In *Desire under the Elms* Eben follows this pattern. Thus, it is not surprising that he feels no compunction for the sin of incest with Abbie. "ABBIE (lifting her head as if defying God). I don't repent that sin. I ain't askin' God t' forgive that!" "EBEN. Nor me . . . ." Eben rebels against a god who is just as unreasonable as his father.

Actually, in spite of all the talk about religion in this play, God or Divine Providence (in the Judeo-Christian tradition) really plays no part in the work's philosophical setting. The world of *Desire under the Elms* is the world of Nietzsche much more than the world of the Bible. There is no God; there is only a process of becoming, says the German philosopher. God is living in the stones; God is living in the farmer who makes corn sprout from the stones; God is the stones and the man. Cabot, in this process of becoming, like Nietzsche's superman belongs to a race of giants. His motivation is the "will to power." Personal suffering is welcomed if it leads to the affirmation of the will. Pity for lesser men—the "soft" creatures—is unthinkable, for the great must be saved from the emasculating influences of the mediocre. Cabot, having
spurned all human considerations, reigns supreme over his own universe. Perhaps he is not a god, but he surely is a colossal figure—a symbol and yet an individual unique in literature.

With the completion of our discussion of Cabot we have now seen two very different O'Neill father creations. Indeed, they are almost opposites on one very important point. Chris is capable of establishing a connection, a human relationship with those about him—with Anna in particular. Cabot, on the other hand, is incapable of giving himself emotionally to anyone. Even with his youngest son, Eben, he cannot establish contact. These two distant poles—the warmth of Chris and the iciness of Cabot—strangely converge in the character of our next father, James Tyrone in Long Day's Journey into Night. The result is a complexity in this last father that makes him the most interesting of the three.
IV. JAMES TYRONE—LONG DAY’S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT

1. One of the most fascinating aspects of O’Neill’s great confession, Long Day’s Journey into Night, is the intricate interplay of characters. Chris and Cabot both are such fixed characters that from the very outset of the action we cannot foresee that any significant change in them is possible. Cabot especially is like a rock. Nothing that his wife or children do can alter his personality in the least. Thus he is the same at the end of the play as he is at the start. Tyrone is no such fixed character. He is not symbolic in the mode of Cabot, nor is he a kind of prophet of doom, like Chris. Tyrone is a particular father of a particular family. O’Neill painted Tyrone not with the bold, broad strokes that he used for some of his lesser fathers. His artistic care was lavished on his portrait of his own father so conscientiously that the lights and shades rather than the strict definition of the figure strike us as we contemplate the work. In attempting to do strict justice to the memory of his own father by drawing his character truthfully, O’Neill has not over-simplified. Tyrone,
therefore, is the most complicated and richly drawn of all the O'Neill fathers, for James O'Neill himself surely was such in life. We should not overemphasize the biographical element, however, since, like every artist, O'Neill had to be selective in regard to the details of his father's character that he chose to use dramatically. The record of James O'Neill that we have in Long Day's Journey is, for all its truth and richness, but the record of a single day in his life.

Though the father's role in this play is our main concern, we will profit by turning our attention for a moment to the mother. Long Day's Journey into Night is one of the few plays of O'Neill in which the mother plays a significant role, which, nevertheless, remains subordinate to that of the father. In many of the plays the mother is dead or dies in the course of the action. In the few cases where the mother survives, her role is comparatively minor. Often the mothers in the plays serve to dampen the spirits and ambitions of the fathers. They are a kind of drag on their progress. Sarah in Gold contributes to Bartlett's growing insanity with her pleadings for him to confess, her warnings of the curse on his. Nora in A Touch of the Poet is a malicious but uninspiring wife for a man like Cornelius Melody. Christine kills Ezra Manning in Mourning.
Becomes Electra. Mary Tyrone burdresses her husband with misery through her dope addiction and her constant expression of regret about the past. The father, however, in this play as in the others, is far from guiltless. Bartlett, after all, was guilty of murder and needed confession. Melody was putting on a ridiculous pretense. Mamo was stiff, unaffectionate, and inconsiderate. In Long Day's Journey Tyrone has been guilty of niggardliness, of drunkenness, of failure to make a real home for his family. There is no question of placing the blame, and yet there is an observation to be made about O'Neill's conception of mothers and fathers. For O'Neill the father is active, the mother is passive. The father is domineering, the mother is submissive. The father is rigid, the mother is permissive. We do not find in O'Neill the kind of mother who bolsters up the courage and ambition of the father, nor the kind whose influence can reform the father. Indeed, if there is any fault that predominates in O'Neill's mothers it is this lack of the ability to pierce the armor of the father. Some try to do so and fail; others never make an attempt. The latter group (the Nora-type) recall Hickey's wife as she is described by Hickey himself in The Iceman Cometh. She drove Hickey to murder her because she always forgave him—no matter what he did.
This forgiveness was the one reaction that he couldn’t stand.

Mary Tyrone, of all the mothers, I believe, is most loved and most needed. The warmth and depth of the relationship between James and Mary is unrivaled in the plays. Even Nat and Essie Miller, the perfect pair in the nostalgic *Ah, Wilderness* can’t compare with the Tyrones, for the Millers’ love has not had to bear the kind of suffering that would give it the refinement and temper of that existing in the Tyrone household. In O'Neill’s view, however, love doesn’t solve everything. Life is more complicated than that. For O’Neill men’s very existence is his biggest problem. He must find a meaning for life. He must reach understanding before he can ever give himself completely in love. O’Neill felt that love could never supply the peace of soul that this modern world—in the absence of absolute values—had lost.

Not only can we study the father-mother relationship most effectively in *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, but this play best reveals the entire family complex. There is in O’Neill’s telling of the story of his own family a kind of balance of influence among the members that one doesn’t see in the other works. Of course, this play doesn’t concern
itself with any specific plot, as others do. The whole effect depends on the interplay of the characters. It was a daring drama for O'Neill to attempt, for it would seem that there could be nothing more prosaic than "A Day in the Life of the O'Neill's." This is a play without the benefit of melodramatic scenes such as the sick-of-time sailing of the schooner in Gold. It has no picturesque settings such as "Johnny-the-Priest's" or a coal barge. It lacks, except in the fog, the mysterious, moody atmosphere of Desire under the Elms or Mourning Becomes Electra. It contains no overwhelming personalities like Cabot. In short, it seems to have none of the qualifications that would make it good "theater." Yet it is probably O'Neill's greatest play. Why? Because it is so honest, so true, so real that it transcends its own character of autobiography and becomes universally applicable. O'Neill here puts his finger on the pulse of all family life. He shows people who love each other hurting each other because they can't simplify themselves to the extent that they can fit into the mold that others in the family have made for them. As much as they want to merge into the unity of the family, they must keep their individuality. The play is complicated. So is life, says O'Neill.
2. According to O'Neill, the cause of much of the trouble within the family, and even among nations, was an inconsiderate materialistic outlook on life. During an interview which took place in the summer of 1946 while rehearsals for The Iceman Cometh were in progress, O'Neill said:

Some day, this country is going to get it—really get it. We had everything to start with—everything—but there's bound to be a retribution. We've followed the same selfish, greedy path as every other country in the world. We talk about the American Dream and want to tell the world about the American Dream, but what is that dream, in most cases but the dream of material things? I sometimes think that the United States, for this reason, is the greatest failure the world has ever seen.  

These are bitter words, not against America, but against materialism. O'Neill thought that the whole secret of human happiness could be summed up in the words of Christ: "For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matt. 16, 26) He was convinced that Americans had lost their souls by their concentration on the accumulation of material wealth to the exclusion of other values. It is unfortunate that O'Neill himself wasn't clear what the other values were. He was absolutely sure of one idea, however. He hated greed and miserliness and the purely pragmatic approach to life with an implacable hatred.
The fathers in the plays turn out to be the supporters of this materialistic point of view. Thus they themselves are very often unlovable. Selfishness and greed run through the characters of the fathers all the way from *Beyond the Horizon*, in which James Mayo want his son Andy to marry Ruth Atkins so that the Mayo and Atkins farms can become one, to *Long Day's Journey*, in which Tyrone hesitates to send Edmund to a private sanatorium because the expenses will be too high.

Let us consider Tyrone's case itself for a moment. Because he is afraid of ending his days in the poorhouse, he has ruined his own career in the theater and lost his opportunity to become a truly great artist. At the wrong moment a chance to make forty thousand dollars a year by playing Monte Cristo was offered, and he snapped at the lure of financial security. "What the hell was it I wanted to buy, I wonder..." he says. By being identified with the part, James Tyrone became the Count and thus was irretrievably associated with everything that was old in the melodramatic theater of the nineteenth century. He missed his chance to do anything beyond entertaining for financial compensation.

His family troubles can be traced to his stinginess, also. He was too close-fisted to get a good doctor for
Mary in her difficult childbirth. Through the clumsy
ministrations of a second-rate physician she contracted
the dope habit which has made her life a madness and has
been a nightmare to all the family. Like Bill Carmody in
*The Stray*, Tyrone was responsible for tuberculosis gaining
ground against his son Edmund.

The constant quarreling in the family comes in great
measure from Tyrone’s miserly habits, such as locking up
the liquor in the cellar and insisting that lights be
turned off. Everything Tyrone does for the family he
does only half-way. Their home and its furnishings are
strictly second-rate. The car and chauffeur he supplies
for Mary are poor imitations of elegance. The household
help is underpaid and thus is inexperienced and clumsy.
Family life, then, as well as Tyrone’s personal life, has
been spoiled by miserliness.\(^{22}\)

Moreover, Tyrone’s whole outlook on life is pragmatic.
He thinks of it as a kind of cut-and-dried affair—almost
like a business. Tyrone’s formula for life would run
something like this: Set your sights on some practical
goal, force yourself to achieve it, earn your living,
raise a family, die, go to heaven. It is all very simple.
Thus he is forever stressing the point that his sons,
especially Jamie, aren't settling down, aren't making anything of themselves, aren't establishing themselves in financial independence. Part of the explanation for this constant harping is that Tyrone, like many other O'Neill fathers, has "no nerves," that is, he doesn't have a sensitive, poetic soul, and he can't comprehend those who do. James Mayo in Beyond the Horizon can't understand his son Robert. He can't see why Robert should not be attracted to working on a farm, why he should want to go "beyond the horizon" in quest of adventure, mystery, of whatever may be there to feed his soul. Tyrone, though very different from Mayo and Cabot in some ways, is still the "hard" father burdened with "soft" sons. Tyrone was the kind of man, when young, who refused to look into the future with a view toward anything but financial security. The probable box-office take was his main concern. Now, as an old man, he refuses to entertain for very long any regrets about the spiritual condition in which this policy has left him. His sons, seeing their futures, perhaps, mirrored in their father's present, can't help looking beyond the economic considerations of life. They are stymied because their gazes are broader than Tyrone's ever was, because they fear for their souls in a way that he never did.
3. Of course, the big clash between father and sons in this play is the clash between tradition and modernity, between a simple, secure view of life and a complicated, frightening view of it. Tyrone himself is the bearer of tradition. In this he resembles many of the fathers—whose children revolt against them precisely because they are trying to break with tradition. Tradition rests secure on its basic assumptions. No matter what agonies he has to endure in Long Day's Journey, Tyrone never suffers the pain of doubt about his position in the universe. First of all, Tyrone accepts traditional Christianity. He has the Faith. He thinks of life, in other words, as regulated in view of the Four Last Things—Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. He believes, in fact, that the trouble with his sons is that they have given up their Catholic Faith. "You're both flouted the faith you were born and brought up in—the one true faith of the Catholic Church—and your denial has brought nothing but self-destruction!" Later on he reiterates: "When you deny God, you deny hope." "When you deny God, you deny sanity." Indeed, modern man's predicament is precisely that, according to O'Neill. Having denied God he has denied hope and sanity and lives on in a raging despair. O'Neill, therefore, would have agreed with
Tyrone as to the results of a denial of God. However, O'Neill thought of his father's solution—embracing the Catholic Faith—as another "pipe-dream." Certainly, in the context of the play, religion doesn't afford much of a solution to anything. In fact, Mary Tyrone's most destructive "pipe-dream" is her idea that she should have been a nun.

Tyrone's orthodoxy shows itself in a condemnation of Voltaire, Rousseau, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Ibsen as "atheists, fools and madmen." Rowson, Baudelaire, Swinburne, Oscar Wilde, Whitman and Poe are "whoresongers and degenerates." Tyrone never suspects that there might be something to be said for these authors. Indeed, Edmund reminds his father during an argument regarding Nietzsche that Tyrone has never read the books and so cannot really express intelligent opinions on them. The logic of the situation in the play goes against Tyrone's view of religion. This is understandable since O'Neill's own religious leanings were in a direction quite away from orthodox Christianity. He left Catholicism for Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Eastern mysticism—and confusion. O'Neill came to regard Christianity (as he himself once phrased it in his explanation of the play _The Great God Brown_) as "masochistic" and "life-denying." For him
Christianity had a nay-saying spirit. Along with Nietzsche, O'Neill wanted a yes-saying view of life. The playwright, as a matter of fact, rarely treated any sort of orthodox religious views with sympathy.

Tyrone's traditionalism makes him almost instinctively an anti-determinist. His view of man's moral life is strictly orthodox. It's all a matter of will power.

When Mary has once again resumed her dope habit she says to Tyrone: "James! We've loved each other! We always will! Let's remember only that, and not try to understand what we cannot understand, or help things that cannot be helped—the things life has done to us we cannot excuse or explain." He answers, "You won't even try?" Later on in the play Edmund accuses his father of not sending Mary for a cure soon enough butcontenting himself with telling her "all she had to do was use a little will power." To the rest of the family this emphasis on the power of the individual will makes Tyrone seem all the more heartless. As we saw in the discussion of Anna Christie, O'Neill wouldn't have put the stress on man's power of self-determination that Tyrone does. His view would be closer to the mother's. In speaking of Jamie she says, "It's wrong to blame your brother. He can't help being what the past has made him. Any more than your father can."
Or you. Or I. Both Janie and Edmund believe that Tyrone himself couldn't change from what he is. Janie says, "I'm a fool to argue. You can't change the leopard's spots." Edmund has the same idea: "And about the Old Man, what's the use of talking? You can't change him." The fatalism in these statements is inescapable. Along with others cited previously in this manner, they indicate a strong deterministic strain in O'Neill's thinking.

Tyrone supports other traditions besides the traditional dogmas and moral codes of religion. He is intensely proud of the "Old Sod" and his own Irish origins. There is a touch of Cornelius Melody in him when he argues that the Duke of Wellington and Shakespeare were Irish Catholics. His sons love to torment him on the topic of Ireland, but he stands firm. Indeed, at times he can go into quite a rage when the reputation of Frin is at stake. O'Neill was quite skilled in capturing the best and the worst of Irish characteristics, and he seemed to delight in doing so. Even in this very serious play the dramatist can't resist using the story about the pigs in the pond of the Standard Oil Millionaire once again. Phil Hogan of A Moon for the Misbegotten becomes Shaughnessy in this
play, but the two are the same in their irresponsible
deviltry and irresponsible good humor. O'Neill was
extremely proud of his Irish ancestry. He wasn't afraid,
however, to expose some of the worst traits of the Irish
along with the best. All four of his Irish fathers
(Carmody, Hogan, Melody, and Tyrone) are stubborn, miserly,
somewhat irresponsible, and overly addicted to the bottle.

Always the reactionary, Tyrone doesn't fail to defend
American democracy against talk that smacks of anarchy
and socialism. He hasn't much use for new trends in
literature, either, but stands soundly by Shakespeare.
Everything worth saying has been said by the great Bard.
We needn't look to newer authors for inspiration.

Catholicism, Ireland, Democracy, Shakespeare—these
are the traditions that James Tyrone stands behind. His
sons are of a new, a "lost" generation. They fight all
of these traditions. In doing so the sons are merely
following an age-old pattern. When the old is ousted
by the new, there is always a battle. The sons of James
Tyrone battle for a new religion, a new social order, new
thought. They are fighting to replace old ideals with
new ones. But in the process they must pay the price of
all progress—safety with the person who cherishes the old
ideas, enmity with their own father. Every father, says O'Neill, since he represents an old order, must accept the tragic fate of having his own children, whose very existence depends on him, grow to hate him because, living in a new world, they hate whatever is old.
V. CONCLUSION

One of the objects of this paper has been to show that the fathers in the plays of O'Neill are striking and important creations. Certainly the three that we have considered are such. The old Swedish sailor obsessed by "rat ole devil sea," the hard and lonesome rural superman, the Count himself—will all be seen on the American stage and found in drama anthologies for many many years to come. There might be some question as to whether or not the other fathers created by O'Neill are as durable. Some, undoubtedly, are not. In spite of their power, the fathers in The Straw, Gold, and Dynamo, placed as they are in plays that were never well-received by audiences or readers, are forgotten already by most people. But the rest, James Mayo, Sara Mahloo, Nat Miller, Phil Hogan, Cornelius Melody, and even the timid Professor Leeds, have a good chance for some kind of immortality, and not only because they are found in more successful plays. Indeed, often the plays are successful because they are in them.

We have progressed far enough now to draw up a composite picture of the O'Neill father. In O'Neill's
mind the father is indulgent and over-protective toward his daughter—who is generally rather sweet and innocent. On the other hand, he cannot establish rapport with his son, who is always in competition with him. He feels that he is held back by his wife, that she doesn't understand and appreciate him. In short, the whole family relationship is strained, and he is often glad to escape from it.

The O'Neill father cherishes an idealized image of himself and of his motives for acting. He cannot give up his illusions, or pipe-dreams, for he would be giving himself up along with them. The O'Neill father often feels that his life is plagued by some kind of mysterious fate which is leading him to destruction. There is a curse haunting him.

The O'Neill father is lonely. In his family circle there is a lack of communication, perhaps even hatred. He himself cannot unite completely with the family because he is jealous of his individuality. Thus he must escape from the family by drinking or going to sea or to the cows. Moreover, he is not wanted by those outside of the family circle. He may have hangers-on who pay him lip-service, but even they inwardly despise him. He is alone in the universe.
In his loneliness as well as in his strength the father resembles God. Indeed, in the last analysis, the fathers serve as gods to themselves. They are hated as gods by those around them.

The O'Neill father is practical. He knows the value of possessions and fears financial insecurity. He wants to see his family get down to business with no nonsense—just as he himself does. His horizon is limited to the exigencies of the here and now, and he hasn't time for what is beyond that. Though most of the fathers cling to an orthodox faith, the church-going father is an oddity in O'Neill.

Finally, the father stands for all that is traditional in religious belief, in social and political custom, in culture in general. It is only by revolution against the father, they, that progress can be made and new traditions established.

The fathers in the plays of Eugene O'Neill, therefore, are tragic figures. They all fail as fathers because none of them achieve what must be the goal of all fathers, happiness in the family. All of the families have some species of misery. They are broken by poverty, drunkenness, insanity, strife, and death. For O'Neill this
unhappiness is an inevitable thing for the modern family. If individuals cannot live securely and happily in a mad
world bereft of traditional values, surely a group cannot.
There is no common ground for communication, especially
between the father’s generation and the son’s. Thus each
individual lives in perpetual conflict with the other
members of the family.

Love, which all of the fathers (except Cabot, who
transfers his love to the farm) have for their families,
gives the old men stature and dignity, but love doesn’t
solve the problem of communication, of unity. Tyrone,
for example, loves his wife and his sons very deeply, as
they also love him. At times he can be profoundly moved
by that love. Nevertheless, his personal failings, especially
his miserliness, and his ultra-traditional views—his
feeling that will power can solve all problems, in
particular—alienate him from his wife and his sons. He
is not a success as a father.

He does not lack, however, a certain greatness.
Though he knows in his heart that his failure is inevitable,
he never foresees his family. As he quotes to his son
Edmund, “A poor thing but mine own!” We may accuse Tyrone
and O’Neill’s other fathers of many failings, but deser-
tion and divorce aren’t among them. They are from a
generation that could not despair, but would cling to a hope even though it be a hopeless one. None of the fathers commits suicide.

Their tragic endurance of inevitable failure, as well as their pride and heroic stature, puts the fathers in a class with the great tragic heroes of the past. Their love for their family, which is deep and genuine in spite of the strange forms it may take, never allows them to descend to the level of stage villains.

There is little danger of overestimating the importance of the function of the fathers in the plays of O'Neill. Though these men are not always his main characters, they are always in a central position in a play. They present a standard, a point of reference, against which the actions of the other characters can be judged. They are always the practical element in the play as opposed to the poetic. They are the traditional opposed to the radical elements. No other American playwright has depended upon the father so consistently and so heavily—and, we might add, so successfully—as has Eugene O'Neill. From 1918 when O'Neill created two monomaniacs for fathers in two one-act plays—Where the Cross is Made and Rosa—to 1941 when he recreated his own father in Long
Day's Journey into Night, again and again he probed into the intricacies of the father's role. Since the fathers in the plays of O'Neill are central to his technique, studying the plays through them is one of the most valid approaches to his art.
VI. APPENDIX

I would like to anticipate one criticism of the general conclusions of this paper which is bound to arise in the mind of anyone who knows the plays of Eugene O'Neill. There is one father character to whom the composite of characteristics gives in an attempt to sketch the O'Neill father-type cannot possibly be applied. That man is Nat Miller of *Ah, Wilderness*. Nat is not deluded, accursed, lonely, god-like, or miserly. He certainly is traditional, but no one hates him for it. In fact, he is one of the most normal, well-adjusted, lovable fathers anyone would care to meet. Only sophistry could make him fit in with the general run of O'Neill's fathers. The question is: Does the happy Nat Miller's very existence negate all our previous contentions regarding the fathers in O'Neill's plays? I believe not.

First of all, we should not despise O'Neill for writing *Ah, Wilderness*! If the nostalgic family comedy was not his ordinary genre, that is no reason to criticize him for writing in this vein. There is no rule that says a man must always write tragedy once he starts writing it. I think *Ah, Wilderness* is a delightful, a heart-warming,
a wonderfully entertaining play with a much-deserved popularity.

In the study of O'Neill, however, the play must be regarded as an exception—indeed, as an exception which proves the rule. First of all, let us look at the problem historically. O'Neill wrote *Ah, Wilderness!* in 1932 during the time that he was struggling with the very controversial *Days without End*. "When he had finished the third draft he determined to put that drama aside and rest for a week. He awoke the next morning with the story, characters, plot scheme and practically all the details of *Ah, Wilderness!* in his mind clamoring to be put down on paper. O'Neill went to work and within a month had completed a first draft of *Ah, Wilderness!*" 35

In other words, writing this play was a kind of wholesome release of the pent-up tensions that O'Neill had accumulated in his prolonged wrestlings with *Days without End*. He himself characterized it as a "dream walking." O'Neill's own statement of his intentions in writing this play is the best explanation of it. "My purpose was to write a play true to the spirit of the American large small-town at the turn of the century. Its quality depended upon atmosphere, sentiment, an exact evocation of the mood of a dead past."
To me, the America which was (and is) the real America found its unique expression in such middle class families as the Killers, among whom so many of my own generation passed from adolescence into manhood. Life is not like life among the Killers, then, according to O'Neill. Once it was, and he wishes that it were that way again, but it isn't. In other words, the happiness and optimism of Ah, Wilderness! and of Nat Miller, the father in the play, were in the mind of the playwright a contrast to the reality of family life in modern America. "If only things were this way," he seems to be saying. Ah, Wilderness! sounds a note of poignant regret that is found in many of the plays. The very beginning of Long Day's Journey, for example, shows James and Mary Tyrone coming from breakfast in a happy, playful mood, making delightful small talk. The sun shines brightly through the windows, and all is right with the world. If only this might last! When we come to the second page of the dialogue, however, the spell is broken. Mary becomes a trifle acrid. Tyrone is resentful, defensive, and huffy. A few pages later, the sons enter and conflict begins in earnest. By the end of the play we have discovered that Mary Tyrone is a hopeless drug addict, Jusie is a no-good scoundrel, Edmund
is near death from tuberculosis, and Tyrone is a miserable, broken old man. The play ends in dense fog and darkness. Ah, wilderness! in that darkness is the solitary light whose feebleness merely accentuates the gloom.
FOOTNOTES

1 In using the term “father” here, I do not refer indiscriminately to any male character in the plays who has had children. The designation is used rather for any character who, during the course of a large part of the play, acts in the capacity of a head of a family, that is, whose major relationships are within the family circle. Thus, Titus Caesar in *Lesions Laughed* has been a father, but his function in the play has little or nothing to do with this fact. On the other hand, James Tyrone in *Long Day’s Journey into Night* plays his role entirely in the family circle and would have no function in the play at all if he were not the father of the family.

2 The plays and the important fathers in them are the following:

*Beyond the Horizon* — James Moyo

*The Straw* — Bill Cermady

*Cold* — Captain Leonhard Bartlett

Anna Christie — Chris Christopherson

*Desire under the Elms* — Ephraim Cebot

*Strange Interlude* — Professor Henry Leeds

*Lysistrata* — Reverend Hutchins Light and Maasiy Fife

*Mourning Becomes Electra* — Ezra Keaton

*Mr. Kildare* — Neil Miller

*A Moon for the Misbegotten* — Phil Hogan

*A Touch of the Poet* — Cornelius Melody

*Long Day’s Journey into Night* — James Tyrone

3 In this paper all dates given for plays, unless specific mention is made of another source, are taken from O’Neill’s own chronologial list, which is complete up to 1933. The entire list may be found in Richard Dana Skinner, Eugene O’Neill, *A Poet’s Quest* (New York: 1935), p. vii-

4 O’Neill wrote the dedication page of *Long Day’s Journey into Night* on July 22, 1941.

52
2This is the date for the early version of Anna Christie, which O'Neill called Chris.

6Except for Professor Henry Leeds of Strange Interlude, none of the fathers has any particular intellectual leaning. All the fathers are rather narrow-minded.

7The other daughters of O'Neill have similar problems to face. Nina, the daughter in Strange Interlude, has to forgive her father for ruining her life by talking her fiancé, Gordon, into postponing their marriage until after the war—in which Gordon was killed. Nina's whole life after her lover's death is plagued by the frustration of unconsummated love. Yet, when Professor Leeds confesses quite humbly that his motive was jealousy, Nina forgives him. Josie Hogan in A Moon for the Misbegotten forgives her father, Phil, forlying to her and for his clumsy efforts to unite her with Josie Tyrone. Likewise, Sara Melody, the daughter in A Touch of the Poet, is able to be indulgent with her father in spite of his ridiculous pretenses and his selfish lack of consideration for her and her mother, Nora. In fact, when Melody has relinquished his claim to nobility and shows promise of becoming a more useful, though less colorful, addition to the family, Sara wants him to go back to his old ways.

These three daughters have problems that are quite similar to those of Anna Christie, therefore, but all can find it in their hearts to forgive the mistakes of their fathers.


10Ibid., p. 65.


14 Ibid.
15 Reverend Hutchins Light of Drama is one notable exception. After a violent scene with his son, he makes a fool of himself before his atheistic neighbor, Henry Fife. From then on his character disintegrates.
17 Ibid., p. 267.
18 Ibid., p. 227. The italics are mine.
19 Ibid., p. 266.
22 It is my opinion that O’Neill, in his violent anti-materialism, blames too much on avarice in the play. This over-simplification doesn’t add to the total effect, since O’Neill’s main thesis is that responsibility cannot be squarely placed on any one person or on any one cause. At times the play the thesis seems to shrink to the trite “money is the root of all evil.”
24 Ibid., p. 134.
25 Ibid., p. 135.
26 Here is an example of what Nietzsche thought about Christianity: Christian morality has been the Circe of all thinkers. ... we recognize what was worshipped as God, not as “divine,” but as pitiable, as absurd, as injurious—not only as an error, but as a crime against life. ... I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous,
secret, subterranean, mean—I call it the one immortal blessing of mankind... Christian morality is the most malignant form of all falsehood.

These words were selected from Nietzsche’s _Ecce Homo_ and _Antichrist_ by John Neville Figgis, D.D., Litt. D., and inserted in his book, _The Will to Freedom_ (New York, 1917) pp. 103-05. I have chosen some of the more scathing passages.

27 Fundamentalism and Bible Christianity are represented by such characters as the revengeful monotheistic Abraham Bentley in the one-act play _Home_, by the Bible-quoting patriarch Cabot, and by the hypocritical minister in _Lysistrata_. The greedy, self-indulgent Franciscan friars in _The Fountain_ show O'Neill’s contempt for the religious life. For Christ himself, O’Neill substituted Lazarus, the laughing, self-affirming Nietzschean hero of _Lazarus Laughed_.


29 _Ibid.,_ p. 141.

30 _Ibid.,_ p. 64.

31 _Ibid.,_ p. 31.

32 _Ibid.,_ p. 44.

33 This work, p. 12 and 13.

34 Although Chris deserted Anna Christie when she was a child and plans to go away again to South “face, I do not consider him a deserter. His physical absence does not amount to moral desertion, for he feels that his presence brings bad luck and thus he sees himself as doing something for his family.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


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